

M. A. Part-II English Paper G2 E3

Modern American Literature

Unit-1

Southern Renaissance The Sound and the Fury

William Faulkner

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1.1 Objectives:

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- 1) find relation between Southern Renaissance and the American Literature
- 2) understand the development of modern American Literature
- 3) know the different narrative perspectives used by Faulkner in the novel
- 4) understand the theme of racial discrimination in American literature
- 5) explain the tragedy of Compson family in the novel

1.2 Southern Renaissance:

The Southern Renaissance was a regional movement. It attempted imparting energy and strength to the American Southern literature of the 1920s and 1930s and was a kind of literary movement, the first of its kind. The movement proved a mainstream movement within Southern literature. The writers of this era supported the Lost Cause. Charles Chesnutt was the early novelist who attempted a severe criticism against the tenets of the Lost Cause through his novels *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900) and *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901). Henry Louis Mencken was also the driving force of the Lost Cause movement who strongly criticized the Southern cultural and intellectual life. His essay "*The Sahara of the Bozart*" (1917) focused writing tradition in American literature and criticized the provincialism of American intellectual life. For him, the American South was the intellectually barren region. For him the following years of Civil War there was a fast decline in the intellectual and cultural life America. His strong criticism shattered the very foundation of the conservative South. This Mencken attack triggered reaffirmation of Southern uniqueness and the Southern writers started exploring Southern identity.

The *Southern Renaissance* was more than a mere historical account. It proved to be an important analytical work for different reasons. Richard H. King, a cultural historian, attempted to define the topic for the first time. For him the movement is "progress in self-consciousness of a select group of Southern writers and intellectuals who were active between 1930 and 1955" According to him, the Woodward's

location placed the beginning the Southern Renaissance in 1929 with the publication of Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. The other significant work was W. J. Cash's book *The Mind of the South*. It worked as the prime and insightful reference for the movement. King commented on Cash's book in his *A Southern Renaissance*, According to him, Cash's book proved provocative and informative in the rise and development of the Renaissance.

William Faulkner and his *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) were arguably the most influential and the major forerunner of the Southern Renaissance movement. This Nobel Prize-winning novelist was himself a southerner, living in the Mississippi region who advocated this movement. Some other prominent writers of this movement were an African-American writer Richard Wright followed by the prominent American Henry Louis Mencken. The other contributors were Tennessee Williams, Robert Perm Warren, Thomas Wolfe, Will Percy, James Agee, Lillian Smith, C. Vann Woodward, Howard Odum, Rupert Vance, John Crowe Ransom, Alien Tate, W. J. Cash and others. The drive includes not only literary writings but the other forms also. Some of the significant works of the drive were William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*; Woodward's *Origins of the New South*; Odum's *Southern Regions of the United States*; and Cash's *The Mind of the South*. The Southern Renaissance focused on three major following themes of the times:

1. the burden of history related to slavery and loss,
2. conservative southern culture, and
3. association with racism and slavery.

The above mentioned themes were significant issues of the early twentieth century. The other important issue related to the Southern Renaissance was its opposition to industrialization. The literature before renaissance used to focus on southern idyllic culture, the historical romance, themes related to the American army, and the Civil War. This part of America faced a new mindset following the First World War. The people started opposing the industrialization and favoured agrarian culture. The issues relating to cultivated land or the cultivation of land became dominant and the same entered the world of literature.

This all started around the 1880s. Some established Southern authors raised the issue of exploitation of blacks. They also ridiculed the existing conventions of the

time. In the following decade, some journalistic writers severely criticized the cultural and intellectual mediocrity of the existing rulers.

The burden of history related to slavery and loss was the driving force in Southern literature between the Civil War and World War I. The Renaissance shifted this burden by addressing some significant themes in their works. They introduced the theme of the burden of history. Those people were still marred by the effects of slavery and their devastating military defeat. They also focused on various traditions of the Southern culture. This culture gave much importance to its religion, family and its community, the people. These things were more important than any individual. It was their concern that one could not exist without losing his sense of identity, alienating oneself from his own people, from his own soil.

The study of the Southern Renaissance takes us back in the pages of history. It began with the activities of 'The Fugitives'. It was a uniform group of poets and critics from Vanderbilt University. The university was placed in Nashville, the state of Tennessee, a Southern state. This fugitives group includes John Ransom, Alien Tate, Donald Davidson and others and started an innovative periodical entitled *The Fugitive* (1922). They claimed to dislocate themselves from the rudimentary culture of the South. One can claim it as a deliberate act of African-American authors who were excluded by the White authors.

The other significant factor of this movement was the role of Southern agrarians. The emergence of the Southern Renaissance opened up the rural South to outside influences due to industrial expansion. The Southerners opposed this industrialization. This can be seen in the collection of essays */// Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930), a deliberate attempt of various Southern Agrarians authors.

The Renaissance writers were concerned with the issues of racism and slavery. This region had a distressed history regards to racial issues. The writers of the movement introduced these themes in their writings. They also introduced some innovative techniques such as complex narratives and the stream of consciousness techniques in their writings. Another interesting but important fact of this movement was that the African-American writers of the region were deprived of mentioning themselves as Southern writers. They were overpowered by the white authors who hold themselves superiors. They considered themselves as the sole creators and

guardians of the Southern literary tradition. However, this movement raised some doubts over its uniformity because it excluded African-American writers of the region. No prominent African-American writers were seen as part of this literary movement who produced some of the greatest novels of the times such as *The House Behind the Cedars* in (1900) and *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901).

William Faulkner remains, one of the most important writers of the movement. The prime notion was 'South was behind the rest of the world'. They left behind that "Lost Cause" narrative that romanticized life before the Civil War. It took up explaining the cultural nuances of the south region. This movement attempted to allow identity to Southern content. Its authors shared common themes, each addressing the history of the South with a sense of realism and honesty. They attempted to focus the harsh realities of the southern slavery, the typical family system, race, religion and the community system. The writers of the movement used the 'stream of consciousness' technique to visit their past and apply the said themes.

Many Southern writers of the 1940s, '50s and '60s were inspired by the writers of the Southern Renaissance and continued this movement as a legacy. These writers include Reynolds Price, Walker Percy, James Dickey, Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, Harper Lee and many others.

1.3 Check Your Progress: 0

- a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.
- The Southern Renaissance Movement in American literature remained dominant in the period of———.
a) 1930s and 1950s b) 1920s and 1950s
c) 1920s and 1930s d) 1880s and 1920s
 - The *Southern Renaissance* was more than a mere —— account.
a) historical b) political c) social d) literary
 - The Mind of the South* by —— was the prime and insightful reference for the movement.
a) Alien Tate b) John Ransom

- c) Henry Mencken d) W. J. Cash
4. The Southern Renaissance was a movement related to the _____
- a) southern region b) Southey Literature
- c) anti-north issues d) United Nations
5. The _____ writers of the region were deprived of mentioning themselves as Southern writers.
- a) American b) African c) Native d) African-American
- b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
1. What caused the origin of the Southern Movement?
 2. Which Faulkner's novels proved influential for this movement?
 3. Why this movement was called as Southern Movement?
 4. What was the main focus of the movement?
 5. Who were the 'fugitives'?
 6. What were the themes of literature before the movement?

1.4 The Sound and the Fury

Introduction:

William Faulkner (1887-1962) is a celebrated name in the world of American literature. He spent most of his years in Oxford, Mississippi, the southern state of America. He loved to be a shy man until he received his Nobel Prize in 1949. This prize gave him name and fame. However, he differentiated his private life and his public appearances, loved to follow his southern etiquettes, remained gentle, kind and courteous to all.

Faulkner's early life, as well as the history of his family life, is really fascinating. His great grandfather, a Colonel, was indulged in many murder cases and had two wives. This small family background made a big difference in Faulkner's life and career. William's father, Murray, married an Oxford girl and established in south Oxford region where William was born. Very few things are known regarding his childhood and early education. It is said that he had a formal education but it rested

on his interest. He studied what he liked. He started producing poetry in his early childhood. The first evidence of his '*L'Après-Midi D'un Faune*' appears in 'The New Republic' (1919). He was a different sort of personality, studied what he liked, wore what he wished for and never worked to get permanent. This special element in his personality made his towns people call him a 'Count Nocount'

Faulkner published many novels in the prime career of his writing. There are many short stories to his credit too. His short stories describe the geography of his hometown in Oxford, Mississippi. Some of the short stories to mention are ,4 *Rose for Emily*, *Red Leaves*, *That Evening Sun* and *Dry September*. These stories were published in a collection *These 13* (1930). *Knight's Gambit* was his other collection of mysterious stories in 1949. He also published two volumes of poetry entitled *The Marble Faun* (1924) and *A Green Bough* (1933). However, Faulkner is known for his novels. Out of his other famous novels, the most famous are: *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom* (1936), *The Hamlet*, *The Town* and *The Mansion*.

Faulkner was unique in his style of writing. He attempted experiments paying much attention to his diction and style, made frequent use of the stream of consciousness technique and used the varieties of emotions as well as varieties of characters throughout his writings. His themes include emotions, suspense, gothic, serious elements, family drama, death and life, money, whereas, his characters include slaves or descendants of slaves, poor white, agrarian, or working-class Southerners, and Southern aristocrats.

Faulkner died out of a serious injury falling from his horse. This accident caused thrombosis, local coagulation of blood in a part of his circulatory system which advanced to a severe heart attack. He breathed his last on July 06, 1962, at Wright's Sanatorium, Mississippi, a southern state of America.

Faulkner began to work on *The Sound and the Fury* immediately after his 31st birthday. It was his fourth novel and commercially was a great success. It was planned to be a short story of a family, the family of Compson from Jefferson, Mississippi. He further planned to extend the story in two more episodes, the three different stories of three different characters. However, his earlier experiences with the publishers and his zeal in experimentation converted those short stories into a full-length novel, *The Sound and the Fury*.

The novel *The Sound and the Fury*, like all other celebrated novels of Faulkner, introduces many characters. It is basically a family drama, the story of the Compson family and all major and minor characters are directly or indirectly related to this family. The following characters are worth to be mentioned here:

Jason Compson III is the head of the Compson family. He is rational and knowledgeable but addicted to alcohol. This alcoholism ultimately kills him (1912). His wife, Caroline Bascomb Compson is a kind of incompetent mother. She never paid attention and never showed any sort of affection to her children, except Jason. Hypochondriac Mrs Compson was always worried about her health which forced her to hand over her children to her housekeeper Dilsey. Her discrimination can be easily found in her way of thinking that Caddy, Quentin and Benjamin. For her, these three are having "Compson blood" whereas, Jason a true Bascomb. She used to love Jason more than the rest of her three children.

Quentin III (b.1891), Candace (Caddy) (b.1892), Jason IV (b.1893) and Benjamin (Maury) (b.1895) are the four survivors of Jason and Caroline. Quentin is the first child of Jason and Caroline and is the narrator of the Second Part. He hardly received any love from his mother and is much attached to his sister, Candace (Caddy). However, immoral behaviours (as he thinks so) of his sister shattered his faith in her. He claims to have an attempt of incest with her and declares it to his father, finally, commits suicide (d.1910).

Candace Compson (known as Caddy) is the second child and the only daughter of Compsons. She appears to be a much favourite of William Faulkner and is the true protagonist of the novel. She remains much close to her brothers Quentin and Benjy and loves her family a lot. She is superior to others but ultimately suffers a lot. Her promiscuity, immature pregnancy, adjusted marriage with Herbert Head and untimely divorce after the birth of Quentin Compson II leaves her in no man's land. She leaves her home to work somewhere else and manage to send monthly expenses as the maintenance amount for her child. She is strong-willed and caring and appears a good caretaker of Benjy and the best friend of Quentin, her brothers.

The narrator of the second part, Jason (Jason Compson IV), is the third son of Jason III and Caroline Bascomb. He is not a good sort of character. He is racist and bitter in nature. According to him, his sister's daughter, the illegitimate Quentin, is

the cause of all his problems. He treats her cruelly and makes inappropriate use of the money given by his sister for the upbringing of Quentin.

Benjamin Compson (Benjy), the fourth child of the Compson family turns out mentally retarded at the age of five. He is a special one having permanent disability and is unable to take care of himself. For Compson family, he is a matter of shame and is treated badly by all except Caddy. He is much attached to Caddy. But her sexual affairs and her untimely marriage shatter his life. Shown as a character having 'sixth sense' he imagines that Caddy has lost her virginity.

The other characters of the novel are interesting too. Uncle Maury Bascomb is Caroline's brother and presented as a bad character. He is having an illicit affair with his married neighbour. Quentin Compson II is Caddy's illegitimate daughter. Dilsey is the black housekeeper of the Compsons and Roskus her husband. Versh, T.P. and Frony are the two sons and a daughter of Dilsey and Roskus. Frony's son Luster also appears as a prominent character. Dalton Ames is the one whom Caddy loves and loses her virginity. Dalton deserts her and Caddy marries Herbert Head. But this lawful husband of Caddy and father to Quentin Compson II divorce Caddy to find his daughter not actually his own. Shreve, Gerald Bland, his mother Spode, Julio, Deacon and Earl are some other characters in the novel.

The Sound and the Fury is divided into four parts. The chapters are:

- Part I - April, Seventh, 1928
- Part II - June, Second, 1910
- Part III-April, Sixth, 1928
- Part IV - April, Eighth, 1928

The novel is having a diverse plot structure. On the surface level, it appears to be dealing with the story of Compson family that is the story of Quentin, Jason and Benjamin, and their passion and fascination towards their sister, Candace. However, when we read between the lines we find four different chapters without following any order or sequence and there is no systematic sort of presentation of the subject matter. The reading gives us juxtaposed events in the course of time and also gives different opinions about similar incidents by different narratives. Ultimately, *The Sound and the Fury* requires too much attention to read and to interpret. Concentration only provides a proper understanding of different incidents and

contexts. However, the novel can be simply placed under 'plot' with few simple lines as: "*The Sound and the Fury* is divided and narrated in four parts by four different narrators dealing with four different dates. The first three parts are subjective and narrated by independent perspectives of the three Compson brothers as narrators viz. Benjy, a mentally retarded thirty-three-year-old man followed by Quentin, an oldest of the Compson family, followed by Jason the third brother and an ill-mannered fellow. The final chapter is narrated in an omniscient narration manner emphasizing the family caretaker Dilsey. She is the only witness of the fall of the Compson family and their southern aristocratic pride after the American Civil War.

The title *The Sound and the Fury* refers to a famous Shakespearean quote from his great tragedy *Macbeth*. Like *Macbeth*, *The Sound and the Fury* also turns out Compsons tragedy. Both works have remarkable similarities. *Macbeth*, a Scottish general and a thorough gentleman receives the news of his wife's suicide and feels dejected and lonely. His realization of the importance of time leads to dejection; dejection leads to chaos. In this chaotic mood, he utters:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow Creeps in this petty pace from day to day To the last syllable of recorded time, And all our yesterdays have lighted fools The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle. Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more. It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing.

(Act V, scene v: 18-27)

This soliloquy attempts to explain life. For him, life is but a walking shadow of the past. One cannot achieve everything from the past. Faulkner reinterprets this *Macbeth* soliloquy. For him, one should take hold of his or her own life or it may end in an untimely suicidal death as that of Quentin or may turn into a cynic and materialist like Jason, or an idiot like Benjamin. The concluding line of the original Shakespearean soliloquy '*it is a tale told by an idiot...signifying nothing*' can be rightly identified with the first part of the novel where 'the idiot' Benjamin (Benjy) begins to tell his part of the story, '*signifying nothing*'.

1.5 Subject Matter - I, April, Seventh, 1928

This first part of the novel is titled as 'April, Seventh, 1928'. So there is no need to say that it deals with that particular day. Like the first, the other parts are also

titled with a particular date, June, 2, 1910, April, 6, 1928 and April, 8, 1928. Three parts of the novel deal with three consecutive days but in a jumbled manner. The three days are Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday having their importance in the world of Christianity. The odd one out is the second part taking us in the past and dealing with the episodes of 1910. The whole business is a series of non-chronological events taking us backwards and forward on the swing of time and memories. The narrative frequently shifts to the past and to the present. The use of stream of consciousness technique and the use of *italics* help us to identify these shifts but then too, it goes difficult to identify each and every shift in the novel. We are also supposed to know the change in time by relating certain characters and their appearance. For example, Luster appears in present, T.P. takes us to the teenage of Benjy and Versh takes us to the infancy and childhood of Benjy.

The narrator of the first part of the novel is Benjamin (called as Benjy, whose earlier name was Maury). He is a mentally disabled fellow of thirty-two years and about to turn thirty-three. He presents the matter in a truly vague and confusing style. He is a matter of shame to the Compson family and turns out as a significant character of the novel. What we know of Benjy is that he is affectionate towards only three things in his life: the fire, the golf course and Caddy, his only sister.

The novel opens on the day before Easter. Benjamin is with Luster, a teenaged black servant of the aristocratic Compsons. Luster is accompanying Benjy around the Compson property. The property is next to a golf course where the players are playing. The golf players' consistent call for 'caddie' (a person who carries a golfer's clubs and provides other assistance during a match) force Benjy to recall his memories. Nostalgic Benjy starts moaning and crying for his sister Candace (Caddy).

Some reflections of Caddy by Benjy are very interesting. Caddy frequently appears on his mental canvas. A scene takes us some three decades earlier in the course of time. It was in 1898 when the grandmother of Benjy died. The four Compson children Quentin, Jason, Candace and Benjamin were asked to play outside during the funeral. But Caddy, out of curiosity, climbed a tree near the house to look inside. When she was upside the tree, her three brothers, Quentin, Jason and Benjamin, looked up to notice her muddy underwear. This is Benjy's first memory of his sister for which he always relates Caddy with trees. He often says to her that she smells like trees. A similar incident occurs when Luster and Benjy try to sneak under a fence into the golf course. Benjy catches his clothes on a nail. This incident too

triggers his memory, a past episode of some twenty-six years when Caddy freed Benjy from the same nail.

At the age of fourteen, Caddy started using perfume. This act of Caddy troubled Benjy. He howls when he finds that Caddy has lost her innocence, her exit from his child world. Each time, Benjy howls to see the loss of Caddy's innocence, and when Caddy finds the reason for his howling she washes her face. This too much association turned Benjy possessive about her. He couldn't imagine losing Caddy and this thought instigate his moaning and crying. He could not see Caddy with her friends or associates like Charlie, or Dalton.

Many incidents in the novel related to Benjy's loss are directly related to his loss of Caddy. Say, for example, the sale of his pasture, his sexual impulse, Caddy's wedding, his loss of her company, etc. Now there is no one closely associated with him. He senses her loss after the death of Quentin, the death of his father and the death of Roskus. Benjy's loss of Caddy is his loss of true love and affection. Again back to present, when Benjy starts moaning.

There are some important incidents narrated by 'idiot' Benjy. The change in his name is prevailing one. His earlier name was Maury (Maury was also the name of his maternal uncle, Uncle Maury Bascomb). That incident takes us in 1900 when the family finds Benjy disabled. They decide to change his name from Maury to Benjamin. The other incident takes us in 1910 where his caring sister gets associated with Dalton Ames, marries Herbert Head, gives birth to a girl child and immediately divorced. We are shocked to know the castration of Benjy (the removal of his testicles) when he attacks a girl.

Like earlier unexpected shifts from the present to past and back to the present. We Luster informing him that his grandmother, Dilsey, has baked a cake on his birthday. He is about to turn thirty-three on that Holy Saturday, a day before Easter.

Luster asks him to stop crying or he will eat the cake. We also see Benjy recalling his mother. He is in a carriage with his mother and his attendant, Dilsey. The episode recalls his memory where his two brothers and sister Caddy appear. Dilsey tells him to move ahead to spare Quentin but his mother objects to go without her daughter. Moreover, 'death' is also a prominent memory of Benjy in this part. There are many death incidents here. The first incident is of the death of their 'piggy' friend followed by the death of Damuddy, Roskus, the grandmother, Quentin and the

horse. This chapter also gives us incidents and records of the deterioration of the Compson family. Benjy remembers his uncle Maury as a lazy fellow spending his time and his father's money on foolish things, his father's heavy drinking bouts, the losing morals of the family members and other such things.

At the end of reading this part of the novel, we get that there are too many shifts based on Benjy's sensations. We also get that Benjy cannot differentiate between the past and the present. He unexpectedly enters the world of reflection, probably by seeing something. This makes the narrative unique. We find Benjy a thorough "idiot" as is referred in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The Part I story of *The Sound and the Fury* is really "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." This part is much complicated for a common reader because of its non-chronological reflections, because of its too impressionistic language, and because of its continuous shifts in time and setting.

1.6 Check Your Progress: I

- a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.
1. The title, *The Sound and the Fury* has been adapted from Shakespeare's masterpiece _____.
a) The Tempest b) Othello
c) All is Well d) Macbeth
 2. The youngest of the Jason-Caroline Compson family is _____.
a) Jason b) Quentin c) Benjy d) Candace
 3. _____ is Caroline's brother and the only maternal uncle of Quentin, Jason, Benjy and Caddy.
a) Roskus b) Maury Bascomb
c) Dalton Ames d) Herbert
 4. Dilsey, the coloured caretaker of the Compsons, had _____ children.
a) three b) two c) one d) four
 5. Caddy loved _____, but married _____.

- a) Dalton, Herbert Head b) Jason, Dalton
- c) Herbert, Dalton d) Dalton Ames, Earl

b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.

1. Who is the narrator of the first part of the novel?
2. What sort of character is Benjamin Compson?
3. What is the relationship between Benjamin and Caddy?
4. Which game play fascinates Benjamin much?
5. Where Quentin did go for his further education?
6. What is the role of Luster in the novel?
7. What was Benjamin's baptized name?
8. In which year was Caddy divorced by her husband?
9. What is the result of Benjy's sexual attack on a passing girl?
10. How did Benjy associate his sister Caddy with?

1.7 Subject Matter - II, June, Second, 1910

Quentin narrates this part of the story. He is the only intelligent child of Compson family, emotional but unstable. We see him as a young student at Harvard living a freelance life, consistently contemplating over the issue of death, remembering his family distancing from his sister Caddy. We see him isolating himself from the loud and harsh world outside and unable to match the world ending his life by drowning himself, committing suicide. We see two important sections in the life of Quentin in this part: Quentin at Harvard and his childhood memories. However, this part of the novel, like the previous one, too contains various shifts in the process of narration.

Quentin inherits the tradition of nobility from his father, Mr. Compson. For Quentin, the gentility, chivalry, courage, honesty and integrity are important virtues. This can be seen in a good act before his suicide. He leaves a couple of his outfits to a Negro boy named Deacon. This and such acts of Quentin show his thinking about Negroes. For him 'a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behaviour; a sort of

obverse reflection of the white people he lives among.' This reflects when he throws a small coin towards a Negro on a railway crossing. This honesty and integrity towards coloured can be found towards the black family serving his house, especially with Dilsey and Roskus.

Quentin finds the outside world reality unsophisticated and intolerable. He is too emotional. He attempts to seek security in his childhood memories. He likes to entertain himself in his memories. Seen struggling with reality, he is always obsessed with Caddy's virginity and purity. He is obsessed with the Southern ideals of chivalry too.

Quentin, along with his two brothers and sister Caddy, never received true love of his mother. His mother, Mrs. Caroline, was always obsessed with her personal and maternal matters. It was her failure as a mother that caused emotional stability in the life of Quentin. It was Caddy who provided him, and her other brothers, with a gentle safeguard and comfort. When Caddy finds Quentin sexually engaged with her friend Natalie, Quentin feels very sad. He throws himself into the pig trough. He fears that his affair is surely going to end up his relationship with his sister. But somehow, he manages to retain his relationship. But when he finds his sister, Caddy, engaged in her sexual promiscuity, he goes shocked, disturbed, and could not gather his nerve for the rest of his life. He reacts violently. He couldn't digest Caddy's sexual maturity. Caddy uses perfume at the age of fourteen and he is not happy. Caddy kisses a boy and Quentin slaps Caddy. Unhappy with her behaviour, he scours her head in the grass and torments her. Caddy's illicit love affair with Dalton Ames makes him think of committing suicide. However, he attends Caddy's marriage ceremony, some eight months later. The more shocking is his act of appealing Caddy to not to marry Herbert and stay with her brothers.

Like Benjy, Quentin too was emotionally dependent on Caddy. He could enjoy his childhood only because of her. Faulkner's symbol of honeysuckle refers to Caddy's loss of innocence; a symbol of sex. Before going to Harvard for further education (1909) Quentin found Caddy pregnant by an unknown lover. Perhaps, it may be Dalton Ames. He is not happy with this affair. Both Caddy and Quentin fight over this issue. He forces Caddy to admit that Dalton forced her. He plans to declare having incest with Caddy just with a fair cause to save Caddy. He threatens Caddy to accept that they have committed incest or he will report this to his father. Pregnant and alone, Caddy marries Herbert Head whom Quentin finds repulsive. But Caddy is

resolute. She knew that she must marry before the birth of her child. However, in the course of time, Herbert finds that the child was not his, and sends Caddy and her new daughter away. Quentin's wanderings through Harvard (as he cuts classes) follow the pattern of his heartbreak over losing Caddy. There is no doubt that Quentin's instability comes out of his emotional insecurity. The other reason is his weakness. This weakness shakes the very foundation of his belief that his sister has lost her virginity. Tormented by his conflicting thoughts and emotions, he commits suicide by drowning.

Before committing suicide, we see Quentin brooding over the issue of 'death'. The events of his final day dramatize uselessness of his life. He felt defeated. He could not hold time. He tries to avoid the memories of his loss. However, he could not isolate himself from the happenings of 2nd June 1910, the day of Caddy's wedding. For him, her wedding day was his funeral day. We see him standing on a river bridge, observing the flowing water, the fishes, entering in a flashback again. He has struggled to retain his relationship with his sister but failed. Sex on both parts destroyed his world. His attempt to isolate himself from the real world too turned futile. His weakness turns him a sympathetic character.

Many readers find Benjy's section difficult to understand and so is Quentin's. There are incidents of non-chronological events along with irregular grammar, spelling and or punctuations. This confusion comes out of Quentin's depressed state of mind and instability. Therefore, Quentin is arguably an even more unreliable narrator than Benjy.

1.8 Check Your Progress: II

a) Say whether the following sentences are **TRUE** or **FALSE**:

1. Quentin, the oldest son, is a happy go lucky type character.
2. Mrs. Compson had four children and Dilsey had three.
3. Maury Bascomb is the son of Caroline Bascomb Compson.
4. Quentin Compson II is the only legitimate issue of Candace.
5. Caddy had her first promiscuous affair in the summer of 1909.
6. Quentin is the most intelligent of all Compson children.
7. Part II of the novel describes the details of 2nd June 1928.

8. The narrator of Part II intends to declare incest with Caddy.
 9. Quentin is arguably a more unreliable narrator than Benjy.
 10. Quentin commits suicide by drowning himself.
- b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase/one sentence.
1. Explain the family background of Quentin.
 2. What is the title of this Part?
 3. With who did Quentin Compson claims to have incest with?
 4. What is the name of Gerald's mother?
 5. To whom Quentin leaves a couple of his outfits before committing suicide?
 6. Why did Quentin throw a coin towards a Negro?
 7. What is the importance of Caddy in Quentin's life?
 8. With whom Caddy finds Quentin sexually engaged with?
 9. What is Quentin's reaction over Caddy kissing a boy?
 10. How did Quentin end his life?

1.9 Subject Matter - III, April, Sixth, 1928

This part is narrated by Jason, Jason IV. He is the third child of the Compson family and is his mother's favourite. It takes place on Good Friday. Unlike the earlier sections of Benjy and Quentin, this part is a bit straightforward reflecting Jason's sole desire for material wealth. But there is some bitterness restored in this section of the novel. Faulkner's theme of loss and disintegration arrive its culmination in this section and presents Jason as a cruel fellow. His thinking does not go with reality. He logically justifies his illogical desires. Alienated from his own family members, he is also alienated from the people he works with. He is cruel, irrational, and 'a most hated villain' of Faulkner readers. He loves money and is such money minded fellow that he calculates the value of flowers heaped on the grave of his dead father. For him, there is no God, and there is no humanity except money.

He is a modern sort of man; fits deem in today's modern society. He is a calculated sort of figure. Like his two brothers, Quentin and Benjamin, he is too concerned about the loss of Caddy, but, his concern is different. For Quentin it was

an emotional loss, for Benjy it was loss in his love and security but for Jason, the loss of Caddy means a loss of bank job. It was Herbert, the chosen better half of Caddy, who offered a bank job for Jason. Caddy's unexpected marriage disaster proves harmful to his financial prospect. This results in his revenge against Caddy. His bitterness and hate against Caddy reflect in his treatment against Quentin II, the daughter of Caddy. He receives two hundred dollars from Caddy for fifteen long years as maintenance of her daughter and the house but never maintains both. He uses this amount for his own pleasures.

Jason becomes the head of his family after his father's death. Then he starts taking his own decisions. He considers himself as a practical businessman. His desire to be a successful businessman makes him investment in the cotton business. There is no doubt that he supports his mother, Benjy, and Caddy's daughter after the death of his father, but there is no affection in this support. He blackmails Caddy into making him Miss Quentin's sole guardian and steals the money that Caddy sends for her daughter's maintenance. He is not on good terms with Miss Quentin. His sentence: 'Once a bitch always a bitch', referring Quentin, clearly infers it. When he finds his mother worried about Quentin but helpless he proposes to let him try his hand. He asks his mother to not to interfere because his philosophy is: '...when people act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is treat them like a nigger.' He literally drags Quentin out and asks why she skipped school and lied to her grandmother. The argument extended until he pulled his belt hitting her. Dilsey interrupted the scene but he continued. Quentin, a grownup lady now, too, starts arguing. She declares that she is spending her mother's money. She knew that he is always concerned with the blank bank note from her mother who frequently visits the telegraph office, returning home to get the bank note signed and going back to cash it.

This nature of Jason results in his economic loss. He loses a good amount of money in cotton business. He buys a car which proves a headache for him. He is forced to withdraw his status from a partner to a clerk. According to Faulkner, he could have benefited more just by keeping his niece happy but his greed forces him to lose everything. He never believed his niece and follows her suspecting adultery. The big bang befalls when he loses all his money from the market followed by Quentin's run away business stealing his money.

Jason's deception of Caddy, Quentin and his mother become more apparent here. Why he behaves like this? There are many probable answers to this question. His instability, greedy nature, lack of emotions, isolation from his own men and his mother are some dominant ones. One can claim that it was only because of his mother, Mrs. Compson, who turns Jason into a villain. She spoils Jason by setting him apart from her own family members. She shapes Jason as per her own whims. This makes Jason the exact opposite of the Compsons. He can be read as the exaggerated reflection of his mother.

Jason was also not true to his mother. His relationship with his own mother also follows his practical thoughts. Though he is deeply attached to her, he differs from her. At times, we find him using her for his own point. He allows her to keep up the pretence of being the southern lady, treats Benjy and Quentin indifferent in front of her, and never let her know that the bank notes, she think she burns, are actually cashed by him. He also hides the fact that her investment in the business has been withdrawn and used for his self-pleasure. He plays a double game with his own mother. This hypocrisy is a characteristic mark of Jason which can be seen in a Luster event. When Luster demands some free tickets for a show, Jason taunts Luster and burns the tickets rather giving those to Luster.

Part III of the novel is narrated in a linear fashion. These happenings of 6th April monitor the incidents of Good Friday. It is the day on which Jason decides to search for Miss Quentin. We observe the two major traits of the Compson family here: Miss Quentin's recklessness and passion inherited from her grandfather and Jason's ruthless cynicism. This section presents the clearest image of the domestic life of the Compson family. For Jason, it is nothing but caring for his hypochondriac mother and idiot Benjy. This part also dramatizes self-interest, failure and compassion as the characteristic of modern man. It is a dire criticism of modern society, the money-minded man and inhuman businesses.

1.10 Check Your Progress: III

a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.

1. Jason had been receiving _____ dollars per month from Caddy as a maintenance amount.

a) five hundred

b) ten hundred

- c) two hundred d) one hundred
 2. Caddy supports her brother for _____ long years only because of her daughter.
a) fifteen b) twelve c) seven and half d) ten
 3. Jason, dreaming to be a businessman, invests his money in a _____ market.
a) mango b) cotton c) strawberry d) wooden
 4. Jason fulfils his 'American Dream' by purchasing _____, by withdrawing thousand dollars from his business.
a) an office b) a telephone c) a car d) dress-code
 5. In an angry mood against Quentin Compson II, Jason declares 'Once a ————— always a —————'.
a) girl, girl b) loser, loser c) criminal, criminal d) bitch, bitch
- b)** Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
1. Who is 'the gem' of Caroline's eyes in *The Sound and the Fury*!
 2. What is special about the 6th April in the novel?
 3. How did the third scene of the novel differ from the earlier two?
 4. What is wrong with Jason as a businessman?
 5. Who is the sole guardian of Miss Quentin?
 6. Who offers a bank job to Jason?
 7. How does Jason's loss of Caddy differ from the loss of his two brothers?
 8. State why Jason is different than his brothers.
 9. What type of character is Jason Compson?
 10. For which reason, Jason gives bad treatment to his niece?

1.11 Subject Matter - IV, April, Eighth, 1928

April 8th, 1928 was Easter Sunday. This last part of the novel is the only part narrated in first person. It is different because it offers a more sympathetic aspect of characters than the earlier parts. Dilsey appears as the central and the only proud figure in the novel. She is the powerful woman of the black family of servants. Dilsey is strongly focused here than anywhere else in the novel. She is a loving woman who treats Benjy and others with love and respect. Different than the declining Compsons, she draws a great deal of strength from her faith and comes out as a proud figure amidst the dying Compson family. She had her strong Christian beliefs. She likes to visit the church and listen to sermons. She is the one who introduces a different aspect of Benjy, his innocence, and also attempts sincerely to bring Benjy to salvation.

Dilsey is always surrounded by Compsons. This humble servant is always at service of every member of the Compson family. The kitchen is her province. She fetches wood, lit a fire, cook food, makes hot water for Mrs. Compson, frequently goes upstairs to attend her, makes biscuits for the family, and is obedient to the 'machine-like' shouts of Mrs. Compson. She is very attentive towards her grandson Luster too. Luster is the final attendant of Benjy. She is careful enough to pay attention to Luster whether he feeds Benjy, dress him or drive Benjy off. She has been serving Compsons for generations and remained loyal all the time. More important is that she is the long-standing witness of the fall of the Compsons, the loss of their status and position as a southern aristocrat. She is the one who has strongly shouldered the maternal responsibilities given up by Mrs. Compson. Though presented as a servant, her role imprints significance as she psychologically maintains Mrs. Compson, emotionally understands Benjy, shows maternal instincts towards Caddy's daughter and works as a mediator between Jason and Quentin. Her devotion and her sense of responsibility heighten her place and status from the rest of the *The Sound and the Fury* characters.

This Easter Sunday, she takes her family and Benjy to the 'coloured'¹ church. She makes a cake on his birthday occasion, his thirty-third. She spares her own money just to spare Jason's bitterness and harsh words. The difference in the character of Dilsey and Mrs. Compson is that the mother forgets the birthday of her son but the servant doesn't. She appears as the real human being throughout the story.

This Dilsey receives maltreatment and abuses in the Compson family. But she never complained. She remained loyal and cared Benjy with the help of Luster. She allows her grandson to drive Benjy in the family's decrepit horse and carriage to the graveyard but keeps an eye on him. When Luster drives the wrong way to start Benjy's hysterical sobbing Jason slaps Luster. She feels bad but her genuine attachment and loyalty towards the Compsons remains the same. Her human nature can be seen at the end of that preacher's sermon when she starts crying imagining that she is the only witness of the family destruction of Compsons.

The other half of this part of the novel discuss on the Jason - Miss. Quentin episode. The tension between the two reaches its height. It results in an inevitable loss of Jason, the concluding part of the novel. The conclusion is that Miss Quentin, after enduring many sufferings from her maternal uncle, runs away from the home. She elopes with a carnival worker. This is a big blow for Jason. It is not because of her going away but because of her taking his fortunes, the investment of his future and his savings for the rest of his life. Miss Quentin seizes a handsome amount of cash from Jason's closet. She manages to make a double benefit. She takes her own support money, which Jason had received from her mother as her maintenance amount for the last fifteen years, and she also steals his money, the money of his life's savings.

It happened like this: Jason received the news of a broken window of the house. Nobody is sure who broke the window that night. Jason finds a door shut and also finds Miss Quentin away. Suspecting something wrong, he tries to open the locked door. But to his shock and surprise, he finds it locked inside. He forcefully gets other keys from his mother. Dilsey accompanies him with an intention to not let him hurt Miss Quentin. Jason opens the door to find the room disordered like an 'assignation' house. He found the window open and Quentin disappeared. He searches out for a departure note but couldn't find any. He starts hurling things out of his closet to find the safe lock broken and all his savings gone.

The episode ends up in an interesting note where Jason calls the police to report a robbery but couldn't lodge a final complaint as he himself was involved in stealing Caddy's money for Miss. Quentin. He tries to find out Miss. Quentin on his own. He drives a long distance with his aching head and visit many places in search of Miss Quentin. The question, how he has been robbed by a girl, troubles him a lot. He gets it more to his heart that the mother (Caddy) cheated him by losing him a bank job

and her daughter (Quentin) looted him. Finally, he decides to give up the issue and keep mum.

1.12 Check Your Progress: IV

- a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.
- _____ appears as the central and the only proud figure in the novel.
a) Quentin b) Caddy c) Dilsey d) Roskus
 - Dilsey had strong Christian beliefs. She frequently visits the church and likes to listen to _____.
a) sermons b) psalms c) news-stories d) songs
 - The last attendant of Benjy is _____, the grandson of Dilsey.
a) Quentin b) Caddy c) Dilsey d) Luster
 - Miss Quentin slips from the clutches of Uncle Jason and escapes with a -
a) banker b) carnival worker c) storekeeper d) southern landlord
 - Mrs. Compson was a _____ type of person, continually worried about her health.
a) sadistic b) monolithic c) psychoanalytic d) hypochondria
- b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
- Who shows true maternal instincts towards Miss Quentin?
 - What type of treatment does Dilsey receive from the Compson family?
 - How is the last narrative different than the earlier ones?
 - Who prepares a cake on the birthday occasion of Benjy?
 - What causes the death of Mr. Compson Jason II?
 - Why Jason is unhappy with Caddy?
 - Who receives much focus in the final part of the novel?
 - What kind of personality is of Mrs. Compson?

9. What results at the end of tension between Miss Quentin and Mr Jason?
10. Why Jason couldn't lodge a complaint against his niece?

1.13 Summary:

The Sound and the Fury (1929), a novel by famous American Nobel Laureate William Faulkner, deliberates the loss of Southern Aristocratic pride after the Civil War. One can illustrate it as a story of two families: the family of Mr. and Mrs. Compson (the Whites) and the family of Dilsey-Roskus (the blacks). The members of the white family are Jason Compson III, the head of the Compson family, his wife Caroline Bascomb Compson as an incompetent mother who never paid attention to and never showed affection towards her children, the four children of Mr. and Mrs. Compson: Quentin, Jason, Candace Compson (Caddy) and Benjamin (Maury or Benjy) and the illegitimate daughter of Caddy, Quentin Compson II. The members of the black servant family are Dilsey, the black housekeeper of the Compsons, Roskus, her husband and another servant to the Compsons, Versh, T.P. and Frony, Dilsey's two sons and a daughter of Dilsey and her grandson Luster (Frony's son). The other significant characters of the novel are Uncle Maury Bascomb as Caroline's brother, Dalton Ames to whom Caddy loves and loses her virginity, Herbert Head her lawful husband, and others.

The novel falls into four distinct parts dealing four different dates: April, Seventh, 1928, June, Second, 1910, April, Sixth, 1928 and April, Eighth, 1928. The interesting thing is that the first three chapters of the novel present the memories of three significant characters (three Compson brothers) on three different days. The days are Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday (6th, 7th and 8th April 1928), treated as important days in the world of Christianity. The days are just juxtaposed, in and out, like the incidents in the novel.

The narrator of the first part is Benjamin (Benjy, [earlier Maury]), a mentally disabled protagonist of thirty-two. He presents the matter in a truly vague and confusing style. The story of this idiot signifies nothing. The second part is narrated by Quentin, the most intelligent one, but emotionally unstable sort of personality. This part is his story which shows us how he isolates himself from the loud and harsh outside world and ends his life by drowning himself, committing suicide. The third part is narrated by Jason, which, unlike the earlier sections of Benjy and Quentin, goes straightforward reflecting Jason's sole desire for material wealth. The final part

is narrated by an omniscient narrator reflecting almost all events of the story on the one hand and focusing Dilsey, the only witness of the fall of the Compson family and their southern aristocratic pride on the other.

The plot structure of *The Sound and the Fury* is unconventional. Outside it appears to be an independent story of Compson family, but inside, it is the story of three Compson brothers, Quentin, Jason and Benjamin, and their fascination towards their sister, Candace. When we read between the lines we find the chapters without. There is no systematic sort of presentation. The events are juxtaposed giving different opinions about similar incidents in different narratives. Ultimately, the novel requires much attention to read and to interpret.

The title of the novel has been derived from a famous Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*. The play is Macbeth's self-realization and his realization of the importance of time. The Macbeth soliloquy in Act V, Scene V attempts to explain life saying *life is but a walking shadow of the past*. Faulkner reinterprets this soliloquy to define that one should take hold of one's life or the life may end in an untimely suicidal death. The concluding line of the Shakespearean soliloquy '*it is a tale told by an idiot...signifying nothing*' can be rightly identified with the novel where 'the idiot' Benjamin (Benjy) begins to tell his part of the story '*signifying nothing*'.

We find different themes portrayed in this novel. Primarily it seems to be about a family but the family is a freefall family where there is an alcoholic father, a worthless uncle, a whining mother, and four curious but difficult children. Further, it is a sincere attempt dealing innocence where innocence comes in strange forms: inattentive mother, a castrated son, a suicidal son, a promiscuous daughter, a stealing niece, etc. No story is complete without a loss of innocence but in *The Sound and the Fury*, there is a repetition of this loss. The other theme is of sin, sin in the form of sex where characters are obsessed with it. Search for identity, search for home, the theme of guilt and blame, theme of race and sexual identity are also important in this novel. The theme of sexual identity remains at the centre of the novel as Caddy throws all social barriers for her pleasures and followed by her daughter in a similar fashion. Caddy's brothers find impossible to discover their sexual identity outside their relationship with their sister.

The story is without any chronological order and requires intense concentration and thorough patience to interpret and to understand. There are different voices

representing nostalgic memories, majority of them are Compsons: Benjy, a severely retarded middle-aged man speaking in April, 1928; Quentin, a young Harvard student speaking in June, 1910; and Jason, a villainous, bitter fellow working as a farm supply store worker, speaking again in April, 1928. The first three chapters are subjective whereas the fourth one focuses on Dilsey, caretaker of the Compson family, a devoted Negro cook, who spared her life in raising the Compson children. First three chapters connect the memories of three brothers of their sister from their own perspective on the one hand and the fall of the once prominent Compson family on the other. It is also an attempt to examine the deterioration of the Southern aristocratic life since the Civil War.

The novel is set in the town of Jefferson, Mississippi where the Compsons are one of several prominent names. Their ancestors came here, settled here and enjoyed a superior position. But things never remain the same all the time. There were attempts to defend their status during the Civil War. However, as ill luck would have it, they witnessed the loss of their wealth, land, and status. There are many other reasons for their loss too. Mr. Compson was an alcoholic fellow engrossed in his frequent drinking bouts, his wife, Mrs. Compson, always concerned about self. She was a hypochondriac, continually worried about her health, although there is really nothing wrong with her. In result, she turns a dependent lady. She always need Dilsey. Actually, it was Dilsey who raised the four Compson children. She, along with Caddy, discharged the mother's role in absence of hypochondriac Mrs. Compson. Caddy also comes up as a mother figure and symbol of affection for Benjy and Quentin. It was difficult for both, Dilsey and Caddy, to maintain three Compson brothers as Quentin was the sensitive bundle of neuroses, Jason self-centered and mean-spirited, and Benjy, a mentally disabled idiot without any sense of time or morality.

We observe many things going adverse against Compsons. Caddy begins to live a promiscuous life, loses her virginity and becomes pregnant from an unknown lover. She gets married but her husband, Herbert, divorces her knowing his wife pregnant from some other man. This Caddy business shatters the very foundation of Compsons. Her pregnancy leaves Quentin emotionally shattered. He attempts to claim the false responsibility of her pregnancy telling his father of having incest. Mr. Compson dismisses Quentin's story and force his son to leave for Harvard. However, in his over-involvement and despair, he commits suicide by drowning himself in the

Charles River just before the end of his first year at Harvard. Benjy starts observing fits of moaning and crying. Mr. Compson sells a large portion of the family land. Jason Compson turns furious over Caddy whose unsuccessful marriage attempt could not help him getting a bank job. Ultimately, the Compsons disown Caddy but decide to shoulder the responsibility of her newborn daughter, Miss Quentin. There is no doubt that the responsibility is to be shouldered by Dilsey. The tragedy turns more severe after the death of Mr. Compson Senior. He dies of alcoholism about a year after Quentin's suicide. Jason, then, becomes the head of the family who steals Caddy's money sent for Quentin's upbringing.

The final part, the Jason and Miss. Quentin episode, brings in the climax. The tension between these two gives us an interesting story to finish. Miss Quentin, after enduring many sufferings from her maternal uncle, runs away on that particular Easter Sunday. She manages to escape in the night by taking her uncle's money, the several thousand dollars, and his savings for the rest of his life. She manages to grab a handsome amount from Jason's closet. In fact, she receives a double benefit. She takes her own money received from her mother (since last fifteen years) for her maintenance and also manage to grab her uncle's money, his fortune. Jason, in the fit of anger, calls the police but couldn't lodge a complaint. He tries to find Miss. Quentin on his own, drives a long distance, search many places, but everything turns in vain. His robbing by a young girl troubles him but more troublesome was the thought that his sister cheated him by losing him a bank job and her daughter looted his life's pleasure.

1.14 Terms to Remember:

<i>curling</i>	: form or cause to form into a curved or spiral shape
<i>caddie</i>	: a person who carries a golfer's clubs and provides other assistance during a match
<i>pasture</i>	: land covered with grass and other low plants suitable for grazing animals, especially cattle or sheep
<i>niggers</i>	: a contemptuous term for a black or dark-skinned person
<i>grunting</i>	: (of a person) make a low inarticulate sound, typically to express effort or indicate assent
<i>moaning</i>	: make a long, low sound expressing physical or mental suffering

<i>slobbering</i>	: the condition of having saliva dripping from the mouth.
<i>rheumatism</i>	: any disease marked by inflammation and pain in the joints, muscles, or fibrous tissue, especially rheumatoid arthritis
<i>stomping</i>	: (of popular music) having a fast tempo and a heavy beat
<i>jimson weed</i>	: a strong-smelling poisonous datura with large, trumpet-shaped white flowers and toothed leaves, which has become a weed of waste ground in many countries
<i>squatted</i>	: crouch or sit with one's knees bent and one's heels close to or touching one's buttocks or the back of one's thighs
<i>hollered</i>	: give a loud shout or cry
<i>looney</i>	: crazy; deranged, to act in a foolish or desultory way
<i>thumped</i>	: hit or strike heavily, especially with the fist or a blunt implement
<i>tumbling down</i>	: fall down suddenly, clumsily, or headlong
<i>barn</i>	: a large farm building used for storing grain, hay, or straw or for housing livestock
<i>squinch</i>	: crouch down in order to make oneself seem smaller or to occupy less space
<i>buzzards</i>	: a large hawk-like bird of prey with broad wings and a rounded tail, often seen soaring in wide circles
<i>ditch</i>	: a narrow channel dug at the side of a road or field, to hold or carry away water.
<i>lattice</i>	: a structure consisting of strips of wood or metal crossed and fastened together with square or diamond-shaped spaces left
<i>glinted</i>	: give out or reflect small flashes of light
<i>scoundrel</i>	: a dishonest or unscrupulous person; a rogue
<i>begrudge</i>	: envy (someone) the possession or enjoyment of (something)
<i>sash</i>	: a long strip or loop of cloth worn over one shoulder or round the waist
<i>scuttering</i>	: (especially of a small animal) move hurriedly with short steps
<i>unwinking minds</i>	: steady; unwavering

<i>schooner</i>	: a sailing ship with two or more masts, typically with the foremast smaller than the mainmast
<i>benignant</i>	: kindly and benevolent
<i>pompous</i>	: affectedly grand, solemn, or self-important
<i>straddle</i>	: sit or stand with one leg on either side of
<i>miners</i>	: a person who works in a mine
<i>frazzle out</i>	: completely exhausted
<i>acrimony</i>	: bitterness or ill feeling
<i>vortex</i>	: a whirling mass of fluid or air, especially a whirlpool or whirlwind
<i>contemplative</i>	: expressing or involving prolonged thought
<i>imperious</i>	: arrogant and domineering
<i>heterogeneous</i>	: diverse in character or content
<i>defunctive</i>	: no longer existing or functioning
<i>honeysuckle</i>	: a widely distributed climbing shrub with tubular flowers that are typically fragrant and of two colours or shades
<i>crimson</i>	: of a rich deep red colour inclining to purple
<i>inflection</i>	: a change in the form of a word (typically the ending) to express a grammatical function or attribute such as tense, mood, etc.
<i>reckon</i>	: establish by calculation
<i>excruciating</i>	: intensely painful
<i>quizzical</i>	: (of a person's expression or behaviour) indicating mild or amused puzzlement
<i>innuendo</i>	: an allusive or oblique remark or hint, typically a suggestive or disparaging one
<i>whimpering</i>	- making a series of low, feeble sounds expressive of fear, pain, or unhappiness
<i>wooden</i>	: a large tent used for social or commercial functions, a canopy
<i>marquee</i>	projecting over the entrance

<i>twilight</i>	: the soft glowing light from the sky when the sun is below the horizon, caused by the reflection of the sun's rays from the atmosphere
<i>brothel</i>	: a house where men visit prostitutes
<i>gasoline</i>	: refined petroleum used as fuel for internal combustion engines;
<i>contemplation</i>	: the action of looking thoughtfully at something for a long time

1.15 Answers to check your Progress: Part I

a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.

1. The Southern Renaissance Movement in American literature remained dominant in the period of **1920s and 1930s**.
2. The *Southern Renaissance* was more than a mere **historical** account.
3. *The Mind of the South* by **W. J. Cash** was the prime and insightful reference for the movement.
4. the Southern Renaissance was a movement related to the **southern region**.
5. **The African-American** writers of the region were deprived of mentioning themselves as Southern writers.

b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase/one sentence.

1. What caused the origin of the Southern Movement? The Southern Renaissance was regional movement. It attempted imparting energy and strength to the American Southern literature of the 1920s and 1930s and was a kind of literary movement, the first of its kind.
2. Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* proved influential for this movement.
3. Being related to the Southern region and southern conscience, this movement was called as the Southern Movement.
4. The burden of history, conservative culture, racism and slavery and opposition to industrialization was the main focus of the movement.
5. 'The Fugitives' was a uniform group of poets and critics from Vanderbilt University claimed to dislocate themselves from the rudimentary culture of the South.

6. The literature before renaissance used to focus on southern idyllic culture, the historical romance and themes related to the American army, and the Civil War.

Part-I

- a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.
 1. The title, The Sound and the Fury has been adopted from Shakespeare's masterpiece **Macbeth**.
 2. The youngest of the Jason-Caroline family is **Benjy**.
 3. **Maury Bascomb** is Caroline's brother and the only maternal uncle of Quentin, Jason, Benjy and Caddy.
 4. Dilsey, the coloured caretaker of the Compson family, had **three** children.
 5. Caddy loved **Daltn**, but married **Herbert Head**.
- b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
 1. Benjy is the narrator of the first part of the novel.
 2. Benjamin Compson is an idiot sort of character.
 3. The relationship between Benjy and Caddy is that of a brother and a sister.
 4. The play of golf fascinates Benjamin.
 5. Quentin went to Harvard for his further education.
 6. Luster is the youngest and the last Caretaker of Benjy.
 7. Maury was Benjamin's baptized name.
 8. Caddy got divorced by her husband in 1910.
 9. Benjy underwent castration after his sexual attack on a girl.
 10. Benjy associate his sister Caddy with the smell of trees.

Part II

- b) Say whether the following sentences are **TRUE** or **FALSE**:

1. Quentin, the oldest son, is a happy go lucky type of character. **FALSE**
 2. Mrs. Compson had four children and Dilsey had three. **TRUE**
 3. Maury Bascomb is the son of Caroline Bascomb Compson. **FALSE**
 4. Quentin Compson II is the only legitimate issue of Candace. **FALSE**
 5. Caddy had her first promiscuous affair in the summer of 1909. **TRUE**
 6. Quentin is the most intelligent of all Compson children. **TRUE**
 7. Part II of the novel describes the details of 2nd June 1928. **FALSE**
 8. The narrator of Part II intends to declare incest with Caddy. **TRUE**
 9. Quentin is arguably more unreliable narrator than Benjy. **TRUE**
 10. Quentin commits suicide by drowning himself. **TRUE**
- b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
1. Quentin is the oldest son of Mr. Jason Compson III, brilliant one.
 2. The title of this Part, Part II is June, Second, 1910.
 3. Quentin Compson claims to have incest with Caddy.
 4. The name of Gerald's mother is Mrs. Bland, a Southerner from Kentucky.
 5. Before suicide, Quentin leaves a couple of his outfits to a Negro boy named Deacon.
 6. Quentin throws a coin towards a Negro as a matter of traditional Southern game played at Christmas.
 7. Caddy is important because she provided safeguard and comfort to Quentin.
 8. Caddy finds Quentin sexually engaged with Natalie, her childhood friend.
 9. When Quentin finds Caddy kissing a boy he literally slaps her.
 10. Quentin ends his life by drowning himself into Charles River.

Part III

- a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.

1. Jason had been receiving **two hundred** dollars per month from Caddy as a maintenance amount.
 2. Caddy supports her brother for **fifteen** long years only because of her daughter.
 3. Jason, dreaming to be a businessman, invests his money in a **cotton** market.
 4. Jason fulfils his 'American Dream' by purchasing a car **by** withdrawing thousand dollars from his business.
 5. In an angry mood against his Quentin Compson II, Jason declares 'once a **bitch**, always a **bitch**.'
- b)** Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
1. Jason, her son is 'the gem' of Caroline's eyes in *The Sound and the Fury*.
 2. 6th April is the 'Good Friday'.
 3. The third scene is narrated in a linear fashion, unlike the juxtaposition of non-chronicle events in the first two.
 4. As a businessman, Jason proved failure and experienced loss.
 5. Uncle Jason is the sole guardian of Miss Quentin.
 6. Caddy's husband, Herbert Head, offers a bank job to Jason
 7. In losing Caddy, Benjy lost love and security, Quentin had an emotional loss, however, Jason lost his bank job, a blow to his future plans.
 8. Jason is different than his brothers because he is the only complete man in the Compson family.
 9. Jason Compson is a reckless and ruthless kind of character.
 10. He was of the opinion that Quentin's mother was responsible for his career failure.

Part IV

- a) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.
1. **Dilsey** appears as the central and the only proud figure in the novel.

2. Dilsey had strong Christian beliefs; visits church and like to listen to **sermons**.
 3. The last attendant of Benjy is **Luster**, the grandson of Dilsey.
 4. Miss Quentin slips from the catches of Uncle Jason and escapes with a **carnival worker**.
 5. Mrs. Compson was a **hypochondriac** type of person, continually worried about her health. _____.
- b) Write answers of the following questions in one word / one phrase / one sentence.
1. Dilsey shows true maternal instincts towards Miss Quentin.
 2. Dilsey was maltreated and abused in the Compson family.
 3. The last narrative goes straightforward, without any complications.
 4. Dilsey prepares cake on the thirty third birthday occasion of Benjy.
 5. Alcoholisms cause the death of Mr. Compson Jason II.
 6. Jason is not happy with Caddy because her divorce made him lose his bank job.
 7. Of course, Dilsey receives much focus in the final part of the novel.
 8. Mrs. Compson is a hypochondriac personality, continually worried about her health.
 9. The end result of tension between Miss Quentin and Mr Jason is the elopement of Miss Quentin taking Jason's money.
 10. Jason decides to not to lodge a complaint against his niece as he himself was involved in stealing her money.

1.20 Exercise:

A) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternative.

1. The real name of Benjamin was_____, which was changed in the course of time.
2. Caddy began to use perfume at the age of_____.

3. Mr. Compson sold his pasture for _____.
4. Benjy's loss of Caddy is actually his loss of Caddy's _____.
5. Part II of the novel is narrated by Quentin and describes activities of a particular day, that is _____.
6. Caddy likes and falls in love with _____ but finally marries _____.
7. The special thing about April, Sixth 1928 is that the day is a _____.
8. The final chapter of the novel focuses on a character named _____.
9. The last caretaker of Benjy is _____.
10. In the final scene, _____ escapes taking hidden cash from Jason's closet.

B) Match the Column 'A' with the Column 'B':

Column 'A'	Column 'B'
1. Nobel to William Faulkner	1910
2. <i>The Sound and the Fury</i>	1895
3. Death of William Faulkner	1928
4. Birth of Maury (Benjamin)	1929
5. Candace (Caddy) Marriage	1910
6. Benjamin's 33 rd Birthday	1962
7. The Suicide of Quentin	1892
8. Birth of Miss Quentin	1949
9. Death of Mr. Jason Compson III	1910
10. Birth of Candace (Caddy)	1912

C) Write **Short Notes on:**

1. The plot and structure of *The Sound and the Fury*
2. The Tragedy of Caddy's life
3. Jason's treatment of insanity towards his family

4. The narrative style used in *The Sound and the Fury*
5. The tragic end of Quentin Compson
6. Significance of the title *The Sound and the Fury*
7. The italicized passages in the novel
8. Compare the significance of Part IV to its earlier parts
9. Service of Dilsey and her family to the family of Compson
10. Major characters in *The Sound and the Fury*

D) Answer the following questions in twelve to fifteen sentences each:

1. 'Quentin is either a victim of his circumstances or a weak and pathetic character' - Discuss.
2. Write a note on the tragic fall of the Compson family.
3. Describe the brother-sister relationship in *The Sound and the Fury*.
4. How did the three Compson brothers differ from each other?
5. Who were the caretakers of Benjamin? Explain their significance.
6. What are the major themes of *The Sound and the Fury*¹?
7. Macbeth's soliloquy '*it is a tale told by an idiot...signifying nothing*' fits Benjy's story as '*an idiot signifying nothing*' - Discuss.
8. Describe the loose life of Caddy.
9. Do you think Benjy was too obsessed with Caddy? Why?
10. '*The Sound and the Fury* represents the decline of Southern Aristocracy'. Do you agree? Explain.

E) Answer the following questions in detail:

1. Do you think that William Faulkner has made use of modernism in his *The Sound and the Fury*? Explain.
2. Illustrate the significant shifts used through the first-person narrator Benjy.
3. Comment on the importance of Caddy in the life of three Compson brothers and her exclusion as a central figure in any part of the novel.

4. Do you find any sort of colour conflict in the novel? Discuss.
5. 'The decline of the Compson family reflects the decline of the Southern Aristocracy' - Discuss.

1.21 Reference for Further Study:

1. Try to read the following works by William Faulkner:
 - Collection of Short Stories: *These 13* (1930), *Knight's Gambit* (1949)
 - Collection of Poems: *The Marble Faun* (1924), *A Green Bough* (1933)
 - Novels: *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932)
2. Watch adaptation of *The Sound and the Fury* by visiting the website: <https://www.youtube.com/iljkPiY2Bro>

3. Select Bibliography:

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Unit-2

Eugene O'Neill - *The Iceman Cometh*

William Faulkner

Contents

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- 2.7 Exercises
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2.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- know about the life and works of Eugene O'Neill
- know about the plot summary of the *The Iceman Cometh*
- learn the major and minor characters in *The Iceman Cometh*
- learn the themes and other aspects in *The Iceman Cometh*
- be able to answer the questions on the play *The Iceman Cometh*.

2.1 Introduction

Written in 1939, Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* was not produced until seven years later, largely because O'Neill was concerned that America was not ready for the play's dark vision. When it was staged in 1946, the play received mixed reviews. By that time, O'Neill was already an internationally-known playwright. In addition, the 1946 production marked the end, for O'Neill, of a twelve year absence from Broadway. Critics praised the play's passion, suspense, and well-drawn characters but complained about its prosaic language, redundancy, and excessive length – the play runs for almost four hours. In 1956, *The Iceman Cometh* was revived and this time, widely acclaimed as a masterpiece that would ensure for O'Neill a place among the greatest of modern dramatists.

The Iceman Cometh is noted for its dark comedy and realism; its setting and characters closely resemble real life. The world of the play is a cruel place. Despair is a constant presence, love only an illusion, and death something to which one looks forward. Relief comes in alcohol and pipe dreams – groundless hopes for a future that will never arrive. Some critics find hope in the characters' camaraderie and endurance. Others consider such a reading too optimistic, believing O'Neill's vision to be unrelentingly dark.

In spite of critical disagreement, however, the importance of *The Iceman Cometh* to twentieth-century theatre is undisputed. It is truly a modern classic, considered by many to be the greatest play by one of America's greatest playwrights.

2.2 Eugene O'Neill: Life and Works

On October 16, 1888, Eugene O'Neill was born in a hotel on Broadway in New York City. His father was a professional actor, and O'Neill lived on the road with his parents until he began attending boarding school at the age of eight. O'Neill's mother, born into an affluent family, was unhappy with the nomadic theatre life, which she considered less than respectable. In part because of O'Neill's difficult birth, she became addicted to drugs. In 1903, she attempted suicide, and O'Neill, at the age of fifteen, learned for the first time of her addiction. That same year, he himself began drinking heavily in a pattern that would persist for most of his life.

O'Neill attended Princeton University, but a drunken prank resulted in his expulsion in 1907 after only nine months of study. Two years later, O'Neill married

Kathleen Jenkins. They had one child, a son, Eugene, Jr. O'Neill and Jenkins did not officially divorce until 1912, but within days of the marriage, O'Neill went to sea, traveling to Honduras and Buenos Aires, where he experienced first-hand the life of a penniless drifter. In 1911, O'Neill returned to New York, where he lived at Jimmy the Priest's, a saloon populated by drunkards, has-beens, and outcasts. Later in his life, O'Neill called Jimmy the Priest's "a hell hole" and said of the establishment, "One couldn't go any lower." It was Jimmy the Priest's, with its atmosphere of failure, hopelessness, dashed dreams, and despair that, together with its miserable clientele, eventually became the model for Harry Hope's saloon in O'Neill's 1946 play, *The Iceman Cometh*.

In 1912, O'Neill developed tuberculosis, an event that became a turning point in his life. During the five months he spent in a sanatorium, he decided to become a playwright. He began reading modern dramatists and was particularly affected by the dark work of August Strindberg (*Miss Julie*), whom he later cited as one of his greatest influences. O'Neill studied play writing at Harvard for one year. He then moved to Greenwich Village, New York, where he became involved with an avant-garde group of artists and radicals. A number of these people later formed the Provincetown Players, the first group to produce a play of O'Neill's, *Bound East for Cardiff*, in 1916.

In 1918, O'Neill married Agnes Boulton, with whom he had two children, Shane, in 1919, and Oona, in 1925; the marriage ended in divorce in 1929. In 1920, O'Neill's first full commercial success, *Beyond the Horizon*, was produced, resulting in the first of four Pulitzer Prizes for its author. That year also saw the production of *The Emperor Jones*, which focuses on the violence in human nature. In 1924, *Desire under the Elms*, which reflected O'Neill's interest in Freudian psychology, was produced. Other important plays in the O'Neill canon include the trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), modeled on the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus's *Oresteia*; the autobiographical *Long Day's Journey into Night*, probably written around 1939 but produced and published after O'Neill's death (per his decree, given the intensely personal nature of the play); and *The Iceman Cometh*, written in 1939, produced in 1946, and considered by many to be O'Neill's greatest work. In 1936, O'Neill won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

During the last ten years of his life, O'Neill was in ill health, suffering from tremors in his hands, which eventually rendered him unable to write. He died of

pneumonia November 27, 1953. He is considered by many to be America's greatest playwright.

2.3 Plot Summary of the play *The Iceman Cometh*

Act I

The first act of *The Iceman Cometh* opens in Harry Hope's saloon in the early morning of the day before Hope's annual birthday party. The room is occupied by a group of (an assortment of) "disheveled ne'er-do-wells" – most in their fifties and sixties. Also present are Rocky, the night bartender, and Harry Hope himself. All of the men sleep except for Larry Slade, a former anarchist. As the curtain opens, Rocky sneaks Larry a free drink. Larry says "he'll pay tomorrow," then remarks that all of the men have great plans for a tomorrow that will never come, that all are given hope only by "the lie of the pipe dream." Larry claims to be the exception; he believes he has no pipe dream. He only waits for death.

Rocky and Larry then speak of Hickey, who comes in every year for Hope's birthday on one of his two annual drinking binges. He's known for buying everyone drinks but also for the joking and laughter he brings to Hope's saloon, particularly his running joke or gag about finding his wife, Evelyn, in bed with the iceman. As Larry and Rocky talk, the others awaken from their drunken slumber. All lead existences built on drunkenness, poverty, and despair, but they also speak continually of their grand pasts and their ambitions for tomorrow.

Parritt, a young man who claims to be a friend of Larry's, enters. Larry continually stresses that Parritt means nothing to him. He was only a friend of the boy's mother when he was still a committed anarchist, dedicated to what he and Parritt now call "the Movement." Now Parritt's mother has been arrested in the wake of a political bombing. Parritt escaped arrest, and as the young man talks, indications that he betrayed his mother to the police become evident.

One by one, the men in the bar talk about their plans for the future, but all are equally obsessed with getting their next drink. The prostitutes Margie and Pearl enter followed by Cora, another prostitute, and Chuck, the day bartender. These characters reveal their own pipe dreams of respectability. The much-anticipated Hickey arrives, jovial and generous to everyone. He soon reveals, however, that he has stopped drinking. As he explains, he no longer needs alcohol because he has given up his

pipe dream and found peace. He wants Hope's roomers to do the same, including Larry, who is offended by Hickey's suggestion that the ex-anarchist has a pipe dream. Hickey falls asleep, and the roomers express their disappointment at the change in his personality.

Act II

The saloon is now decorated for Hope's birthday festivities. The time is around midnight of the same day. Chuck, Rocky, and the three prostitutes are making further preparations for the party, while complaining about Hickey trying to control not only the party but also the roomers' lives, insisting that each give up his or her pipe dream. Hickey enters and renews his attempts to bring the others the peace he's found. Hickey tells Larry that once he gives up his view of himself as a man who merely observes life, waiting for death, he'll also find peace. The others enter, all determined to prove to Hickey that their plans for the future are not pipe dreams. Parritt enters and tries to speak to Larry about his mother, but Larry does not want to listen, even when Parritt admits that he betrayed his mother to the police for a reward.

As the roomers speak among themselves, it becomes clear that the camaraderie that once existed is unraveling. Where they had once supported each other's pipe dreams, fights now break out as they see each other through Hickey's eyes. The party begins, but the celebration is dampened by Hickey's continual appraisals regarding the dark truth of each person's situation. As anger at Hickey grows, Larry asks Hickey if this time he really did find his wife in bed with the iceman. Hickey tells them Evelyn is dead. All are immediately sorry for their anger, but Hickey says he is not sad. His wife is finally rid of him, and she is at peace.

Act III

Hope's saloon, the next morning. Larry, Rocky, Parritt, and a number of the roomers are present. Rocky and Larry discuss the previous night's party, which broke up early because of Hickey's constant badgering. Parritt persists in his attempt to forge a relationship with Larry. While he had previously told Larry that he ratted his mother out for ideological reasons, he now admits that he did it so he could use the reward money on a prostitute. Larry hints that if Parritt has any sense of honor he should end his life. As some of the regulars arrive, it becomes clear that Hickey has turned former friends against each other. Each, while still hanging onto the promise

of his own pipe dream, now accuses the others of fooling themselves. Some of the regulars come in with clean clothes, ready to go out into the world, proving to Hickey that their dreams can come true. Most turn in the keys to their rooms, proclaiming that they will never return to Hope's saloon.

Hickey enters and says that all will return when they realize that nothing will ever come of their pipe dreams. And Hickey says that Larry will finally face the fact that he is also kidding himself. Hickey characterizes Larry as an old man afraid to die. Hope, who has not left the saloon since the death of his wife twenty years earlier, now walks outside to prove that he can go out into the world again, but he soon returns, depressed and miserable, just as Hickey claims that Hope can now be at peace. Larry tells Hickey that all that he's brought Hope is the peace of death, then confronts Hickey with his own belief that Hickey drove his wife to suicide. Hickey tells Larry that his wife was murdered, that the police do not know who did it but that they soon will. Parritt, meanwhile, becomes agitated at the talk of murder and proclaims that he did not kill his mother. The act ends with Hickey expressing concern that the death of Hope's pipe dream has not made him happy.

Act IV

Hope's saloon at 1:30 a.m. All of the roomers are sitting at tables, drinking. They have returned from their failed attempts to realize their pipe dreams. Parritt claims that while Larry now realizes that he does not have the courage to die, Larry believes that Parritt should kill himself. Hickey has left to make a phone call but returns and hears Larry contending that Hickey now realizes that the peace he proclaims is false. Hickey denies this but then says he does not understand why the roomers, now that their dreams are dashed, have not found contentment. Larry accuses Hickey of killing his wife because he found her in bed with the iceman. Hickey admits that he killed his wife, that he had to because he loved her. If he had killed himself, it would have broken her heart; she would have believed she was to blame. Larry tells Hickey to be quiet, that he does not want to know; he does not want to be responsible for Hickey going to the electric chair.

Two policeman, Moran and Lieb, enter, asking for Hickey; they received a call that Evelyn's murderer could be found in Hope's saloon. Hickey then tells the others why he killed Evelyn. As a young man, he was considered wild, reviled by his hometown. Only Evelyn believed in him and loved her, and she was the only person

he loved. During their marriage, he drank and went to prostitutes, but Evelyn continued to believe his pipe dream – that he would someday straighten up and become a good husband to her. Because of her continuing belief in him, he felt intensely guilty. One night while she was asleep, he concluded that the only way to bring her peace was to keep her from ever waking up, and so he shot her. Hickey's confession brings Parritt to admit that he turned his mother in because he hated her.

Remembering his last words to Evelyn, "Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, you damned bitch," Hickey denies that he could ever have hated Evelyn and concludes that he must have been insane to kill her and call her a bitch. The roomers seize on that statement, claiming that they knew Hickey must have been crazy but acted otherwise to humor him. The police take Hickey away.

Parritt sees his situation as a parallel to Hickey's, except that he cannot claim his mother is at peace; for someone who loves freedom as she does, prison is worse than death. Larry finally tells Parritt that the only thing he can do is to kill himself. Parritt leaves as the roomers continue to claim prior knowledge of Hickey's insanity. As they gradually resume their good-natured banter, Larry becomes more and more disturbed. He finally hears Parritt jump off of the fire escape and is horrified. He realizes that Hickey converted him. He is no longer just an observer; by telling Parritt to kill himself, Larry has become an active participant in life. As the others, who do not know of Parritt's death, begin to sing, celebrating Hope's birthday in earnest, Larry stares out of the window, oblivious to the noise.

2.3.1 Check Your Progress

- i) What are names of the three prostitutes in *The Iceman Cometh*?
- ii) What is the pipe-dream of Ed Mosher?
- iii) What is the name of Hickey's wife?
- iv) Who has killed Hickey's wife?
- v) What is the pipe-dream of Pat McGloin?

2.4 Major and Minor Characters:

Cora

Cora is a prostitute. Chuck Morello is her pimp, but the two of them fantasize about someday getting married and moving to the country. After Hickey's arrival,

she and Chuck leave to get married but are ultimately unable to do so. She believes that Chuck will hold her past against her, and he wonders why he should marry her when he can get her money anyway. At the end of the play, she and Chuck return to their pipe dream of a future marriage.

Hickey/ Theodore Hickman

Hickey is a hardware salesman who comes to Harry's Hope's saloon twice a year for a drinking binge. The roomers look forward to his arrival. He buys them drinks, tells them jokes, and allows them to forget the bleakness of their lives. They especially like the running gag in which he says he has left his wife, Evelyn, in bed with the iceman. When Hickey arrives this time, however, he has changed. He claims to have finally found peace, having let go of his pipe dream. He wants the roomers to find peace the same way. To that end, he harasses the roomers, endlessly nagging them, eventually persuading them to realize their pipe dreams. His belief is that they will recognize that they can never achieve these dreams, give them up, and be happier.

The roomers do as Hickey advises, but to his surprise, they become even more miserable. After prodding from Larry to reveal the reason for his change, Hickey first says only that his wife has died. Finally, however, he admits that he has killed his wife, whom he describes as the perfect loving and forgiving woman. She believed that he would one day be a good and faithful husband to her. He initially claims he killed her to end her pipe dream and bring her peace. While describing the murder, however, Hickey calls her a bitch and is horrified at his words. His real pipe dream, unbeknownst to him, is that he truly loved his wife. Rather than face his hatred of Evelyn, however, Hickey says that he must have been insane to call her a bitch and that everything he has said to the roomers since he arrived was the result of his insanity. Thus Hickey, who tried so hard to force the roomers to face their illusions, cannot face his own. Like the others, he returns to the safety of his pipe dream.

Harry Hope

Harry Hope is the proprietor of Harry Hope's Saloon, the setting for *The Iceman Cometh*. Although he has a gruff manner and tries to act tough, he is a softhearted sort, and the roomers depend on his kindness when they cannot pay their bills or afford another drink. He has not left the bar since the death of his wife, Bessie, whom he idealizes as the perfect wife. The truth is that she was a terrible nag. Hope's pipe

dream is that he will one day leave the safety of the bar and go out into the world again, but his effort to do so ends in failure.

Hugo Kalmar

Kalmar was once the editor of anarchist periodicals. He knew Parritt's mother and recognizes Parritt when he sees him. Kalmar spent ten years in prison for the Movement, but he is now lost in an alcoholic haze.

Cecil Lewis/ The Captain

Lewis was once a Captain in the British Army. He fought in the Boer War, in which the Boers, South Africans of Dutch ancestry, fought for an end to British occupation.

Lieb

Lieb is one of the two policemen who come for Hickey at the end of the play.

Margie

Margie is a prostitute, with Rocky as her pimp, but she calls herself a "tart," not a whore, before Hickey's arrival. Hickey initially convinces her that she is indeed a whore, but at the end of the play, she returns to her pipe dream.

Pat McGloin

McGloin is a former Police Lieutenant who was thrown off the force for corruption. His pipe dream is to return to his old position with the force, but his efforts to be reinstated are met with rejection.

Moran

Moran is one of the two policemen who come for Hickey at the end of the play.

Chuck Morello

Morello is the day bartender at Harry Hope's. He is actually Cora's pimp, but the two of them dream of someday marrying and moving to the country. After Hickey's arrival, the two leave to get married, though they soon realize that their plans to marry are a pipe dream. When Hickey leaves, the two return to their whimsical wedding plans.

Ed Mosher

Mosher is the brother of Harry Hope's deceased wife, Bessie. He is a former circus man and petty swindler. His pipe dream is that he will someday return to his position with the circus, but his attempt to return to that occupation fails.

Joe Mott

Mott, the only Black character in the play, was once the proprietor of a Negro gambling house. Before Hickey's appearance, he continually refers to himself as someone who is "white," meaning he has risen above the other members of his race. After Hickey comes, he justly accuses the white roomers of looking down on him because of his color. He no longer believes he can be one of them.

Willie Oban

Born to a wealthy but corrupt businessman, Oban graduated from Harvard Law School but is now a hopeless alcoholic whose family has rejected him. Oban's pipe dream is that he will some day quit drinking and practice law, but he will never be able to do either.

Don Parritt

A stranger at Harry Hope's saloon, Parritt arrives looking for Larry Slade, whom he remembers as his mother's friend – the only one of her friends that ever paid attention to him. Although he initially claims that he is running from the law following his anarchist mother's arrest – and his own involvement with radical politics – it soon becomes clear that Parritt is hiding something. Eventually he reveals that he betrayed his mother and her friends to the police, though he initially claims to have done so because of his own ideological beliefs. He then claims that he betrayed her for money, which he wanted to spend on a prostitute. Finally, however, Parritt admits that he betrayed his mother simply because he hated her. Throughout the play, Parritt attempts to convince Larry to help him, but Larry rejects his entreaties. After Parritt admits the true reason for his betrayal, however, Larry tells him what he wants to hear – that suicide is the only solution for him. Parritt jumps from the fire escape as the roomers, having returned to their pipe dreams, celebrate Harry Hope's birthday.

Pearl

Pearl is one of the three prostitutes in the play. Rocky is her pimp, but she says he is not, and, like Margie, she is careful to refer to herself as a “tart,” not a “whore.” After Hickey arrives, she finally sees herself as a whore, but returns to her pipe dream by the end of the play.

Rocky Pioggi

Rocky is the good-natured night bartender. Although he is clearly a pimp for the prostitutes Margie and Pearl, he deludes himself into thinking he is above such a lowly profession. He refers to himself instead as the women’s “manager.” He claims that a pimp would not have a job and that he takes the women’s money because they wouldn’t know what to do with it anyway. After Hickey arrives, Rocky briefly admits to being a pimp, but once Hickey is considered to be insane, Rocky returns to his pipe dream.

Larry Slade

Slade is considered by many to be the protagonist in *The Iceman Cometh*. He is a former anarchist who became disillusioned with the Movement and abandoned it after years of involvement. He sees himself as having no pipe dreams. He simply sits in the grandstand, observing life and waiting for death. Parritt and Hickey, however, prove him wrong. He was once friends with Parritt’s mother and may be the young man’s father, but when Parritt arrives, Larry insists that the troubled man means nothing to him. As Parritt exposes more and more about himself, slowly revealing that he betrayed his mother, Larry’s continued insistence in his lack of interest in Parritt seems more and more desperate, suggesting that Larry is involved in spite of himself.

Eventually it is Larry who tells Parritt that suicide is his only choice and thus becomes Parritt’s executioner. Hickey’s belief that Larry’s vision of himself as an observer, no longer involved in life, is a pipe dream is shown to be true. At the end of the play, Larry is the only one of the roomers who is truly changed by Hickey’s anti-pipe dream campaign. Larry calls himself “the only real convert to death Hickey made.” Deprived of his illusion as a mere observer, for the first time, Larry truly does wait for death.

Jimmy Tomorrow/ James Cameron

Jimmy Tomorrow is a former Boer War correspondent. He was dismissed from his position as a reporter because of his heavy drinking. He claims that he began drinking because his wife, Marjorie, was unfaithful to him. The truth is that he began drinking long before that, however, and was grateful to his wife for giving him an excuse to drink. He is called Jimmy Tomorrow because he repeatedly speaks of how he will return to the newspaper and get his job back “tomorrow.” This is his pipe dream. After he leaves the bar in his attempt to return to his job, a policeman finds him by the river. Other characters conclude that he wanted to jump in the river but didn’t have the nerve.

Piet Wetjoen/ The General

Wetjoen is the former leader of a Boer commando. The Boers, now called Afrikaners, are South Africans of Dutch ancestry. They fought against British occupation in the Boer War. Wetjoen is friends with Cecil Lewis, who fought on the British side in that war.

2.4.1 Check Your Progress

- i) What is the pipe dream of Hickey?
- ii) Why James Cameron is called as Jimmy Tomorrow?
- iii) What is the name of a night bartender?
- iv) Who is Pat McGloin?
- v) What is the name of the only negro (black) character in the play?
- vi) When did O’Neill receive the Nobel Prize?

2.5 Themes and other Aspects in *The Iceman Cometh*:

I. Themes

A. *Hope and the American Dream*

The promise of the American Dream, a goal of material prosperity and success, has long been regarded as a crucial element of American culture. For many, it is the possibility of this dream that separates America from other nations. It is the hope of the downtrodden. The faith Americans have in the dream, that, given enough

ambition and determination, absolutely anyone can “make it” is almost religious in nature.

For the inhabitants of Harry Hope’s Saloon, however, faith has led to despair; the dream has soured. O’Neill populates Hope’s with characters from diverse backgrounds. Some, such as Willie Oban, a Harvard Law School graduate, and Jimmy Tomorrow, a former war correspondent, have come close to success – though it ultimately eluded their grasp. Others, such as Joe Mott, the former proprietor of a Negro gambling house, and Ed Mosher, a former circus man, have lived on the edge of respectability. Still others, such as the prostitutes, have always lived lives of petty crime. What unites all but Larry and Parritt, however, is a need to retain their dream, for if the dream is attainable, there is no hope for them. Each sees their failure as a personal issue, not a deficiency in the system. Jimmy Tomorrow rationalizes that as long as he *believes* that he can quit drinking, get his job back, and resume his former place in society, he can live with his despair.

The former anarchists, however, represent a different perspective. For anarchists, the American Dream is a lie and good can only come when all government is eliminated. Although this too is a dream, it flies in the face of the traditional American belief of individual success within the system. In the early decades of this century, anarchy and socialism were regarded as viable alternatives to an American social system many viewed as flawed. Alternative political beliefs were seen by many as a new hope for America. But in *The Iceman Cometh*, O’Neill shows that this hope is no more attainable than the roomers’ elusive dreams. Even those who believe that the American dream is an illusion have nothing to offer in its stead.

B. *Death*

Harry Hope’s saloon, Larry notes at the beginning of the play, is “harmless as a graveyard.” In a sense, however, Hope’s saloon *is* a graveyard – “The End of the Line Cafe,” as Larry calls it. The saloon’s inhabitants cling to their pipe dreams, but their lives are essentially over. Death is the next stop. Larry claims to hope for death. He welcomes it as “a fine long sleep, and I’m damned tired, and it can’t come too soon for me.”

As long as the roomers have their pipe dreams, they believe they can hold death at bay, but Hickey’s arrival brings the reality of death. Hickey first brings a spiritual death, telling the roomers that their pipe dreams are empty. Later, Hickey brings

literal death into the world of Hope's Saloon; not only is the news of Evelyn's murder shattering, it ultimately paves the way for Parritt's death. Larry, who tells Parritt that his only solution is suicide, becomes Larry's executioner. After Parritt's death, Larry says, "By God, I'm the only real convert to death Hickey made here." No longer a mere observer, Larry's desire for death is now a reality.

Numerous critics have pointed out that the "iceman" of O'Neill's title is in fact Death, the Grim Reaper. It is Death that has come to Evelyn, sent by Hickey into the arms of the iceman at last. And it is Death that Hickey brings to Hope's saloon. However, as the play ends, the roomers are able to resume their pipe dreams, denying Death access. Even Parritt's suicide is unnoticed by all but Larry. Hickey is able to return to his own pipe dream, to deny his hatred of Evelyn as well as his responsibility for her death. He believes that he must have been insane. Only Larry realizes that Death has truly come to Hope's. For him, that has changed everything.

C. Isolation

The characters in *The Iceman Cometh* are isolated from mainstream society. This is evident from the beginning, when the curtain opens on the drunken, sleeping men alone in the literal world of their dreams. As the play progresses, the essential isolation of the characters becomes clear. Even awake, each character remains caught in his or her own dream. There is a sort of camaraderie among O'Neill's roomers, but this small sense of community is revealed as a thin veneer following Hickey's arrival; his proclamations of false dreams reveal an underlying animosity. Forced to face their hopeless realities, the roomers fight among themselves until Hickey's departure allows them to return to their pipe dreams.

Parritt arrives at Hope's bar searching for Larry, hoping to end his own isolation. He comes to the ex-anarchist because he recalls Larry being kind to him. Larry, however, rejects Parritt's appeal for friendship. He believes himself to be in the grandstand, an isolated observer rather than a participant in life, and he intends to remain, isolated, uninvolved.

Hickey also seeks an end to his isolation. In past visits, he was satisfied with his superficial friendship with the roomers. Now, however, he claims to have given up on his pipe dream and is not content with just changing his own life. In his search for relief from isolation, Hickey wants the roomers to come to his realization. His story about murdering Evelyn is an attempt to understand his pain he has felt, but the

roomers make it clear that they don't want to hear him. Only when he declares that he must have been insane, when he is willing to return to superficial relationships, is he once more accepted by the roomers.

Larry, despite his efforts, develops a brief but real connection with Parritt. That connection, however, only brings him pain. As the play closes, the roomers return to their thin sense of camaraderie, but O'Neill reveals the depth of their isolation. When the roomers begin to sing in celebration of Hope's birthday, each sings a completely different song. Larry, meanwhile, is spiritually as well as physically isolated from the group. Each of the characters ends the play alone.

II. STYLE

Setting

The Iceman Cometh is set in the summer of 1912 in Harry Hope's saloon, a seedy establishment on the downtown West Side of New York. All of the play's action takes place either in the bar or the back room of the saloon, visually affirming O'Neill's intention that the bar is a world unto itself. The condition of the bar reflects the hopeless squalor of the roomers' lives. O'Neill describes the walls and ceiling as once white but "now so splotched, peeled, stained and dusty that their color can best be described as dirty." Adding to the play's themes of alienation and isolation, the windows are so filthy that it is impossible to see the outside world through them. The bar is crowded with tables and chairs "so close together that it is a difficult squeeze to pass between them." This crowded condition adds to the suffocating nature of the bar, its atmosphere of hopelessness and despair. Because the setting changes little throughout the play, the audience gains a gradual sense of the saloon's oppressiveness.

The only major change in the setting occurs in Act II, when the saloon is decorated for Hope's birthday party. The room has been cleaned, and a space has been cleared for dancing. Added props, such as a piano, presents, and the birthday cake, contribute to the festive atmosphere. But this lighter setting stands in sharp contrast to the anger and accusations that evolve later in the act, as the camaraderie is destroyed by Hickey's proselytizing. In this case, the party setting heightens the effect of the stage action with a visual contrast to the dark emotions that present themselves. In the final two acts, the saloon resumes its atmosphere of dirt and despair. In fact, in the final act, when the roomers have come full circle and returned

to their pipe dreams, the set is once more as it appeared in Act I, heightening the sense that – save Larry’s situation – little has really changed.

Time and the Theater

A recurring criticism of *The Iceman Cometh* is that, at nearly four hours running time, the play is simply too long. This begs the question: Is it proper to fault a play for its length? Such a criticism may seem petty and is rarely leveled at novels or poems. It is this sort of criticism, in fact, that brings into relief an important difference between drama and other forms of literature. Unlike other genres, a written drama is not the play’s finished form. The final work is the production (resulting from the work of actors, directors, set dressers, and others involved with the staging) that emerges from the text. A play exists *in time* in a way that other forms of literature do not. A production of *The Iceman Cometh* cannot be set aside like a paperback novel, to be picked up later at the viewer’s leisure. An audience’s ability to focus on the play over a continuous time period is a factor that must be taken into consideration.

Directors do consider attention spans. It is not at all uncommon for a director to provide his own “criticism” by cutting the playwright’s dialogue. One director, in fact, managed to shave the running time of *The Iceman Cometh* by one hour through extensive script edits. It is important, however, that the student of drama not arbitrarily set an “ideal” length for a play. It is more useful to consider the ultimate effect of the play’s length. Does that length serve a useful purpose? In *The Iceman Cometh* the length of the play adds to the feeling of oppressiveness and hopelessness. The continued repetition in O’Neill’s dialogue, which is sometimes cut by directors who fail to grasp the meaning in its iterations, emphasizes the redundant, looping quality of the characters’ lives. The extreme length of the play contributes to the suffocating atmosphere of Hope’s saloon.

Symbolism

A symbol is something that stands for or suggests something other than itself. In *The Iceman Cometh* the iceman is a symbol of death. In the time period of the play, before there were electric refrigerators, people owned iceboxes which kept food cold by keeping it in an enclosed space with large blocks of ice. The ice was delivered by the iceman, who traveled from door to door.

From the beginning of the play, the roomers look forward to Hickey's running gag about leaving his wife in bed with the iceman. When they discover how much Hickey has changed, some begin to suspect that he did find his wife with the iceman. The figure of the iceman is easily associated with death. In western culture, death is traditionally associated with cold. In addition, it was once customary to use ice to preserve corpses until they could be buried. From this practice comes the slang expressions "to put someone on ice" or "to ice someone," both of which mean "to kill" that "someone." The iceman Hickey left Evelyn with is Death. When used in the title with the word "cometh," the implication is that Death comes in the present tense – it is always arriving for someone. At the end of the play, Death comes for Parritt. Larry expresses a longing for Death, the iceman, who will eventually come for everyone in the bar.

The Unities

The unities are the three rules that govern classical drama. They are unity of time, unity of place, and unity of action. Unity of time generally means that the action of a play should take place within a twenty-four-hour period. Unity of place means that the action of the play should take place in one location. Unity of action means that events must follow logically from one another.

The concept of the unities originated in the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his treatise *Poetics*. Many, however, consider Aristotle's discussion of the unities descriptive; he is simply describing the dramatic style of his own time. During the Renaissance, however, the unities became prescriptive – rules for playwrights to follow – particularly in Italy and France. Following the rule of the unities was supposed to make a play more believable for the audience.

In *The Iceman Cometh* O'Neill adheres to the three unities. The play takes place in one location, within a relatively short period of time, and with events following logically from one another. O'Neill, greatly influenced by classical drama, may have used the unities in order to create an association between *The Iceman Cometh* and classic Greek tragedy. The unities can contribute to a sense of realism. The audience lives the events as the characters live them and thus experiences the stagnation and despair of Hope's saloon as if it were real.

2.5.1 Check Your Progress

- i) What is the setting of *The Iceman Cometh*?

- ii) Which are the three unities?
- iii) What does the word 'iceman' in the title symbolize?
- iv) What is the running time of *The Iceman Cometh*?
- v) Who formulated the three unities?

2.5.1 Terms to remember

- a. **Dark comedy** – term coined by J. L. Styan in his book *The Dark Comedy* (1962). It denotes comedy which is tragic-comic in tone and form; plays in which laughter, grief, wretchedness and despair are intermingled. The plays of Chekhov (1860-1904) are outstanding examples.
- b. **Realism** – in a mode of writing that gives the impression of recording or 'reflecting' faithfully an actual way of life.
- c. **Setting** – The where and when of a story or play; the locale. In drama the term may refer to the scenery or props.

2.6 Answers to Check your progress

2.3.1 Answers

- i) Pearl, Margie and Cora
- ii) Ed Mosher's pipe dream is that he will someday return to his position with the circus
- iii) Evelyn.
- iv) Hickey himself has killed his wife, Evelyn.
- v) Pat McGloin's pipe dream is to return to his old position Police Lieutenant with the force.

2.4.1 Answers

- i) Hickey's pipe dream is that he truly loved his wife, Evelyn.
- ii) James Cameron is called Jimmy Tomorrow because he repeatedly speaks of how he will return to the newspaper and get his job back "tomorrow".
- iii) Rocky.
- iv) Pat McGloin is a former Police Lieutenant who was thrown off the force for corruption.

- v) Joe Mott, the only Black character in the play (who was once the proprietor of a negro gambling house).
- vi) O'Neill received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936.

2.5.1 Answers

- i) *The Iceman Cometh* is set in New York in 1912 at Harry Hope's Greenwich Village-saloon and rooming house.
- ii) Three Unities: unity of time, unity of place, and unity of action.
- iii) The iceman is a symbol of death.
- iv) four hours.
- v) The concept of the unities originated in the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his treatise *Poetics*,

2.7 Exercises

- i) "The characters in *The Iceman Cometh* are isolated from mainstream society". Elucidate
- ii) Discuss the theme of 'Hope and the American Dream' in *The Iceman Cometh*.
- iii) "*The Iceman Cometh* is noted for its dark realism". Discuss.
- iv) How does O'Neill adhere to the three unities in *The Iceman Cometh*?
- v) Elucidate the theme of 'isolation' in *The Iceman Cometh*.
- vi) "The characters in *The Iceman Cometh* are isolated from mainstream society". Illustrate.
- vii) Write the short notes on:
 - a) The character of Hickey
 - b) The character of Larry Slade

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