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Semester-I

Poetry in English up to the 19th Century

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Unit-1

Poetry in the Age of Chaucer

- A. D. Hope

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1.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- understand the life and work of Geoffrey Chaucer,
- know the contribution of Chaucer to the English Literature,
- understand the poetic language, structure, and themes of Chaucer's poetry, and
- enjoy the Chaucer's poems and their analyses.

1.1 Introduction

While studying English literature at M.A. level we broadly study British literature along with the literature in English from other regions of the world such as United States of America, Canada, Australia, India, and other countries. Within literature, we try to understand the different literary movements over the centuries. British literature has much longer history than, let us say, American or African literature. Literature consists of prose and poetry. Poetry (including plays in poetic forms in the beginning) has rather longer history to its counterpart i. e. prose.

In the present paper **Poetry in English up to 19th Century**, we try to understand British poetry in general; its origin, development and present position. In this endeavour, we have to pay closer attention to one of the most important literary figures in England in 14th Century – Geoffrey Chaucer. The 14th century is known as the age of Chaucer. English was not prestigious language in Britain itself in Chaucer’s time. Latin and French had a great influence on the then England. However, Chaucer preferred to write in English rather than French (Norman-French or Anglo-Norman-French). Chaucer’s contribution to establish English as a language of literature is noteworthy. Thus, Chaucer is very relevant to study today as he has rightly been called as the “Father of English literature” or, alternatively as the “Father of English Poetry”.

We will understand his contribution in detail in the present chapter and will study the selected texts to see his original writings, its characteristics, and his writing in translation in Modern English. Before that, let us first study his life and work in the next section.

1.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

1.2.1 Life and Work of Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in 1340s (the exact date is not available, 1342 or 1343 is a closer guess) and died in 1400 A.D. He was a poet, courtier, diplomat, and civil servant. His father John Chaucer was a famous vintner, and he also served to the King as a butler. Chaucer was fluent in French as well as Middle English of his time. He was also competent in Latin (standardized and written form of then Latin) and Italian (spoken form of Latin). His writings show that he was familiar with the famous writings of his time and earlier times. By 1366, Chaucer had married and

probably, his wife was Philippa. He also served in military. Chaucer was multilingual, fluent in Italian, French and Latin and translated works from French and Latin to English. He also established middle English as a respectable medium for medieval Literature. Previously texts were written in either French or Latin. He coined many English words used in the present day and invented the poetic form 'Rime Royal Roet'. He was on diplomatic mission to *Flanders, France, and Italy* on various occasions. Chaucer died in 1400 in London.

His major works are

- The Book of the Duchess (C. 1370)
- The House of Fame (1378-1380)
- Anelida and Arcite (1380-1387)
- Parliament of Fowls (1380-1382)
- Troilus and Criseyde (1382-1386)
- The legend of Good Women (1380)
- The Canterbury Tales (1388-1400)

The Book of the Duchess is written in the form of a poetic genre known as the high medieval dream vision. This book deals with a central concern of the poetic genre of courtly love; which is worse, to lose one's love to death or to infidelity. In 'The Book of the Duchess, the narrator struggles to sleep; when he finally does, he finds himself in a beautiful chamber. In the distance, he hears hunters. While investigating, he comes across a knight who is crying over having lost a chess game. The chess game is a metaphor and the knight has lost his love. The narrator wakes and decides to record the dream as the poem being read. The poem was an elegy from John of Gaunt's first wife. Blanche, the duchess of Lancaster who died from plague in Sept, 1368 or 1369 and Chaucer has referred to the poem by the alternative titles of 'The Death of Blauncher' or The Death of Blauncher the Duchess.

The House of Fame is a poem of more than 2000 lines. The theme of the poem is the poetic search for truth and the derisive attitude of the poet towards tradition, literary authority and authorship.

Anelida and Arcite is a 357 line poem that tells a story of Anelida, queen of Armenia and her wooing by false Arcite from Thebes, Greece. It is a poem with

complex structure. The poem deals with a knight's (Arcite) faithlessness to a beautiful and noble lady Anelida.

Parliament of Fowls is made up of approximately 700 lines. The poem is in the form of rhyme royal stanza. The idea that Valentine's Day is a day for lovers is thought to originate with Geoffrey Chaucer's this poem. It describes a group of birds which gather together in the early spring on Saint Valentine's Day to choose their mates for the year.

Troilus and Criseyde is an epic poem about the tragic story of Troilus and Criseyde. This poem has 8239 lines only of the major themes in the poem is the idea of the power of fortune in human lives, viewed against the vagaries of the human condition. This poem is based upon Boccaccio's *Filostrato*.

The Legend of Good Women, a poem in the form of the dream vision discusses the theme of the fidelity of women in love. The poem reaccounts the stories of ten virtuous women of history & myth who were martyrs for love throughout nine sections.

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of 24 stories that runs over 17,000 lines. It is widely regarded as Chaucer's magnum opus.

We can see the influence of French & Italian works on his lines. It is taken from Italian poet Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. It is a love story of *Troilus* and *Criseyde*.

After this brief survey of Chaucer's significant literary contribution, we will try to understand the England in the age of Chaucer in the next section to understand his work in the proper context.

1.2.2 England in the Age of Chaucer

The period between 1343 and 1450 is known as the age of Chaucer. It is the first significant period in the literary history of England. It marks the beginning of new era, new language & new literature. Chaucer's time was roughly a phase between the Medieval Period and Modern Period. Though modernism is a relative term, it is used here to refer to the changes that came into existence in the age of Chaucer in the field of religion and beliefs, trends in the usage of language and literature, and the change in society.

The most important events of the Chaucer's time to be recorded are Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), Black Death (1348), and Peasant's Revolt (1381). The prolonged war between France and England on the issue of territory was resulted into the economic deterioration of England. The Black Death (the skin gets black patches after the plague) caused the many lives in England. The disease spread multiple times in Europe and other parts of the world, but it had also huge impact on England in the age of Chaucer. In 1381, the peasants revolted and seized the capital and asked the terrified government to fulfill their demands which was suggestive of democratic revolution than the Medieval ages.

The literature of the time attacked the institutions of Medieval church, from the corrupt priesthood to the papacy (the office or authority of the Pope) itself. In Chaucer's writings we also find satirical passages devoted to such criticism. The Age of Faith was passing into the age of skepticism, and the authority of every sort losing its grip on the English public.

After knowing the life and work of Geoffery Chaucer and England in his time, we will focus on his most important work *The Canterbury Tales* and the analysis of the prescribed texts in the next sections.

1.2.3 The Canterbury Tales

Composing a collection of stories together was a very old practice right from ancient times. Chaucer had command over several languages and had a great skill of storytelling, and he had tried his skill even before *The Canterbury Tales* in the work like *The Legend of Good Women*.

The framework of *The Canterbury Tales* was adopted because it promised the fullest opportunity for a large and varied collection of stories. Chaucer tells the story of a group of pilgrims traveling from London to Canterbury Tales to visit the shrine of the martyr St. Thomas Beckett. It was primarily decided to compose 120 stories to be told by the pilgrims, who were 30 in number. As per plan, each pilgrim was expected to tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and another two stories on the way back to South work. The winner will be awarded dinner by Harry Bailly, the Host of the Tabard Inn. The pilgrims gathered at the Tabard Inn and went to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury. They decided to engage in storytelling in the journey to Canterbury and back. Though the original ambitious plan of Chaucer was to include 120 tales, he could compose only 24 tales in the collection of *The*

Canterbury Tales with its prologue in the beginning. Some of the pilgrims did not tell the story as mentioned by Chaucer.

Thus, it is considered as an unfinished project of Chaucer. It is published between 1387-1400. It is comprised of more than 17000 lines written in Middle English. We found several manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*. Some scholars divide his 24 tales into ten fragments or groups (see Table 1.1). These fragments are generally accepted, however, the sequence of these tales within each fragment is debatable.

Table 1.1: Tales of *The Canterbury Tales*

Fragment	Tales
Fragment I	General Prologue The Knight's Tale The Miller's Tale The Reeve's Tale The Cook's Tale
Fragment II	The Man of Law's Tale
Fragment III	The Wife of Bath's Tale The Friar's Tale The Summoner's Tale
Fragment IV	The Clerk's Tale The Merchant's Tale
Fragment V	The Squire's Tale The Franklin's Tale
Fragment VI	The Physician's Tale The Pardoner's Tale

Fragment VII	The Shipman's Tale The Prioress's Tale Sir Thopas' Tale The Tale of Melibee The Monk's Tale The Nun's Priest's Tale
Fragment VIII	The Second Nun's Tale The Canon's Yeoman's Tale
Fragment IX	The Manciple's Tale
Fragment X	The Parson's Tale

1.2.4 Analysis of the prescribed text

After the framework of *The Canterbury Tales* in the above section, we will study the details of the prescribed text from it. To begin with, we will study the *General Prologue* first and then we will continue to the selected texts as per prescribed syllabus.

1.2.4.1 *General Prologue*

The word 'prologue' is a separate introductory section of a literary (or a musical) work. It is entitled as *General Prologue* because Chaucer has included prologues for several other individual tales in the collection of *The Canterbury Tales*.

General prologue is consisted of 858 poetic lines of religious pilgrimage. The prologue begins with the description of the Spring. April is the time when people go on pilgrimage. Chaucer's pilgrims include a knight; his son, squire; the knight's yeoman; the prioress; a nun and her priest; a monk; a frier; a merchant; a clerk; a sergeant of law; a franklin; a haberdasher; a carpenter; a weaver; a dyer; a tapestry weaver; a cook; a shipman; a doctor of physic; a wife of Bath; a parson and his brother, a plowman; a miller; a maniple; a reeve; a summoner; a pardoner; the Host (a man called Harry Bailey); and Chaucer himself.

The beginning lines from the general prologue are as follows:

The Prologue

*Whan that **Aprill** with his shouressoote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swichlicour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweetebreeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendrecroppes, and the yongesonne
Hath in the Ram his half coursyrone,
And smalefowelesmakenmelodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),
Thannelongen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to sekenstraungestrondes,
To fernehalwes, kowthe in sondrylondes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
The hoolyblisfulmartir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.*

[Original Text in Middle English]

The Prologue

*When in **April** the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power
As brings about the engendering of the flower,
When also Zephyrus with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath
Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run,
And the small fowl are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye*

*(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)
Then people long to go on pilgrimages
And palmers long to seek the stranger strands
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands,
And specially, from every shire's end
Of England, down to Canterbury they wend
To seek the holy blissful martyr, * quick
To give his help to them when they were sick.*

[Translated text in Modern English]

We observe the original text in Middle English followed by its translation in Modern English. The *General Prologue* starts with the pleasant season, the Spring. The commonplace themes are the characteristics of the Medieval literature. The *General Prologue* is one of the best-known parts of *The Canterbury Tales*. Spring is considered as the season of hope and the end of the despair.

In the opening line of the General Prologue, Chaucer mentions the month of **April**. We find the similar references in other famous works in English literature. For instance, T. S. Eliot also begins his famous poem *The Waste Land* by mentioning the month of April as:

***April** is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with Spring rain.*

In another famous novel *The Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell writes the famous line:

*It was a bright cold day in **April**, and the clocks were striking thirteen.*

Though we observe the similar opening lines of great literary work, Chaucer is more hopeful than Eliot and Orwell. Chaucer's first sentence is famous and has been memorized by generations of students working on their Middle English pronunciation and prosody – that is, the sound of the poetic line as it bounces along. We observe the melody and the rhyme in it. The first sentence reveals Chaucer's technique of mixing foreign words from Latin, French, and Middle English to

produce poetic lines. He indicates the month of April and readers know that people often go on pilgrimage in this month. However, the first sentence is complex and run across 18 complicated lines. It describes many more things than spring and the occasion of pilgrimage. Chaucer's concerns and vocabulary are highly poetical as well as calendrical and meteorological. He mentions that we are in early spring and it's raining after a long drought. But in this opening, April and March are personified as are the Ram (the constellation Aries) and Zephyrus (the mild west wind). They are made into actors coordinated with each other and affecting the natural world. The description can be paraphrased as:

When the weather turns fine and spring rains arrive, and the lovebirds and plant life respond to the sweet season, people desire to go on pilgrimage, both overseas and to foreign land, as well as over England to Canterbury. Chaucer's diction is highly poetical. He uses 'liquor' for the rain which denotes liquid at that time.

We find the human relationships with each other, their customs and habits, their beliefs and paying visits (pilgrimage) to religious places, man's relation to the birds, animals, and plants and the behaviour of these animate things and the progress in the certain months is revealed in these lines. In addition to it, Chaucer also focuses the man's relation to non-living things. His astronomical knowledge about the stars and other astronomical bodies is represented in these opening lines. Chaucer's command over different languages and his mastery over prosody can be understood with these few lines at the beginning of *The Canterbury Tales* in the *General Prologue*. *General Prologue* exhibits social conditions, in his period. It is a satire on social status, corruption in church, friendship and companionship in the social classes. It reflects a satirical tone. Chaucer satirizes medieval church and its representatives through his characters. There are symbols to represent social class & conditions.

After commenting on the selected text of *General Prologue*, we turn to *The Knight's Tale*.

1.2.4.2 *The Knight's Tale* [The Temple of Mars]

The Knight's Tale is one of the 24 tales from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer which is consisted of 2250 lines in total. It is based on Boccaccio's *Theseida*, a chivalric romance. The plot of *The Knight's Tale* goes like: Palamon and Arcite, both were cousins and knights, fell in love with Emelye, a sister of Hippolyta. Hippolyta was a queen of the Amazons who was married to their captor Theseus. A

combat held between Palamon and Arcite to win the hand. In the end, Arcite won, however he was thrown by the horse and died. On the deathbed, Arcite asked Emelye to marry Palamon as he would be a good husband for her. Emelye and Palamon got married. In this tale, we observe the classical love triangle, however Palamon and Arcite are not binary opposite. They are similar in their language, behaviour, courage, fight, etc.

The Knight's Tale begins with the description of the King of Athens, Theseus. He was powerful and conquered all the lands of Amazons. (Then he captured Hippolyta and her younger sister, Emelye). As described, no one was greater than Theseus under the sun.

The prescribed text from *The Knight's Tale* [The Temple of Mars] is of 64 lines. Due to restrictions of space, we provide a few lines before the commentary on it. First and foremost, we observe the difference between spellings of Modern English and Middle English in Chaucer's poetry. For instance, the spellings such as *sholde* – *should*, *wel* – *well*, *eek* – *also*, *telle* – *tell*, *al* – *all*, *wal* – *wall*, *withinne* – *within*, *myghty* – *mighty*, *rede* – *red*, *al* – *all*, *peynted* – *painted*, *lengthe* – *length*, *brede* – *breadth*, *lyk* – *like*, and others. We find the addition and deletion of the final vowel in the Middle English, substitution of the letters y and i, etc. Another peculiarity is that some words are archaic and not used in the Modern English. Next, Chaucer has employed many words from foreign languages like Latin and French. The rhyme is observed as a-a, b-b, c-c. Observe the ending words of the first stanza in the following text: *wal*, *rede-brede*, *place-trace*.

*Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
The portreiture that was upon the wal
Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?
Al peynted was the wal, in lengthe and brede,
Lyk to the estres of the grisly place
That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
In thilkecolde, frosty regioun
Ther as Mars hath his sovereynmansioun.
First on the wal was peynted a forest,
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,
Of stubbessharpe and hidouse to biholde,*

*In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough,
As though a storm sholdebresten every bough.
And downward from an hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of Mars armypotente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to se.*

Being a mythical tale, Chaucer describes three Temples in the story: at the eastern gate there is the Temple of Venus; the Goddess of Love, at the west there is the Temple of Mars; the God of War, and at the north there is the Temple of Diana; the Goddess of Chastity. Before the battle between Arcite and Palamon to win the hand of Emelye, Palamon goes to the Temple of Venus and prays to get his love; Emelye, Arcite visits the Temple of Mars and prays for his victory, and Emelye prays to Diana wishing to be unmarried or get a true love. The above description is of the Temple of Mars. The temple of Mars is described as a dark and grisly place. A stormy forest is painted on the wall, made of steel, dark, and guarded by heavy iron-bound doors. There is crime, rage, murder, and such. There are paintings of corpses with their throats cut, devastated towns, burning ships, hunters killed by bears, infants devoured by sows in their cradles. There are paintings of the murder of Julius Caesar and Nero and others whose deaths were shaped by the stars. The statue of Mars stood on a chariot, with the stars Puella and Rubeus above him and at his feet a red-eyed wolf, devouring a man.

Next, we will discuss another portion prescribed for us from the same tale.

1.2.4.3 *The Knight's Tale [Saturn]*

By now, we have an idea of the plot of the tale. We also know how destiny plays a significant role at the end of the story. When Palamon get injured by the soldier from the army of Arcite, Theseus, the king asks his men to take an injured Palamon away as per tournament rules. Then the king declares that Arcite as a winner of the battle. Arcite proceeds to claim his love Emelye as a gift after winning a battle, however his horse suddenly throws him on the ground to death.

When we try to find the reasons for this event, we realize the role of destiny that completely alters the situation further. In the below text, Saturn speaks for himself and describes his own nature in detail: He controls the situation; he uses his malefic powers and acts against free will and reason. The Middle English spellings and their

Modern English equivalents, in the given text, are: *deer – dear, doghter – daughter, quod – said, cours – course (path, orbit), wyde – wide, turne – turn, hath – has, moore – more, woot – know/s, myn – mine, etc.*

*"My deeredoghter Venus," quod Saturne,
"My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath moore power than woot any man.
Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;
Myn is the prison in the derke cote;
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
The murmure and the cherlesrebellyng,
The groynyng, and the pryveempoysonyng;
I do vengeance and pleyncorreccioun,
Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
Myn is the ruyne of the hyehalles,
The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
I slow Sampsoun, shakynge the piler;
And myne be the maladyescolde,
The derketresons, and the castes olde;
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.*

As you know from the above discussion that three protagonists pray to different Gods and their wishes need to be fulfilled. Palamon wish to win his love by praying Venus, Arcite aims to get victory in the battle, and Emelye wishes to get her true love or to remain unmarried. Saturn said, "Venus, my dear daughter, don't worry and I will take care to fulfill all the wishes". He told Venus that he has more power than any man knows. And then he gives the whole list of his malicious and cruel activities that he can do. These are like: drowning in the dark sea, imprisonment in the dark cell, killing and hanging by throat, secret poisoning, falling of towers and walls, punishments, and so on. And readers, you know that how Saturn fulfills the three desires: Arcite's prayer to Mars was to win the battle and he wins the battle accordingly, Palamon's prayer to Venus was to get his love and he gets Emelye after Arcite's death, and Emelye's wish to Diana was to get true love. Thus, all the wishes get fulfilled. In the tale, the question remains that why poor Arcite, even after winning the battle, has to face the death? In the medieval and modern literature, the

role of supernatural elements is observed. We logically could not solve such riddles and have to consider the role of the destiny – could be the provisional solution. The main theme of the tale is the instability of human life-joy and suffering are never far apart from the one another and nobody is safe from disaster.

The knight in the knight's Tale represents the virtues like chivalry, honour, courage and gentility.

Further, we study *The Miller's Tale* in the next section.

1.2.4.4 *The Miller's Tale [Alysoun]*

This is the second tale from *The Canterbury Tales* told by the miller Robin. After the knight's tale, the drunken miller insists on telling his story. It is the story of the carpenter named John who lives in Oxford. He has an eighteen-year-old wife, Alysoun. John is very jealous and guards his wife carefully. John rents his room in the house to clever Nicholas who studies at Oxford University. Nicholas advances to Alysoun. She later agrees, and the affair continues. Absolon, another man and a clerk by profession, has also eye on Alysoun and tries to impress her by singing songs and sending gifts to her. But that doesn't interest her as she is involved with Nicholas.

Nicholas wishes to spend a night with Alysoun and makes a plan. He fools John by saying that some unfortunate thing is about to occur. He says that there will be an intense and dangerous flood. To save from the calamity three of them sleep in the tubs hanged by the rope at the greater height to the ceiling. When John sleeps in the tub in the air, Alysoun and Nicholas come down and share John's bed. On the same night, Absolon pays a visit to Alysoun's house and begs for a kiss from her. She fooled him in the dark by offering her backside out of the window. After realizing that he goes to blacksmith and comes back with a red-hot coulter. He knocks on the window again and requests Alysoun for a kiss. In the dark night, Nicholas offers his backside from the window this time. Absolon burns him with the red-hot coulter. Nicholas screams for water to relieve some pains. John hears someone shouting 'water' who believes about the flood and cuts the rope attached to the tub at the ceiling and fall son the ground, breaking his arm. Hearing the noise, people from the town assemble and laugh at poor John and consider him mad, after listening to the versions of Nicholas and Alysoun's story about the event.

The Miller's Tale is considered Chaucer's first original work as *The Knight's Tale* is based on Boccaccio's *Teseida*. It is of 746 lines including its prologue. The

fifty lines from *The Miller's Tale* are prescribed for to study. A few lines from the prescribed text are given below in Middle English followed by its translation in Modern English to have some idea about its composition. Pay attention to the diction and the prosody.

*This carpenter hadde wedded newe a wyf,
Which that he lovedemoore than his lyf;
Of eighteteeneyeer she was of age.
Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,
For she was wylde and yong, and he was old
And demedhimselven been lik a cokewold.*

*This carpenter had married a new wife
Not long before, and loved her more than life.
She was a girl of eighteen years of age.
Jealous he was and kept her in the cage,
For he was old and she was wild and young;
He thought himself quite likely to be stung.*

The above text describes the carpenter, his new married life, and his approach to the young newly married wife. The prescribed text is devoted to the Alysoun. We observe a few lines describing her in the following lines. These lines describe her complexion, body type, eyes, clothing, and shoes. The translated text in Modern English is provided below.

*She was a fair young wife, her body as slender
As any weasel's, and as soft and tender;
She used to wear a girdle of striped silk;
Her apron was as white as morning milk
Over her loins, all gusseted and pleated.
White was her smock; embroidery repeated
Its pattern on the collar, front and back,
Inside and out; it was of silk, and black.*

*The tapes and ribbons of her milky mutch
Were made to match her collar to a touch;
She wore a broad silk fillet, rather high,
And certainly she had a lecherous eye.
And she had plucked her eyebrows into bows,
Slenderly arched they were, and black as sloes;
And a more truly blissful sight to see
She was than blossom on a cherry-tree,
And softer than the wool upon a wether;
And by her girdle hung a purse of leather,
Tasselled with silk and silver droplets, pearled;
If you went seeking up and down the world,
The wisest man you met would have to wrench
His fancy to imagine such a wench;
And her complexion had a brighter tint
Than a new florin from the Royal Mint.
As to her song, it was as loud and quick
As any swallow's chirping on a rick;
And she would skip or play some game or other
Like any kid or calf behind its mother.
Her mouth was sweet as mead or honey – say
A hoard of apples lying in the hay.
Skittish she was, and jolly as a colt,
Tall as a mast and upright as a bolt
Out of a bow. Her collaret revealed
A brooch as big as boss upon a shield.
High shoes she wore, and laced them to the top.
She was a daisy, O a lollypop
For any nobleman to take to bed
Or some good man of yeoman stock to wed.*

The Miller's Tale is a story of lust and revenge

After the discussion of *General prologue* and two tales after that, we will discuss *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* in the next section.

1.2.4.5 *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*

The Wife of Bath's Tale of 408 lines is preceded its prologue of 856 lines. Thus, the prologue is twice as compared to the actual tale. It is the longest prologue in *The Canterbury Tales*. The prologue is more significant than the actual tale. In this prologue, the woman condemns the celibacy, and she narrates a lusty account of her five marriages. The social structure in the 14th century, at the time of Chaucer, was rapidly changing. The prologue provides insight into the role of women in the late middle age. The wife of Bath is somewhat deaf. She is rich, middle-aged and impressive. She dresses nicely and she is very lively. She likes to travel and she likes the company of men. Her name is Alisoun. The Wife of Bath does not accept the double standards for men and women. In 14th century, men could have more than one spouse. She defends women's multiple marriages.

For our study, the fifty lines from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* have been prescribed. In these lines, the Wife of Bath describes her experience with her fourth husband. After the first three husbands, she had a fourth husband who was more playful. He was young, strong, and stubborn. He plays harp for her, and she would dance and sing. He had killed his previous wife for drinking wine. However, he would not have stopped her from drinking wine, if she had his wife. There is a description about how she recalls her days of youth. In the end she details how her fourth husband had died and had buried in her absence. A few lines from the prescribed text are given below for the close study.

*My four the housbonde was a revelour --
This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour --
And I was yong and ful of ragerye,
Stibourn and strong, and joly as a pye.
How koude I daunce to an harpesmale,
And syngge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,
Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweetewyn!
Metellius, the foulecherl, the swyn,
That with a stafbirafte his wyf hir lyf,*

*For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,
He shold enathan daunted me frodrynke!*

We discussed the social and ethical issues of the 14th Century England with the help of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. This prologue can be studied from the feminist perspective. The place of woman in the society, man's attitude towards women, marriages, work and duties of women, the right of decision, man-woman relationship, economy and her share are the some of the topics which can be explored further by studying the prologue from feminist perspective. The wife of Bath is very antithesis of virtuous women hood - who challenges the prevailing gender inequality of the times. She is independent and values her independence.

The take of the wife of Bath is an ironic parody of the classice fairy-tale of knight hood.

After the significant *Prologue to The Wife of Bath's Tale*, a critique on 14th century society in England, we will study *The Pardoner's Tale* in the next section.

1.2.4.6The Pardoner's Tale

The Pardoner's Tale is one of the twenty-four tales of *The Canterbury Tales* and its forty-line prologue preceding the actual tale of 640 lines. In *The Pardoner's Tale*, Pardoner explains that the "Greed is the root of [all] evils". He disapproves of gambling, drinking wine, and other kinds of wrong doings in society.

In the tale, three young men are gambling, drinking, and cursing in the hotel. They witness the burial of their friend and decide to kill the Death. They come across an Old Man who tells them that they will find the Death at the foot of the Oak tree. Three of them arrive there. They find the hoard of gold coins under the tree and forget to kill the Death. Then they wait for nightfall to carry these gold coins to the town along with them.

Two of them ask their youngest friend to fetch the food and wine for them. He leaves. Other two plan to kill him, and they also plan to divide the wealth between them. They wish to live a happy life and fulfill their desires. On the other hand, the youngest friend while going to fetch the food plans to kill the two of his friends waiting at the hoard. He purchases the poison (which is used to kill rats) and three bottles of wine. Then he mixes it in two of the wine bottles and keeps his own bottle clean without poison.

When he arrives at the tree, they stab him immediately. After his death, they decide to drink the wine and bury his body later. They unfortunately pick up the poisoned bottle and drink wine from it. Consequently, they die and face the painful death. The story ends here. Pardoner concludes his point that "Greed is the root of [all] evils".

The Pardoner likes money, rich food and fine living. The function of a pardoner in Chaucer's time was to collect money for charitable purposes and to be the Pope's special agent in dispensing or rewarding contributors. In Chaucer's times most pardoners were dishonest.

The following are the lines from the prescribed 115 lines of *The Pardoner's Tale*. These lines describe the beginning scene of the friend of three friends drinking in the hotel.

*Thise riotouresthre of whiche I telle,
Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,
Were set hem in a taverne to drynke,
And as they sat, they herde a belle clynke
Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave.
That oon of hem gancallen to his knave:
"Go bet," quod he, "and axe redily
What cors is this that passethheerforby;
And looke that thou reporte his name weel."
"Sire," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-deel;
It was me toold er ye cam heer two houres.
He was, pardee, an old felawe of youres,
And sodeynly he was yslayn to-nyght,
Fordronke, as he sat on his bench upright.
Ther cam a priveetheef men clepeth Deeth*

Thus, we have finished the discussion of the prescribed text and have proceeded to recapitulate the major points of Chaucer's poetry in general and *The Canterbury Tales* in particular in the following section.

1.3 Summary of the Chapter

At the outset, we discussed the importance of studying Chaucer in present time. Chaucer is one of the first authors who began to write in English instead of French or Latin. Chaucer is called as the “Father of English Literature” or the “Father of English Poetry” because of his immense contribution to English literature in general and English poetry in particular. By English literature we mean the British literature or the literature in English produced in England or Britain. Another aspect of Chaucer’s literature is that he wrote about the commonplace people and commonplace themes. He wrote about the variety of people from all walks of life. His narrative technique is quite interesting, and the structure of *The Canterbury Tales* accommodates all kinds of tales and their narrators. Being proficient in several languages such as Middle English, French, Latin (standard variety), and Italian (common variety), Chaucer mingles these languages in his poetry so eloquently without disturbing its prosody.

Then, we studied Chaucer’s life and his work. His various professions, his visits to a variety of places such as Flanders, France, Italy among others, his family background and their close relations with the King and the kingdom and other factors certainly affected his writing. Chaucer’s minute observations about the social structures, his knowledge about the literature of his and previous times, his mastery over different subjects, and his storytelling technique are noteworthy.

Next, we studied the prescribed text. *The General Prologue* sets the scene for the tales. Chaucer’s structure of *The Canterbury Tales* described in the prologue encompasses the versatility of characters, themes, and different people from all walks of life. *The Knight’s Tale* presents chivalry, romance, knighthood, battles, courtship, love, courage, crime and punishment, and other themes, while *The Miller’s Tale* is about the betrayal, man-woman relation, etc. Further, *The Prologue to the Wife of Bath’s Tale* and its prologue is a satire on the medieval society from the woman’s perspective. Lastly, we discussed *The Pardoner’s Tale* in which the point is made that “Greed is the root of [all] the evils”.

Thus, we studied Chaucer as a literary figure and his selected text in this chapter. We will proceed to **German Romanticism** in the next chapter.

1.4 Characteristics of Canterbury Tales

- The framework of the *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400) provides liberty to Chaucer to accommodate variety of characters and their diverse tales within a single collection. The pilgrims tell stories on the way to Canterbury as their pilgrimage, a religious travel and the way back. The pilgrims include the **Host**, Harry Bailey; the owner of the Tabard Inn; **Knight**, an experienced crusader; **Squire**, the son of the Knight; **Knight's yeoman**, an archer; **Prioress**, a woman with impeccable table manners; **Second Nun**, the chaplain to Prioress; **Nun's priests**, three priests in the Prioress's party; **Monk**, an avid hunter and a horseman; **Friar**, a mendicant; **Merchant**, a trader; **Clerk**, An Oxford-educated scholar; **Man of law**, a lawyer; **Franklin**, a companion of lawyer; **Five craft workers** (a haberdasher, carpenter, weaver, dyer, and tapester, all described together); **Cook**, a servant of the craft workers; **Shipman**, a barge captain; **Physician**; **Wife of Bath**; **Parson**; **Plowman**; **Miller**; **Manciple**; **Reeve**, an accountant; **Summoner**, a greedy man; **Pardoner**, a close companion of the Summoner; **Canon**, an alchemist; and Canon's yeoman along with the Chaucer, the narrator.
- According to the traditional medieval social hierarchy, the duty of the knight in society was to protect that society from its earthly enemies. The churchman had to act as a protective wall against the spiritual enemies of mankind. Besides knight and churchman, Chaucer's characters belonged to the different professions from the society. All of them were with their good and bad qualities, their faults, their ambitions, their sorrows, and their aspirations. These are common men with their imperfections. Their faiths and beliefs also control their lives.
- It was also believed that the supernatural power controls the lives of men and women on the earth.
- In Chaucer's day the second person singular pronoun *thou* and the corresponding verbal form ending in *-est* were in common use. The plural forms *ye* and *yow* (reduced simply to *you* in modern English) could be used in a singular meaning when a formal mode of address was intended. The genitive or possessives were also interesting in his time, for example, *by my fader soule* (by my father's soul) or *in his lady grace* (in his lady's grace). A few nouns form plurals by adding *n*, for example, *eyen* (eyes) or *fon* (foes). A few nouns have same form for singular and

plural, for example, *hors* (horse), *swyn*(swine), and *sheep* (sheep). In adjectival use, we observe weak and strong forms, for example, *good* (strong) and *goode*(weak).

Characteristics of Chaucer's Poetry

- Rhyme Royal was used by Chaucer for the first time in English in *Troilus and Criseide*(1385/1386). The rhyme scheme of a seven line stanza in rhyme royal is: a-b-a-b-b-c-c.
- Chaucer's poetry is roughly divided into three periods or phases i.e. 1370-1380, 1381-1386, and 1387-1400. In the initial phase Chaucer produced important works such as *The Book of Dutchess* and *The House of Fame* besides his incomplete translation *The Romaunt of the Rose*. In the second phase, he wrote *The Parliament of Fowls*, *Troilus and Criseide*and *The Legend of Good Women*. Among these significant works, *Troilus and Criseide*is most appreciated for his distinct narrative style and poetic maturity. The last phase made him a great poet with the publication of *The Canterbury Tales*.
- We observe Chaucer's a wide canvas of imagination of extraterritorial entities and supernatural things. His minute observations of society, the people from all kinds of professions, their habits, their beliefs, their aspirations are represented in the form of characters prominently in the *Canterbury Tales*.
- He has handled different kinds of genres: scientific writing, romance, tales, translation among others.
- Chaucer criticized social evils satirically. He made people to laugh at their own follies and absurdities.
- Chaucer's visits to the different places, his military assignments, his and his family's association with the King and Kingdom, the socio-political and religious background of the time, and his creative mind made him a unique individual.
- As he was proficient in different languages, he combined Latin, French and English meticulously to compose his poetry.
- His preference of using English over French or Latin is also noteworthy. He has established English as a language of literature, a language of poetry in specific.

1.4 Check your progress

A. Select the appropriate option from the alternatives given.

1. being a poet, who was Chaucer by profession?
a. courtier b. diplomat c. civil servant d. all the above
2. Which of the following work is not produced by Geoffrey Chaucer?
a. The Canterbury Tales b. Troilus and Criseyde
c. Theseida d. The House of Fame
3. Which is the most significant event occurred during the Chaucer's Time?
a. Hundred Years of War b. Black Death
c. Peasant's Revolt d. All the above
4. How many tales are included in *The Canterbury Tales*?
a. 20 b. 24 c. 28 d. 32
5. How many fragments are there of *The Canterbury Tales*?
a. 10 b. 12 c. 14 d. 16
6. Who among the following was not a pilgrim in the pilgrimage to Canterbury?
a. knight b. miller c. king d. pardoner
7. Which famous work of English literature does not begin with the month of April?
a. The Canterbury Tales b. The Road not Taken
c. The Waste Land d. Nineteen Eighty-Four
8. Which temple is described by Chaucer in *The Knight's Tale*?
a. Temple of Mars b. Temple of Venus
c. Temple of Diana d. All the above
9. Who wins the battle in *The Knight's Tale*?
a. Arcite b. Palamon c. Theseus d. Diana
10. Which is Saturn's malicious activity?
a. drowning in the dark sea b. imprisonment in the dark cell

- c. secret poisoning d. all the above
11. Who among the following is not a character from *The Miller's Tale*?
- a. Alysoun b. Arcite c. Nicholas d. John
12. Who was Nocholas?
- a. student b. teacher c. carpenter d. doctor
13. How can we describe *The prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale* in a word?
- a. sonnet b. critique c. ode d. elegy
14. What is the root of all evils, according to Pardoner?
- a. honesty b. truth c. greed d. betrayal
15. How many friends are there in *The Pardoner's Tale*?
- a. 7 b. 5 c. 3 d. 9

B. Answer the following questions.

1. Discuss the significance of *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*.
2. Describe the life and work of Geoffrey Chaucer.
3. How many temples are described in *The Knight's Tale*? Explain.
4. Clarify the role of Saturn in *The Knight's Tale*.
5. Write a detailed note on *The Miller's Tale*.
6. Elucidate Chaucer's contribution to the English literature.
7. Discuss *The Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale*.
8. Explain the moral issues in *The Pardoner's Tale*.

1.5 Glossary

100 Years of War: the series of armed conflict between the United Kingdom and France from 1337 to 1453.

Absolon: a man interested in Alyson in the *Miller's Tale*

Alysoun: the female protagonist and the wife of the carpenter John in the *Miller's Tale*

Arcite: one of the two protagonist heroes or a knight of *The Knight's Tale*

Black Death:The Black Death was a bubonic plague pandemic which reached England in 1348.

Canterbury: a cathedral city in southeast England, was a pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages

Diana:the Goddess of Chastity

Emelye: the female protagonist and the heroine of in *The Knight's Tale*

Geoffrey Chaucer: The poet, courtier, diplomat, and civil servant lived between 1342/43 and 1400.

Giovanni Boccaccio: An Italian writer and a poet (1313-1375)

Iamb: an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, when it is repeated five times in a single poetic line is known as iambic pentameter. Chaucer used iambic pentameter extensively in the *Canterbury Tales*. The unrhymed variety of iambic pentameter is called **blank verse** and its rhymed variety is called **heroic couplet**.

Inn: a pub or hotel. Inns are generally establishments or buildings where travelers can seek lodging, and usually, food and drink.

John Chaucer: Geoffrey Chaucer's father

John: the male protagonist and the carpenter in the *Miller's Tale*

Mars:the God of War

Nicholas: the student in the Oxford who had an illicit relation with Alysoun the *Miller's Tale*

Palamon: one of the two protagonist heroes or a knight of *The Knight's Tale*

Peasant's Revolt: The revolt by peasants in England in 1381 due to socio-economic tensions and high taxes caused by the Black Death and 100 Years of War.

Philippa Pan: Geoffrey Chaucer's wife also known as Philippa de Roet or Philippa Chaucer

Prologue: a separate introductory section of a literary, dramatic, or musical work

Saturn:a God with malefic powers, Saturn was responsible for Arcite's death in the *Knight's Tale*.

Saturn: the supreme sky God who acts against the reason, in the Knight's tale he uses his power to scare the horse of Arcite which resulted in Arcite's death.

St. Thomas Becket: Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury lived between 1118 and 1170.

Theseida: a long epic poem by Boccaccio

Thomas Chaucer: the Son of Geoffrey Chaucer

Venus:the Goddess of Love

Zephyrus: the Greek god of the west wind

1.6 Answer key to Check your progress.

A. 1-d, 2-c, 3-d, 4-b, 5-a,
6-c, 7-b, 8-d, 9-a, 10-d,
11-b, 12-a, 13-b, 14-c, 15-c

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Unit-2

German Romanticism

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2.0 Objectives:

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand German Romanticism
- Know the contribution of various figures in the development of German Romantic Movement
- Know the life and works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Holderlin
- Analyse and comment on the selected poems of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Holderlin

2.1 German Romanticism:

2.1.1 Introduction:

German Romanticism was a profound cultural and intellectual movement that emerged with the experiments of the writers like Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Schiller in their treatment of subjective modes of expression and of the linguistic and cultural functions of art in the late 18th century and continued to flourish throughout the 19th century in Germany. It emerged as a reaction to the rationalism and empiricism of the Enlightenment and celebrated the richness of human emotion, the mysteries of nature, and the spiritual dimensions of existence along with wit, humour and beauty. It encompassed a wide

range of artistic, literary, philosophical, and musical expressions, and its impact extended far beyond its original time and place. It was characterized by a fascination with the irrational, and the emotional aspects of human experience, in contrast to the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and logic.

German Romanticism was, in fact, a response to the changing social, political, and technological landscape of the period in the wake of industrialization that began to reshape society. As the rational thought and material progress became increasingly dominant over traditional values, rural life-style and emotional sphere of human life, a group of thinkers and artists sought to rekindle a sense of wonder, mystery, and introspection. This movement was marked by a profound emphasis on individualism, subjectivity, and the exploration of the inner self against the ever-growing Enlightenment impact in the form of reason and logic that tried to provide basis as well as answers to all questions of human life during the period. As a result, the movement was not only confined to a single medium; but, it encompassed literature, visual arts, music, and philosophy. Literary giants like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, painters like Caspar David Friedrich, composers like Franz Schubert, and philosophers like Friedrich Schlegel all contributed to the rich tapestry of Romantic expression.

In essence, German Romanticism can be seen as a celebration of the human spirit's capacity for imagination, emotion, and connection with the cosmos. It challenged prevailing norms, redefined artistic and philosophical boundaries, and left an indelible mark on Western culture. Even beyond its historical context, the ideas and artistic creations of German Romanticism continue to resonate, reminding the readers of the enduring power of human creativity and the exploration of the human experience.

2.1.2 Features of German Romanticism:

1. Nature and Spirituality: Nature occupies a central place in the Romantic imaginations of German writers who turned to nature as a quiet place that has not yet been controlled by capitalism. It is a place of deep reverence for them as they consider it as a source of spiritual inspiration and a reflection of the divine that can lead the human being to experience their true selves. The Romantic writers often find nature as a mirror of human emotions, and tried to explore the connection between the external world and the inner human experience. Through their works, they sought

to forge a spiritual connection with the natural world, often depicting landscapes that were both awe-inspiring and introspective.

2. Individualism and Subjectivity: German Romantics celebrated individuality and subjectivity. They explored the complexities of human emotions, inner conflicts, and personal journeys. The subjective experience of the individual was considered as a valuable source of artistic and philosophical insight. Hence, they emphasized the unique experiences and emotions of the individual. They explored the inner world of human emotions, dreams, and imagination, often celebrating the individual's personal perspectives and identity.

3. Imagination and Fantasy: The Romantics writers of the period emphasised imagination rather than reality in their artistic expressions. They believed that the imagination could reveal deeper truths in the lives of humanity that cannot be achieved with the rational thought alone. Hence, the fantasy and the supernatural were often dominant themes in Romantic literature and art.

4. Medievalism and Folklore: German Romantics had a fascination with the medieval past and often drew inspiration from medieval folklore, myths, and legends, viewing it as a time of authenticity and rich cultural heritage. This interest was further fuelled by a desire to connect with a more authentic and unspoiled cultural heritage. They explored the medieval myths, legends, and folktales in order to reconnect with the past and its traditions. This fascination with the past wasn't just about nostalgia; it was more an attempt to connect traditional identity that stood in contrast to the rapidly changing modern world.

5. Emotion and Intuition: Another crucial facet of German Romanticism was its exploration of emotions, often veering away from the Enlightenment's strict emphasis on reason. They valued emotion and intuition over strict adherence to rules and conventions. They believed that emotions and intuition could reveal deeper truths about the human existence and experience. Artistic expression was meant to evoke powerful emotions and resonate with the audience's feelings. Themes of love, longing, and melancholy were frequently explored, and literature and art were seen as vehicles for stirring powerful emotions in the audience.

6. Transcendence and Idealism: Romantic writers attempted to go beyond the material world and sought to transcend the limitations of reality through artistic and philosophical exploration. They often embraced idealism as they believe in the

existence of a higher spiritual reality which can take them beyond the material world. As a result, the Romantic writers were fascinated with the mystical and the supernatural.

7. Irony and Paradox: The use of irony and paradox was common aspect in the writings of in German Romantic writers. They tried to embrace the contradictions laying in the nature that led them to explore the tension between opposing ideas that ultimately reflected the complexity of human experience.

8. Love and Longing: Themes of love and longing were prevalent in Romantic literature and art. Romantic love was often depicted as intense, passionate, and even unattainable, evoking a sense of yearning and desire. The feelings of longingness and the efforts to gain love dominated the articulations of the writers of the period.

9. Nationalism and Cultural Identity: German Romantics played a role in shaping a sense of national and cultural identity Germany by going beyond the existing literary formulations and representing the ancestral history. They celebrated local cultures, languages, and traditions that contributed greatly to the broader movement of cultural nationalism.

10. Aestheticism and Fragmentation: German Romantics developed new theories of aesthetics, focusing on the role of art in expressing emotions and exploring the sublime. They valued the beauty of the natural world and the power of art to capture its essence. Furthermore, the concept of the fragment was significantly developed in the writings of Romantic writers as they allowed the expression of multiple perspectives through their fragmented works and the encouraged the reader's or viewer's imagination to complete the narrative.

11. Artistic Freedom: The Romantics championed artistic freedom and rejected rigid rules and conventions. They believed that artists should have the liberty to express their unique creative visions without restrictions. According to them, rationalism overlooked the depth and complexity of human experience, so they sought to balance reason with emotion.

Thus, the above mentioned features collectively contributed in shaping the German Romanticism, making it a movement that deeply influenced literature, art, philosophy, and cultural thought in the 18th and 19th centuries.

2.1.3 Prominent Figures:

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): Goethe is one of the most prominent figures of German Romanticism, who is often considered a bridge between the Enlightenment and Romantic Movement. His works, such as the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and the epic drama *Faust*, explored the themes of individualism, emotion, and the relationship between humans and the cosmos.

2. Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805): Schiller's plays and philosophical writings emphasized the importance of freedom, beauty, and the aesthetic experience. His ideas about the integration of reason and emotion had a significant influence on Romantic thought.

3. Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) (1772-1801): Novalis was a poet and philosopher known for his mystical and metaphysical explorations. His poetry and prose often blended nature, spirituality, and romantic longing.

4. Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853): A prolific writer, Tieck was known for his fairy tales, novellas, and plays that often delved into the realm of fantasy, the supernatural, and medievalism.

5. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) and **August Wilhelm Schlegel** (1767-1845): The Schlegel brothers were key figures in shaping Romantic literary theory. Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenaeum Fragments* laid the groundwork for many Romantic ideas, including the importance of irony, the fragment, and the concept of artistic genius.

6. E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822): Hoffmann was a writer, composer, and painter known for his tales that blended the real and the fantastic, often exploring themes of the uncanny and the supernatural.

7. Heinrich Heine (1797-1856): Heine's poetry and prose combined political and social commentary with Romantic themes of love, longing, and introspection. He is known for his ironic and often satirical approach.

8. Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840): As a painter, Friedrich is renowned for his landscapes that often feature solitary figures in contemplative or sublime natural settings. His works evoke a sense of the spiritual and the mysterious.

9. Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857): Eichendorff's poetry and prose celebrated nature, nostalgia, and the romantic experience. His works often focused on the individual's relationship with the natural world.

10. Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826): As a composer, Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* is often cited as an example of Romantic music, blending folklore, supernatural elements, and emotional intensity.

11. Clemens Brentano (1778-1842): Brentano's works often explored themes of love, religion, and the supernatural. He was associated with the Heidelberg Romantic movement.

Apart from the above mentioned proponents, the other literary figures of German Romanticism include Ernst Moritz Arndt, Achim von Arnim, Bettina von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, Adelbert von Chamisso, Joseph von Eichendorff, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, Heinrich Heine, Friedrich Hölderlin, Jean Paul, Heinrich von Kleist, Sophie Mereau, Eduard Mörike, Dorothea Schlegel, Ernst Schulze, Gustav Schwab, Ludwig Uhland, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. Each of these literary writers contributed to the rich tapestry of artistic, philosophical, and literary expressions of this movement. Their collective ideas and works continue to influence artistic thought and creativity till the present date.

2.1.4 Influence and Legacy:

German Romanticism had a lasting impact on various artistic disciplines, philosophy, and literature. Its emphasis on individualism, emotion, and the connection between humans and nature contributed to the development of later movements such as Symbolism, Expressionism, and even elements of Modernism. The movement's influence can be seen in the works of composers like Franz Schubert, painters like Caspar David Friedrich, and philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche.

2.1.5 Check Your Progress:

- 1) German Romanticism is a reaction against and empiricism of the Enlightenment.
a) rationalism b) nationalism c) idealism d) aestheticism
- 2) occupies a central place in the Romantic imagination.

Goethe's intellectual abilities were not confined to literature; but he had depicted a keen interest in the natural sciences. His botanical studies, particularly his extensive work on plants, contributed significantly to the field of morphology and laid the groundwork for modern plant science. His *Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790) was a seminal work in this area. He has also played a role in the literary and cultural scenes of his time. He spent several years at the Weimar court, where he held various positions, including that of a government official. He befriended other notable figures, including Friedrich Schiller, and their collaboration enriched German literature. Their correspondence touched on subjects ranging from aesthetics to ethics.

Throughout his life, Goethe's intellectual pursuits were driven by a desire to understand the world and the place of humanity in it. His philosophical thoughts found expression in essays like "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship" and "Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years," which explore themes of education, personal development, and the role of the artist in society. His emphasis on self-discovery, exploration of the human psyche, and the integration of the arts and sciences has left an enduring mark. His works are widely studied and appreciated, leading him to be a key figure in both German Romanticism and Enlightenment thought. He died in Weimar on 22nd March, 1832, leaving behind a body of work that continues to inspire and captivate readers and thinkers around the world.

2.3 Summary and Analysis of Selected Poems:

2.3.1 Roman Elegies I

Text of the Poem: Roman Elegies I

Deign to speak to me, stones, you high palaces, deign to address me
Streets, now say but one word! Genius, will you not stir?
True, all is living yet within your sanctified precincts,
Timeless Rome; only me all still in silence receives.
O, who will whisper to me, at what small window, revealing
Her, the dear one, whose glance, searing, will quicken my blood?
Can I not guess on what roads, forever coming and going,

Only for her sake I'll spend all my invaluable time?
Still I'm seeing the sights, the churches, the ruins, the columns,
As a serious man ought to and does use his days.
That, however, will pass, and soon no more than one temple,
Amor's temple alone, claim this initiate's zeal.
Rome, you remain a whole world; but without love the whole world would
Always be less than the world, neither would Rome still be Rome.

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“Roman Elegies I” is the first poem in the collection of elegies written by Goethe during his stay in Rome. The very first line of the poem begins with an apostrophe where the speaker addresses to stones and towering palaces described as high places. The second line continues the same expression where the speaker asks the streets in Rome presenting a state that he expects some information which is not explicit yet. Although the first and second lines are the parts of the rhetorical question that is raised in the last phrase of second line, these two lines make two exclamations referring to the historical significance these stones, that are used to create towering palaces, and streets have in the poem. The poet believes that these palaces and streets have its' own spirit that has witnessed each moment in the past. In the third and fourth line, the speaker thinks that the past is still alive or present in the form of walls of towers or buildings of the Rome which he considers as a perpetual or timeless place. The speaker personifies the walls by qualifying it with the adjective ‘sanctified’ meaning ‘sacred.’ However, the speaker also knows that these sacred walls will not reveal the history or the glory of Rome in the past to him.

The speaker now contemplates that who will tell him the classical past or where he will find the evidences that will encourage him to discover the glorious past. The phrase ‘quicken’ which is used at the end of the line six is a pun used to state two different meanings – one, who will tell him the past quickly; and, second, the past will motivate him. The speaker then tells that he probably knows the person who will tell him the glory of past Rome. He intends to make the forward and backward journey from his beloved, which he usually does; and where he spends his sweet time. On his way, he notices the ruined churches and palaces, and the columns of these ruined places informing the visitors their existence in the long past. The

churches and palaces seem to be reflecting the journey of a wise and sensible man indicating another use of personification and reflecting the place it occupies in the ancestral history.

The line eleven suddenly makes a reversal as the speaker points out that soon something is going to happen as everything is going to be converted in one vast temple. He makes clear in the next line that this vast temple will be of love that ultimately brings all other glories and achievements under one concept of love which has an ability to begin the new journey of the world. In the last two lines, the speaker states that though Rome encompasses the whole world, Rome cannot be Rome without love. Thus, the poem portrays Rome as a city of artistic and historical significance, a place where the classical past coexists with the present. Goethe expresses his awe at the cultural richness of Rome, emphasizing its timeless beauty and how its history continues to inspire the present generation.

Following are some of the key points that should be explored in the analysis of the poem:

1. Context and Setting: The poem is written during Goethe's stay in Rome. It sets the scene by describing the city as a place of historical and artistic significance. The speaker marvels at rich cultural heritage of Rome and the way its ancient past mingles with the present, emphasizing its timeless allure.

2. The Awe of Rome: Goethe's admiration for Rome's art and history is palpable in the poem. He expresses his fascination with the city's grandeur, highlighting the monuments in the form of Churches, ruins of the towering palaces that surround him. This admiration showcases Goethe's engagement with classical culture and his deep appreciation for the beauty of his surroundings.

3. The Temporal Nature of Beauty: Goethe's reflections on art and beauty extend beyond the visual aspects. He contemplates the transitory nature of beauty and how art serves as a testament to human creativity and aspiration. This theme connects with his broader exploration of fleeting emotions and experiences.

4. Love: love is a dominating aspect in the poem. The speaker of the poem knows that the ancestral history can be revealed to him only by her. The poem delves into the eternal nature of love that has the power to incorporate the whole world.

5. Sensuality and Physicality: Throughout the poem, Goethe's language and imagery emphasize sensuality and physicality. The poems convey a visceral experience, inviting readers to connect with the emotions and sensations described.

2.3.2 Roman Elegies IV

Text of the Poem: Roman Elegies IV

Pious we lovers are, and in silence revere all the spirits,
Long to propitiate each, god and goddess alike.
And resemble in that you victors of Rome! To the gods of
All the world's peoples you gave dwellings, a home far from home,
Whether black and severe out of ancient basalt Egyptians
Or all white a Greek shaped it in marble that charms.
Yet no timeless one bears any grudge if by discrimination
One amongst them receives incense more precious from us.
Freely, indeed, we confess that still, as in past times, our prayers,
Daily service to one, one above all, we devote.
Roguish, lively and serious we celebrate rituals in secret,
Knowing that silence be hooves all who are pledged to that cult.
Sooner by horrible acts to our heels we should summon and fasten
Vengeful Furies, or else dare the harsh judgement of Zeus,
Suffer his rolling wheel or in fetters be clamped to the rock-face,
Than from that service of love sever our hearts and our minds.
And the goddess we serve? She is called Opportunity. Know her!
Often to you she appears, always in different shapes.
Daughter of Proteus she'd like to think herself, mothered by Thetis,
Hers by whose mutable guile many a hero was tricked.
So now her daughter tricks those inexperienced or timid,

Teasing some in their sleep, flying past others who wake;
Gladly surrendering only to one who is quick, energetic.
Gentle she is to that man, playful and tender and sweet.
Once she appeared to me too, as an olive-complexioned girl, whose
Dark and plentiful hair, glistening, covered her brow,
Shorter ringlets curled round a neck that was graceful and slender,
Wavy, unbraided hair rose from the top of her head.
And I recognized her; as she hurried I held her: and sweetly
She, most willing to learn, soon paid me back each caress.
Oh, how delighted I was! - But enough, for that era is over.
Now by you, Roman braids, tightly, all round, I'm entwined.

Summary and analysis of the Poem:

“Roman Elegies IV” is another poem written by Goethe during his stay in Rome that presents the themes of love, devotion, and the fleeting nature of opportunity. The poem describes a passionate and secretive devotion to the goddess Opportunity, drawing parallels between this devotion and the religious reverence that the Romans showed to various gods and goddesses. The poem opens with the portrayal of lovers who are described as pious and silent in their devotion that establishes religious tone since the beginning of the poem. The lovers offer their devotion to the gods and goddesses in the same way in order to propitiate each of them. The third line of the poem establishes comparison between the dedication of the lovers with the victorious Romans who built temples for gods from various cultures, whether in dark basalt or white marble brought from Egypt or Greece. It suggests that the lovers are just as dedicated and devout as the ancient Romans in their religious practices. This comparison also underlines the depth of feelings and dedication that the lovers offer to each God or Goddess that also puts forth the universality of the emotions expressed towards Gods irrespective to the cultural diversity. In fact, the last phrase in line three and further line four highlights inclusivity of Roman culture that provides space to all cultural practices; and presents the power of love and devotion which can transcend cultural boundaries.

Line seven and eight emphasize the idea that no timeless (god) holds a grudge against his or her devotees if they give more devotion to one god among them. These lines are, in fact, suggestive of the equality of the love of gods that cannot be influenced on the basis of unequal devotion or the quality of the offerings. In the next two lines, the speaker freely admits that they have devoted their prayers and daily services more to one goddess. In the next seven lines, he just describes the way they used to offer their devotion and finally in the seventeenth line, the name of the goddess is revealed as Opportunity. The speaker here admits that they keep their rituals and offerings secret as they know silence can take the responsibility of everything. The reference to Furies and Zeus in line fourteen is the allusion in the poem that refers to the Greek mythology. The Furies are also called as Erinyes who are the three goddesses of vengeance living in the Underworld which is supposed as the Greek realm of the dead people. The Furies are sent to bring justice to the people who committed crimes. Similarly, Zeus is the sky and thunder god who lives at Mount Olympus and rules as the king of all gods passing his judgements and creating the destiny of living. The speaker here implies that before their love and service is broken with the intervention of Furies or the judgement of Zeus, they desire to serve the goddess Opportunity. It indicates that the devotees do not want to expose their secret service or ritual as it would lead them to face the punishment; yet, it is also clear that they are ready to face the judgement rather than giving up their love and devotion to the goddess Opportunity. Further, the secret rituals add the element of intimacy to the poem emphasizing the devotion as personal and passionate.

After the introduction to the goddess opportunity in line seventeen, the speaker presents that this goddess appears in different shapes such as the daughter of Proteus and Thetis, who used mutable guile to trick heroes. Opportunity, being the daughter of Thetis, learnt the same tricks passed to her from heredity; and uses her tricks on those who are timid and inexperienced and passing quickly from those who are not aware. She surrenders only to those who are quick and energetic which points out the significance of seizing favourable moments in life. This elusive and selective goddess becomes gentle, playful, tender and sweet to such a man who is willing to seize the moment.

The poem then shifts to the personal tone in line twenty-five as the speaker narrates his own experiences about the goddess Opportunity who appears as a beautiful, olive-complexioned girl with dark, plentiful and glistening hair. Here, the

speaker adds a human touch to the abstract concept like opportunity that adds a depth to the narrative and highlights the joy and delight that come with seizing opportunities. He describes the unbraided or loose wavy hair of this girl which flowing down from head covering her braid (forehead) and formed in short ringlets that curled near her graceful and slender neck. The speaker did not take much time to recognize her and soon grabbed her as she was trying to slip from him. As a result, he received the affections from her in return which is a kind of relishing experience for him. The poem ends with the poet's acknowledgment that the era of passionate devotion has passed, and he is now entwined by Roman braids, possibly suggesting a change in focus or circumstances in his life which also highlights the ever-changing nature of life and love. Thus, the poem explores the connection between love and devotion, the transience of opportunities, and the idea that love can be as intense and meaningful as religious worship. It also unfolds the complexities of human emotions and the importance of seizing moments of opportunity in life.

2.3.3 Roman Elegies VI

Text of the Poem: Roman Elegies VI

How can you talk in that tone to me, so cruelly, crassly?
Where you come from are all lovers as bitter and harsh?
If my name is mud, I must bear it; for am I not fallen,
Guilty, in their eyes? But oh, fallen to no one save you!
These fine gowns are the evidence needed by envious neighbours
That this widow has ceased mourning her husband indoors.
Rashly, didn't you come to this house many times in full moonlight,
Gray, in your surplice-like cloak, hair in a clerical bun?
Didn't you, for a lark, make a point of selecting that costume?
If a prelate it is, why, then that prelate is you.
In our spiritual Rome, believe it or not, but I'll swear it,
Never a priest has received favours or solace from me.
Yes, I was poor, to my shame, and young, and well known to seducers.

Falconieri, no less, gave me the eye more than once.
And a pimp of Albani's to Ostia now tried to lure me,
Quattro Fontane now, always with notes that had weight.
Did this girl oblige? No, thanks. If there's one thing she's never
Fancied, it's those who wear gaiters, the purple or red.
For, my father said, "in the end it's you girls who are diddled",
Though my mother, I think, took a less serious view.

Summary and analysis of the Poem:

"Roman Elegies VI" is one more poem composed in Rome by Goethe that comments on the issues of social perception, judgment, reputation, and personal history. The poem opens with the rhetorical question demanding explanations from the other about his harsh and cruel tone reflected in his response. The second line poses another question; but it is more an expression of astonishment or wonder rather than a question as the speaker asks whether this harshness is a common trait among lovers belonged to other background or culture. Thus, the first two lines of the poem set emotional tone of the poem through the expressions of surprise and discomfort of the speaker in the conversation with another person belonged to different cultural background. Probably, the harsh and cruel tone of another person is indicative of his cultural origin that shaped his attitude towards love. The speaker further tells that the behaviour of a person establishes his reputation in the eyes of others; therefore, the rash and cruel behaviour may lead the person to fall in the eyes of others in terms of societal standards. The conditional clause beginning with 'If' in the third line and the subsequent question asked in third and fourth line suggest the intimate relations between the speaker and another person bringing to forth the fact that it is not only the disgrace of a person using harsh and cruel tone, but it will also lead the speaker to fall in the eyes of others or to feel guilty. The following exclamation then expresses a contrasting opinion where the speaker tells that they can be saved only when they do not fall in the eyes of no one.

The poem takes turn in line five as the speaker mentions 'fine gowns' which serve as an evidence to envious neighbours that a widow has stopped mourning her late husband indoors. The speaker here suggests that she has moved from her past and now she is engaged in new and probably romantic relationships. Hence, 'fine

gown' symbolizes speaker's transition from the past to the new present. The speaker then reminds the other the way she used to visit his house in full moonlight, dressed in a clerical-like outfit with hair in a bun. The clothing described here in the poem again suggests the intimate relations these two persons share in even the past. Further, the way costume has been suggested in the form of playful game confirms the past connection between them. She tries to think the cause of his rash behaviour and asks if it is the duties of prelate (clergyman) that leads him to act indifferently. She further swears that she did not give any favours or solace to priests in Rome although number of seducers tried their luck in wooing her. She produces a list of men including Falconieri and a pimp associated with Albani who made advances, but she never entertained them. It indicates that she had never paid attention to her seducers and is devoted to this other person only. Her statement also makes clear the secretive nature of their relations which are unknown to the people in Rome.

In the last four lines of the poem, the speaker reflects on the kind of people who are not fancied. She tells that those who wear red or purple gaiters (clerical or religious attire, symbolizing priests) are not favoured indicating that she is not attracted towards the priests. In this case, although her father opines that it is the young girl who is cheated in the end, her mother is less serious about the relationships. Thus, in the end, the speaker desires to establish romantic relations with a person outside the sphere of religion. The differing opinions of father and mother highlight here in the poem the complexities of societal expectations and individual choices in matters of love.

2.3.4 Roman Elegies XX:

Text of the Poem: Roman Elegies XX

Men distinguished by strength, by a frank and courageous nature,
All the more, it would seem, need to be deeply discreet!
Secrecy, you that subdue a whole city and rule over peoples,
Tutelar goddess to me, leading me safely through life, -
What a reversal now in my fate! When, all facetious, the Muses,
Jointly with Amor, the rogue, loosen the lips that were sealed.
Hard enough it's already to cover up royal disgraces!

Crown or Phrygian cap, neither now serves to conceal
Midas' long pointed ears. Any servant of his will have noticed,
And at once feels oppressed, awed by the secret within.
Deep he'd like to bury it, and be rid of the worrying knowledge.
Yet mere earth will not keep secrets like that one intact,
Rushes shoot from the ground and they whisper and sigh in the breezes:
"Midas, Midas the king, Midas has long pointed ears!"
Harder now it's for me to preserve my more beautiful secret,
Given such fullness of heart, easily lips overflow.
To no woman friend I can tell it; for she could reproach me;
In no male friend confide: danger could come from that source.
To proclaim my rapture to groves and the echoing hillsides
I'm not young enough now, lonely enough, come to that.
So to you; elegiacs, alone let me tell and entrust it.
How she delights me by day, fills me with rapture by night.
She, sought after by many men, skilfully shuns all the snares which
Brashly the bold ones lay, subtly the shame-faced and sly;
Lithe and clever, she gives them the slip, for she knows all the footpaths
Where her lover will wait, listening, confident, keen.
Luna, be late, for she comes! And make sure that our neighbour won't see her;
Rustle, leaves, in the shrubs! No one must hear her light step.
And, dear elegies, you, may you flourish and blossom, be cradled
Warm in the lightest of breaths lovingly wafted by air,
Then give away to all Rome, as they did, those garrulous rushes,
Secrets one fortunate pair treasured and kept to themselves.

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“Roman Elegies XX” is another poem under scrutiny where Goethe explores the themes of discretion, secrecy and desire. The poem begins with three adjectives which are, in fact, the qualities that define a man. These adjectives are strength, frankness, and courage that contribute to make a man; however, in the second line, the speaker presents another quality of a man which is more significant, according to him, than the qualities mentioned in the first line. He suggests that the deepest form of reticence, or discretion, is even more important for a man. He praises discretion as the conqueror of cities, ruler of men and the beloved goddess who has guided him through life. It seems that he is suggesting to the readers that the real ability of a man lies in keeping the secrets (reticence or discretion). In the fifth line of the poem, the speaker exclaims about his fate which has been unlocked with the entry of laughing Muse, and Amor (which is the God of Love, according to the Roman mythology). Here, the speaker alludes to the Roman God of Love to tell the rewards in his life. He also personifies discretion as a beloved goddess who has guided him safely through life. This personification highlights the importance of discretion in handling the complexities of human relationships in the society.

The poem takes a more personal turn in the next lines as the speaker discusses a secret he holds. He compares this secret to the story of King Midas, who had long ears, presenting another allusion in the poem. King Midas had long ears so he tried to conceal them under a crown and a Phrygian cap. This reference serves as a metaphor for the poet’s own secret, which becomes increasingly difficult to hide, much like Midas’ ears. The poet feels the urge to share this secret, but he struggles to find a trustworthy confidant. He cannot reveal his secret neither to a girlfriend as she will scold him nor to a friend as he would turn as a rival to him. He fears that revealing the secret could lead to shame and danger.

The speaker, therefore, turns to poetry to expose his secret. Addressing to the poetic lines of Hexameter and Pentameter (look at the initial letter which is capitalized personifying the metrical forms of composition), he begins to describe a woman who captivates him during both day and night. She skillfully avoids the advances of other men, who follow her; but she eagerly seeks the company of her lover, who waits for her attentively. This adds an element of desire and longing to the poem. The poet invokes nature, calling upon the moon (Luna) to conceal her arrival and asks the breeze to muffle the sounds of her footsteps. This reflects the idea that

nature can provide a sanctuary for lovers and their secrets. In the closing lines, the poet expresses his hope that his beloved songs will reveal the happy secret of this couple to the Romans, much like the gossiping reeds that spread the tale of King Midas' long ears. The poem explores themes of discretion, secrecy, desire, and the longing for a trustworthy confidant.

2.3.5 Mignon

Text of the Poem: Mignon

(from Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, 1795)

Knowst thou the land of flowering lemon trees?

In leafage dark the golden orange glows,

From azure sky there wafts a gentle breeze,

Calm the myrtle, high the laurel grows,

Knowst thou it still?

Aiee, aiee,

There would I go, beloved mine, with thee.

Knowst thou the house? Its column-bedded roof,

The shining hall, the inner room aglow,

The marble statues gaze but do not move:

What have they done, poor child, to hurt thee so?

Knowst thou it still?

Aiee, aiee,

There would I go, protector mine, with thee.

Knowst thou the mountain, stepping up through cloud?

The mule in mist treads out his path; a cave,

And in it dwell s the ancient dragon brood;

The crag swoops down and over it the wave;

Knowst thou it still?

Aiee, aiee,

There goes the way, father, for thee and me.

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“Mignon” is a lyrical type poem where the speaker of the poem, who is a young girl called Mignon, expresses her longing for a distant and beautiful place while reflecting on her mysterious past. It begins with the rhetorical question which is extended over the next three lines asking someone if he knows a particular land where lemon trees grow and where golden oranges shine among dark green leaves. The girl further describes a gentle breeze coming from a pure blue sky and mentions the presence of myrtle and bay trees. So, the vivid and sensory imagery is evoked at the beginning of the poem that portrays a picture of a distant land where lemon trees grow, gold oranges glisten in dark leaves, and a soft wind blows under a pure blue sky. These images create a sense of beauty and allure, and take the readers to the imaginary world of Mignon, for which she craves. She asks where the reader knows the place very well suggesting that she would like to depend on him. She further expresses a strong desire to go to this place, revealing it is where she wants to be with her beloved.

Mignon then starts inquiring about a house with columns and beams, filled with glittering rooms and a gleaming hallway. The marble figures are kept inside the hall that seems to be watching her which creates mystery in the poem. The rhetorical question in line ten poses uncertainty in the girl as she intends to confirm where the marble figures are really looking at her. These figures lead her to realise her own misery; as a result, she wonders about the significance of these figures and their connection to her own sorrowful existence. Line number five, six and seven is repeated here with a replacement of a phrase “beloved mine” with “protector mine;” presenting the longingness of Mignon again who wants to be in this house with her true guardian. It seems that her longing for this person is not only rooted in love but also in her desire for protection and security. It raises questions about her past and her need for a reliable and caring figure.

Mignon then asks if the reader is familiar with a clouded mountain mass where mules go through misty pass, and dragons dwell in caves exposing the ancient past. The cliffs in this place have been smoothed by flowing waters. In the end of the poem, line number five and six are again repeated whereas line seven is totally replaced expressing the desire of Mignon to go there, who addresses her father and states that it is the path they must follow. At this point, she probably suggests a journey into the unknown land, symbolizing her quest for self-discovery or a sense of home. Her plea to her father to continue the journey adds a sense of urgency and determination. Thus, the poem captures Mignon's sense of displacement, longing, and a connection to a distant, beautiful, and mysterious place. The poem leaves readers with a sense of intrigue about Mignon's background and the significance of the locations she describes. It reflects themes of displacement and yearning, longing for beloved, nostalgia, emotional depth and a search for belonging. Throughout the poem, Mignon expresses a strong desire to be in this idyllic place with her beloved. Her repeated refrain of "Aiee, aiee, There would I go" underscores her intense yearning for a connection with this person. This longing adds an emotional depth to the poem that further reveals enigmatic nature of Mignon's character. Her words convey complexities of emotions, from love and longing to sorrow and a desire for connection.

2.3.6 Wanderer's Night Song

Text of the Poem: Wanderer's Night Song (1776)

Thou that from the heavens art,
Every pain and sorrow stillest,
And the doubly wretched heart
Doubly with refreshment fillest,
I am weary with contending!
Why this rapture and unrest?
Peace descending
Come, ah, come into my breast!

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“Wanderer’s Night Song (1776)” is Goethe's short yet emotionally charged poem expressing yearning for peace and relief from suffering, seeking solace in the divine, and grappling with inner turmoil. The poem begins with an address to a divine or heavenly which has an ability to calm and soothe pains and sorrows. This entity has the power to provide refreshment to those who are doubly afflicted by suffering. The description of the heart as ‘doubly wretched’ points out the emotional turmoil that can be the cause of sorrow or pain. The speaker seeks comfort and relief from the suffering, addressing this entity as the source of that comfort. The desire for ‘refreshment’ implies a need to replenish the spirit and find relief from the burdens of life. The speaker then expresses weariness and fatigue which is the result of his struggles; and questions the reason behind his alternating feelings of ecstasy and unrest. The feelings of rapture and unrest present the inner conflict leading the speaker to long for stability and peace. In the end of the poem, the speaker invites the divine entity to come and enter in his heart which will lead him to experience peace and solace. Thus, the poem deals with the inner struggle of the speaker and search for peace to the restless heart. The speaker is aware that the peace he is searching can only be bestowed to him and therefore he prays to the divine entity. The simplicity and emotional depth revealed in the poem relates it to the entire human society that faces inner turmoil and desires for solace.

2.3.7 Death of Fly

Text of the Poem: Death of a Fly

(1810, from ‘Sixteen Parables’)

With greed she quaffs and quaffs the traitorous drink,
Unceasing, from the start wholly enticed,
She feels so far so good, and every link
In her delicate little legs is paralyzed –
No longer deft they are, to groom her wings,
No longer dexterous, to preen her head;
Her life expended, thus, in pleasurings,

Her little feet soon have nowhere to tread;
So does she drink and drink, and while she does,
Comes misty death her myriad eyes to close.

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“Death of a Fly” is Goethe’s another short poem written in 1810 as part of his collection “Sixteen Parables.” It provides a brief and vivid portrayal of a fly’s demise in a metaphorical way after being enticed by a treacherous drink. In fact, it leads the readers to think on the consequences of excessive indulgence and the transient nature of earthly pleasures. The poem opens with the adjective ‘greed’ presenting the nature of a fly that cannot resist a tempting and deceitful drink. The repetition of the word ‘quaff’ here suggests that the fly is unable to resist its enticement and is attracted towards the drink which is described as traitorous qualifying the allure of the drink. The temptation of the fly for the drink is unceasing (continuous) from the beginning symbolically signifying the seductive nature of worldly pleasures that never provide satisfaction and the consistent attempts of people for immediate gratification. The fly started experiencing a sense of pleasure believing that she has been at the extreme point and far away from dangers. The sense of satisfaction derived from the pleasures of moment leads the fly to believe that everything is going well; but it is an illusion presented in disguise of a moment’s pleasure. The consequences of this temptation are soon visible as in the fourth line of the poem as the fly is depicted as paralyzed. The hyphen used in the end of the fourth line indicates the further explanations provided in the poem in order to show the way fly has become paralyzed losing its dexterity. The delicate little legs of the fly lost their deft (skills) and cannot groom the wings, and preen the head. Thus, the loss of physical abilities of the fly metaphorically indicates the loss of control in pursuit of fleeting pleasures that further makes helpless to the fly to groom its wings or preen head. Consequently, the fly spends its life in pursuit of fleeting pleasures leaving it with nowhere to go and nothing to do. It is engrossed in the momentary delights of the life in such a way that it neglects other aspects of its existence. This highlights the trade-off between the immediate gratification of desires and the potential neglect of other essential aspects of life. The last two lines in the poem summarize the final outcome of fly’s continuous drinking as it neglects, closing its myriad eyes, even the death approaching to it. Here, death is described as misty which descends slowly upon the

fly to close its countless efforts made in attempt of instant gratification neglecting the inevitability of death.

Thus, the poem gives a moral lesson to its readers that the life spent in excessive indulgence, which is but a momentary pleasure, will lead to the downfall and eventual demise; therefore, it is necessary to lead a balanced life.

2.3.8 Erlking

Text of the Poem: The Erlkonig (c.1782)

Who rides by night in the wind so wild?

It is the father, with his child.

The boy is safe in his father's arm ,

He holds him tight, he keeps him warm.

My son, what is it, why cover your face?

Father, you see him, there in that place,

The elfin king with his cloak and crown?

It is only the mist rising up, my son.

“Dear little child, will you come with me?

Beautiful games I'll play with thee;

Bright are the flowers we'll find on the shore,

My mother has golden robes full score.”

Father, o father, and did you not hear

What the elfin king breathed into my ear?

Lie quiet, my child , now never you mind:

Dry leaves it was that click in the wind.

“Come along now, you’re a fine little lad,
My daughters will serve you, see you are glad;
My daughters dance all night in a ring,
They’ll cradle and dance you and lullaby sing.”

Father, now look, in the gloom, do you see
The elfin daughters beckon to me?
My son, my son, I see it and say :
Those old willows, they look so gray.

“I love you, beguiled by your beauty I am,
If you are unwilling I’ll force you to come!”
Father, his fingers grip me, o
The elfin king has hurt me so!

Now struck with horror the father rides fast,
His gasping child in his arm to the last,
Home through thick and thin he sped:
Locked in his arm, the child was dead.

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“The Erlkonig,” is a most famous and haunting ballad by Goethe that presents the haunting and tragic tale of a father and his young son encountering a supernatural entity known as the Erlkonig, often translated as the “Elf King” or “Alder King.”. Narrated through the third person perspective with four distinct voices of the father, the son, the Erlkonig, and the narrator, the poem is articulated in dramatic and rhythmic structure. The poem opens with the observations of the narrator who finds that someone is travelling very late in the night through a deep forest. As the darkness of the night surrounds the riding person, the narrator initially could not

identify who exactly this person is; but then soon clarifies that it is a father riding on horseback with his young child in his arms. The father clasps the child tightly, trying to keep him warm and safe. From the beginning of the poem, a pervasive atmosphere of foreboding and unease is established, especially in the third and fourth lines as the father is trying to make his son safe. The elements like wind, night and darkness further contribute to a sense of impending danger.

The narrative of the poem shifts to the voices of father and son in the fifth and sixth, seventh lines respectively, where the father, in his attempt make his son fearless, asks the son why he has hidden his face, and why he has been scared. The terrified child answers that he sees the Erlkonig, a mythical figure associated with death and the supernatural, and his presence is felt as a sinister force throughout the poem. The child tells that the Erlkonig with his crown and a flowing cloak; but the father dismisses his fear, attributing it to the rustling leaves and the trail of mist they see. It is very much clear at this stage that the child hides his face due to his fear of Erlkonig which then continues to intensify with the development of the poem. The father tries to reassure the child that they are safe, trying to calm him down.

The fourth narrative voice of Erlkonig joins here in the ninth line interrupting the conversation of the father and the son, and beckoning the son to come with him. The Erlkonig promises the son that they will play fine and lovely games, and he will have beautiful flowers as well as gold garments if he comes with him. The son becomes increasingly agitated and asks his father if he can hear the Erlkonig's whispers. The father tries to convince the son that it is just the wind rustling through dry leaves. The Erlkonig continues to tempt the son, offering him the company of his lovely daughters who will sing, dance, and rock him to sleep. The child becomes more distressed, claiming to see the Erlkonig's daughters standing in the shadows. The way Erlkonig tempts the son adds the quality of eerie and seductiveness to the character of Erlkonig. The father is now filled with dread as sees the daughters of Erlkonig standing there; but he then assures his son that he can see only the shadow ancient willow trees.

In his attempt, the Erlkonig tells the son that he is charmed by the son's lovely form and threatens to use force if the son refuses to go along with him. The questions of the son to his father are now turned in exclamation indicating that the son has realised the grips of Erlkonig. He cries out in fear, saying that the Erlkonig has finally seized him and is hurting him. He pleads with his father to save him from the

Erlkonig's grasp. The poem ends with the father racing to their destination in terror, but by the time they reach their house, the son is dead in his arms. Thus, the abrupt and sorrowful ending of the poem leaves a haunting impression, presenting a chilling revelation of the supernatural truth that the Erlkonig has finally claimed the life of the son. The poem explores themes of fear, supernatural encounters, and the helplessness of a parent in the face of a son's terror. The shifting voices of the father, the son and the Erlkonig contribute to the dramatic rhythm of the poem and create the atmosphere of urgency and tension leading the readers to contemplate over the existence of supernatural entity in the form of Erlkonigin reality or it is a product of the son's imagination. In addition to it, the setting of the poem in the forest at night further contributes to the sense of isolation revealing the emotional depth and intensity in the darkness of the night.

2.3.9 Check Your Progress:

- 1) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is born at _____
 a) Berlin b) Frankfurt c) Hamburg d) Munich
- 2) *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) is a _____ novel.
 a) epistolary b) picaresque c) sentimental d) adventure
- 3) All things are _____ in your sacred walls eternal Rome.
 a) dead b) natural c) alive d) beautiful
- 4) Rome cannot be Rome without _____
 a) history b) man c) her d) love
- 5) The deepest _____ makes more to man than strength, generosity and courage.
 a) reticence b) sincerity c) generosity d) brevity
- 6) _____ has long ears.
 a) Erlkonig b) King Midas c) Charlemagne d) Sigismund
- 7) The speaker will tell his secretes to _____, and Pentameter.
 a) Tetrameter b) Heptameter c) Hexameter d) Octameter
- 8) The figures of _____ are looking at Mignon?

but his mental health deteriorated over time, leading to periods of hospitalization and unstable living conditions. Despite his struggles, he continued to write prolifically and produced some of his most renowned works during this period.

The novel *Hyperion* is considered as the major work of Holderlin which appeared in two parts in 1797 and 1799. The novel is also titled as *The Hermit in Greece* (Hyperion oder Der Eremit in Griechenland), and written in epistolary form where a spiritual journey and struggle for personal ideals is explored through the incidents in the life of its protagonist. By the time of 1799, he has published various little lyrical type poems; but he failed to attract the attention of literary circle of the time. He has also attempted to produce a literary-philosophical periodical called "Iduna". He has published his translations of Greek dramas of Sophocles in 1804, but the works suffered with translations of Greek idioms into German. His lyrical and philosophical work "Hyperion's Song of Fate" explores the concept of destiny. His poems collected as "Hymns" which includes "Germanien," "Der Rhein," and "Patmos," express his admiration for nature, history, and the divine appear in 1808. "Der Rhein," and "Patmos," are supposed as the longest and most densely charged hymns in the collection.

Holderlin's later poetry includes "Bread and Wine" which reflects his deepening introspection and concern for spiritual matters. He has also written a drama entitled *The Death of Empedocles* which remain unfinished where he portrays the struggles and death of the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles. His odes, which are referred as the "late odes," feature complex metaphors and a highly individualized language. These poems reflect his introspective thoughts and contemplation of nature, human existence, and the divine. He spent the later years of his life in isolation due to his declined mental health. He died on 7th June, 1843 in Tubingen in his illness.

2.5 Summary and Analysis of the Selected Poems

2.5.1 Man

Text of the Poem: Man

Scarcely had the ancient mountain tops
Sprouted from the waters, O Earth,
And the first green islands, redolent

With young saplings, breathed delight
Through the May air over the ocean,
And the joyful eye of the sun-god
Looked down on his firstlings, the trees and flowers,
Laughing children of his youth, your offspring,

When, on the fairest of those islands.
Born after a warm night, in the dawn light long ago,
Earth's most beautiful child
Lay under clustering grapes. And the boy
Looked up to Father Helios, who knew him,
And tasting the sweet berries, he chose
The sacred vine for his nurse.
As soon as he is grown, the beasts
Fear him, for he is other than they—
A man. He is not like you and not
Like the father, for boldly the high
Soul of the father in him is united
With your joys and your madness for always,
O Earth. Rather would he resemble
Eternal Nature, mother of gods, the terrible.

Therefore, O Earth, his presumption
Drives him away from your breast, and your tender
Gifts are in vain; ever and ever too high
Does the proud heart beat!

Leaving the sweet meadow of his shores
Man must go out into flowerless waters.
And though his orchards shine like the starry night
With golden fruit, yet he digs

Caves for himself in the mountains and grubs in the pit
Far from the sacred ray of his father.
Faithless also to the sun-god, who
Loves not toilers and mocks at cares.

Ah! the birds of the wood breathe freer, and though
The breast of man more wildly and proudly heaves,
His arrogance turns to fear, and the delicate
Flowers of tranquillity bloom not for long.

R. F. C. HULL

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

Friedrich Holderlin's poem "Man" deals with the relationships between humanity, nature and divinity; further, commenting on the human condition and the consequences of his arrogance. The poem is divided in six stanzas containing each of them unequal lines; and some of them continue the next stanza using the enjambment. The first stanza of the poem opens with the description of Earth in its early stages, with newly formed mountains and islands created from the water. The Earth has become green with young saplings of trees that have been recently flowering during the month of May over the ocean. The sun-god takes delight watching this creation of the natural world in the form of trees and flowers for the first time on the Earth. The Earth stands here for the nurturing mother whereas the sun-god represents a benevolent father figure taking delight in his offspring. Thus,

the first stanza sets the poem in the pristine natural world where nature started flourishing in harmony developing the Earth into a fairest island.

The second stanza begins with the description of Earth as fairest island where the most beautiful child takes birth in the dawn light after a warm night. The child becomes a boy who looks at his father – the sun-god described in the first stanza – Helios who already knows that the boy is his creation. The boy starts using natural resources which is indicated through the phrase ‘tasting the sweet berries’ and pointing out the fact that the man is depended on nature for his substance. The boy then chooses sacred vine as his nurse symbolizes the emergence of human culture and the cultivation. As the boy grows, he becomes different from other animals and is identified as a man. Despite being the child of Earth and Helios, he has neither the qualities of Earth nor of Helios; rather he combines the wisdom of Helios and the joys and madness of Earth. In fact, he resembles Eternal Nature, which is a mother of gods and, a powerful and fearsome force.

The third stanza shifts the tone of the poem established in the first two stanzas where man is depicted as the distinct animal yet living in harmony with nature creating his culture and living on the agriculture. However, in the third stanza, the presumption of the man drives him away from the Earth proving all the natural gifts in vain. The speaker here exclaims that does man's heart beats too proudly indicating his exploitative nature. The fourth stanza continues with the with man's estrangement from the natural world which is extended over the fifth stanza. The man leaves behind the sweet meadow of his shores and enters into the flowerless waters. Despite the abundant orchards and golden fruit, he chooses to dwell in caves in the mountains, far from the sun's divine influence. Here, man's arrogance is depicted as a driving force that estranges him from both Earth and the sun-god and leads to dwell in isolation with unfulfilled desires. His isolation is not only physical but also a spiritual one as he becomes faithless to Helios.

The final stanza of the poem concludes with a stark contrast between the freedom of birds in the woods and the inner turmoil of man. Although man feels himself more proud and practical, his arrogance has now turned into a fear; and the delicate flowers of tranquillity do not last long for him. Thus, the poem is philosophical contemplation representing complex relationship between humanity, nature, and the divine; and the estrangement of man from nature and divine in pursuit of his ambition and pride leading him to separate from his inner peace and harmony.

2.5.2 Sunset

Text of the Poem: SUNSET

Where are you? Drunk and drowsy, my soul is filled
With all your rapture; for it was only now
That I had listened as, with golden
Tones, the enchanting youth, the sun-god,

On heaven's lyre was playing his evensong;
The woods and hills around were resounding all.
But far away, where humble nations
Worship him still, he is now residing.

LOLA GRUENTHAL

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“Sunset” is another poem of Holderlin which is brief yet evocative one as it captures the longing of the speaker for the transient beauty of a sunset and the presence of the sun-god. The poem opens with a rhetorical question asking the sun's whereabouts. The speaker's soul is drunk and drowsy with the ecstasy or rapture of the sun highlighting his profound emotional and sensory experience. The speaker had recently listened about the sun-god, who is described as an enchanting youth, playing evensong with a golden tune on heaven's lyre. The phrase ‘golden tune’ is evocative of grandeur and divine beauty metaphorically representing the glorious sunset in the sky. The speaker creates an image of musical performance where the sun-god is descending playing his evening song.

The second line in second stanza begins with the projection of nature's response to the sunset beauty. The woods and hills are described as ‘resounding all’ signifying that the nature is echoing and responding to the sun's evensong. Nature is personified here in the poem in order to depict the connection between the elements of nature and the sun. In the last two lines, the speaker laments on the departure of the sun. The conjunction ‘but’ used in the beginning of the second last line marks the shift in tone indicating the loss of beauty and pleasure referred before as well as longing for

it. The sun has gone far away now to reside at humble nations where he is still worshipped indicating the separation of evening beauty from the speaker's world. The poem ends with the contemplation that humble nations still provide dwelling to the sun, suggesting the perpetual reverence and divinity of the sun as well as the spiritual and cultural significance of those nations.

2.5.3 To the Fates

Text of the Poem: To The Fates

Grant me just one summer, powerful ones,
And just one autumn for ripe songs,
That my heart, filled with that sweet
Music, may more willingly die within me.

The soul, denied its divine heritage in life,
Won't find rest down in Hades either.
But if what is holy to me, the poem
That rests in my heart, succeeds —

Then welcome, silent world of shadows!
I'll be content, even though it's not my own lyre
That leads me downwards. Once I'll have
Lived like the gods, and more isn't necessary.

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

“To The Fates” is a emotionally charged poem of Holderlin reflecting on the role of poetry, creativity, and mortality in the life of a poet. The title of the poem makes it clear that the poem is addressed to the Fates asking a permission to allow him a period of one summer and one autumn to produce a song. The verb ‘Grant’ – with which the poem opens – points out the nature of a request which is totally formal one leading the readers to realize that the Fate is a powerful forces which has

an ability to control human destiny. In fact, the poem alludes to the God Fate in Greek mythology who controls the destiny of human beings. The speaker seeks permission for only a short period of time that is only one summer and one autumn to compose a beautiful song, indicating a limited span in the life of the speaker dedicated to compose creative and mature poetry. The poems he is going to compose will create a sweet music that will fill his heart.

The second stanza of the poem presents the yearnings of the speaker for that short but creative season and tells that his soul will not find peace even in death if he is denied its divine heritage in life. He believes that the ability to compose fine verses is, in fact, a heritage passed to him through divinity; and therefore, such a person will not meet his final destination in the form of Hades or death. He expresses the hope that the holy poem residing in the his heart will succeed unfolding the idea that poetic expressions are the powerful tools to open up one's innermost thoughts and emotions which can provide a sense of fulfilment and transcendence. Rather, composing fine poems is the only holy work for him.

The last stanza of the poem reveals the idea of mortality and the eventual journey in the silent world of shadows. The world of shadows represents death which is further qualified as the silent world. The speaker is satisfied, content in this world of death even if he will not be able to use his own lyre as the lyre driving him downwards will be controlled by natural forces or divinity. However, he will be satisfied as he has lived a life akin to the gods during his creative period which is more important than the afterlife. The speaker probably deliberates on the idea that the act of creating and leaving behind a legacy through art is a way for the poet to attain a sense of immortality. Thus, the poem is a reflection on the desire for a brief but fruitful creative season in life, where the speaker can compose beautiful poetry which will lead him to achieve a sense of purpose and immortality, even in the face of mortality.

2.5.4 Hyperion's Song

Text of the Poem: HYPERION'S SONG

You walk above in the light
On gentle grounds, O souls of the blessed!
Heavenly brilliant breezes

Move you with ease,
As the touch of the artist on
Strings that are sacred.

Fatelessly, like the slumbering
Infant, breathe the divine;
Chastely sealed,
In humility budding,
Blooms their spirit
Ever alive,
And the eyes of the blessed
Gaze with serene and
Infinite clearness.

To us, though, is given
No rest wherever we go:
The suffering mortals
Are vanishing, falling
Blindly from hour to
Hour, like the water
From precipice hurtled
To precipice, down through
Long-drawn-out years to uncertain ends.
LOLA GRUENTHAL

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

Holderlin's "Hyperion's Song" is another poem reflecting on the differences between the heavenly existence of blessed souls and the perpetual suffering of mortal beings. The poem opens with addressing to the blessed souls who live in the heavens and walk above in the light on gentle grounds. These heavenly souls are in a state of bliss, moved by heavenly, brilliant breezes as gently as an artist's touch on sacred strings. The metaphorical image portrayed here in the form of artist who touches gently the strings emphasizes the eternal and harmonious nature of blissful souls in heavenly realm. The second stanza continues the description of these heavenly souls who exist fatelessly like a slumbering infant and breathe the divine. The speaker suggests that the heavenly souls are not destined like human being on the Earth; rather they can directly access the divine without any efforts which also highlights their purity and transcendence. Their spirits are pure or chaste, budding in humility; and they bloom forever, indicating their perpetual growth and spiritual awakening. The eyes of the blessed souls gaze with serene and infinite clarity, signifying their enlightened perspective.

The third stanza of the poem establishes a sharp contrast with the descriptions made in earlier stanzas as the focus now shifts to the Earthly creatures that are the human beings who are not blessed with perpetual rest wherever they go. The prepositional phrase at the beginning of the third stanza and the subsequent adverb 'though' separates the human beings and places them against the blessed souls. Unlike heavenly souls, they are suffering mortals vanishing and falling blindly from one moment to another. The speaker, here, evokes a sense of futility and uncertainty to the existence of human being. The fall of these divine souls is compared with the water cascading down precipices over extended periods of time, eventually reaching uncertain ends. The uncertain ends of the flowing water essentially suggest the relentless journey of human beings without a clear destination. Thus, the poem presents themes of divine transcendence, the transitory nature of human life as well as the difference between the existence in heaven and Earth.

2.5.5 Memories

Text of the Poem: MEMORIES

The Northeast blows,
The dearest among the winds
To me, because of the fiery spirit
It promises, bearing good voyage to the sailors.
But go now and greet
The beautiful Garonne
And the gardens of Bordeaux
There where along the precipitous bank
The pathway runs, and into the river
The brook plunges; but over against it
Watches forever a noble pair
Of oaks and silver poplars;

Still it comes back to me well, and how
The elm forest, inclining, sways
The widespread summits above the mill;
In the courtyard, meanwhile, a fig tree grows.
There it is that on feast days go
The swarthy women
Upon silken ground,
At the time of March
When night is equal with day.
And over slow passes.
Heavy with golden dreams,

Drift wild airs bringing sleep.

But let one hand me,
Full of the dark light.
The fragrant cup.
That I might rest; for sweet
Sleep would be, under shadows.
It is not good
Soulless to be, with mortal
Thoughts. Yet good
Is converse, and to say
The heart's meaning, to hear much
Of days of love,
And events, the doing of deeds.

But where are the friends? Bellarmin
With the companion? Many a one
Bears shyness, timid to go to the source;
The beginning of riches is truly
In the sea. They, the seafarers,
Like painters, assemble
The beautiful of the earth, and do not disdain
Winged war, and suffer
To live alone, yearlong, under
The leafless mast, where the night is not lit up
With the glow-lamps of the town's feast days.

Nor the playing of strings nor innate dancing.

But now to Indians

The men are gone;

Deserted is the airy peak

On mountains of vines from which the descending

Dordogne comes,

And together with the magnificent

Garonne, great as a sea.

The river goes out. The sea, though,

Takes and gives recollection,

And love, too, fixes the eyes intently.

What endures, however, poets create.

VERNON WATKINS

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

Holderlin's poem "Memories" deals with the personal memories of different places and experiences. The poem begins with the reference to the blowing Northeast wind which is dearest wind to the poet. He explains further the reason why he calls it dearest wind – because it promises fiery spirit bearing good voyage to the sailors, indicating good fortune and blessings to them. Line fifth suddenly marks a change in the tone of the poem as the poet instructs the Northeast wind to greet the beautiful Garonne River and the gardens of Bordeaux. The beauty of the river is further marked in next lines of the poem where the pathway runs along the precipitous banks and little streams joins the river. The noble pair of oaks and silver poplars enhances the beauty of the landscape which also serves as a timeless and watchful presence in the idyllic setting of the poem.

The second stanza reveals other memories of the poet who remembers the elm forest that sways and spreads above a mill. A fig tree grows in the courtyard of the mill, where swarthy women in their silk gather during the feast days organized in the

month of March when day and night are of equal length. During this period, a wild air passes slowly bringing sleep. The wind is personified here which as the golden arms, specifying the seasonal qualities. The third stanza presents the desires of poet who wants to be handed a fragrant cup filled with the dark light to find rest and sweet sleep under the shadows. His desire suggests that he intends to spend much of the time remembering the past moments or the dark light in his life. At this time, he feels that it is necessary to share his experiences as he thinks the thoughts are mortal one unless they are passed. Therefore, being a soulless or friendless is not good according to him. According to him, it is essential to communicate heartfelt thoughts and experiences that can also establish a meaningful connection between the humans.

In the fourth stanza of the poem, the poet looks for the friends, especially Bellarmin and his companion. Some of the friends among many are shy and timid, and may not reveal their sources. He suggests that the source of riches is the sea where seafarers, like painters, gather beautiful things and disdain in winged war which leads them to suffer loneliness of living alone for the years under the leafless mast. Their willingness to live alone for the sake of riches keeps them far away from the glorious festivities of the town where nights are celebrated with the music and dance. The final stanza concludes the poem with reference to India where men prefer to go leaving behind the vine-covered mountains of Dordogne and the magnificent Garonne River. The sea takes away the river's flow, but memories and love continue to hold a special place in the poet's heart.

2.5.6 Ripened the Fruit

Text of the Poem: RIPENED THE FRUIT . . .

Ripened the fruit, in fire cast, baked
And tried on the earth, and it is the law
That all go back into it, like snakes,
Prophetic, dreaming on
The hills of the heavens. And there is so much
Like a burden
Of logs on the shoulders
That has to be borne. Though the roads

Are not right. For discrepant,
As horses, go the tethered
Elements and the immemorial
Laws of the earth. And ever
A longing strains after the fetterless. But there is so much
That has to be borne. And one must be true.
Let us look not before, though,
Nor after. May we be rocked, rather, as
A boat is cradled at sea.

KATE FLORES

Summary and Analysis of the Poem:

Holderlin's poem "Ripened the Fruit . . ." presents the profound exploration of the human condition, its challenges, and the need to accept and endure them with steadfastness and authenticity. The poem opens with the description of the ripened fruit which is cast into fire, baked, and tested on the earth. The metaphorical image of the ripened fruit stands for the life which has been shaped with the various experiences derived from the trials and tests. Then, all returns to the earth like snakes dreaming of the hills of the heaven, suggesting the cycle of life and death. The reference to snakes as prophetic and dreaming on the hills of the heavens adds a mystical dimension to this concept. Yet, there is a heavy burden to be borne, symbolized by logs on shoulders. The burden alike to logs on shoulder represents the natural order according to which the human beings need to live and face the challenges, responsibilities, and struggles of the life.

The poet suggest that the road of the life is not right, indicating the hardships of life. The challenges of human life are compared with the horses tethered and the immemorial laws of the Earth. This image conveys the idea that various elements of life may be in conflict with one another. There is also a sense of longing expressed indicating desire for freedom from these burdens and constraints along with the acknowledgement there is burden that needs to be carried out during the life. At this moment, the poet points out the importance of staying true to oneself. It encourages

living in the present moment, without thinking on the past or worrying about the future. The final metaphor compares life to a boat being cradled at sea suggesting that, despite the challenges and uncertainties, one can find solace and stability in the rhythm and movement of life itself. This last image evokes a sense of surrender and acceptance, as the boat is rocked by the sea's movements. Thus, the poem is a philosophical exploration on the unavoidable circumstances of the life which puts the human beings continuously on the trials underlining the significance of being true to oneself in the life so as to face the challenges.

2.5.7 Check Your Progress:

- 1) Young saplings of trees have been recently flowering during the month of _____
a) May b) June c) April d) August
- 2) The boy looked up to Father _____
a) Zeus b) Helios c) Hercules d) Opportunity
- 3) Man digs _____ for himself in the mountains.
a) mines b) gold c) caves d) earth
- 4) The speaker's soul is filled with sun's _____
a) rays b) gold rays c) evensong d) rapture
- 5) The _____ was playing his evensong on heaven's lyre.
a) sun-god b) Helios c) woods d) hill
- 6) The poem 'To the Fates . . .' alludes to the _____ in Greek mythology.
a) Helios b) God Fate c) Hades d) Zeus
- 7) The phrase 'silent world of shadows' in the poem 'To the Fates . . .' represents _____
a) life b) human shadow
c) silence d) death
- 8) _____ walk above in the light on gentle grounds.

2.7 Exercise:

A) Answer the following questions in 450-500 words.

1. Discuss in detail the German Romantic movement.
2. Write a note on Goethe's Roman Elegies and discuss each of them in detail.
3. Elucidate different themes of the poem 'Roman Elegies XX'
4. Comment on various themes reflected in 'Mignon.'
5. Comment on the haunting and tragic tale presented in the poem 'The Erlkonig'
6. Analyse Holderlin's 'Man' as a relationship between humanity, nature and divinity.
7. Write a note on the poem 'To the Fates.'
8. Elucidate the difference between heavenly and earthly souls in the poem 'Hyperion's Song'
9. Comment on the memories of the poet represented in the poem 'Memories.'

B) Write short notes in about 300-350 words.

1. Comment on the features of German Romanticism.
2. Discuss the contribution of various figures in the development of German Romanticism.
3. Explore the themes presented in the poem 'Roman Elegies I'
4. Elaborate briefly 'Roman Elegies IV'
5. Write a note on 'Roman Elegies VI'
6. Discuss Longingness of Mignon.
7. Comment on the yearnings of the speaker in 'Wanderer's Night.'
8. Analyse the poem 'Death of a Fly.'
9. Discuss longing of the speaker for the transient beauty in the poem 'Sunset.'
10. Explore the theme of the poem "Ripened the Fruit . . ."

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Unit-3

Arthur Rimbaud

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3.0 Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Trace the development of verse tradition through French Symbolist Poetry.
- Understand the trends in French Poetry
- Understand major concepts in the French Symbolist Poetry
- Understand the French Symbolist Poetry in historical and social context.
- Understand themes in the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud
- Interpret and aesthetically appreciate the major concerns in the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud.

3.1 Contents

Arthur Rimbaud (Poems selected from Arthur Rimbaud: Collected Poems. Translated by Martin Sorrell, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

- 1. 'Evil'
- 2. Asleep in the Valley'
- 3. The Dresser
- 4.'Seated',
- 5. Paris War-Cry
- 6. 'Seven-year-old Poets'
- 7. Drunken Boat'
- 8. Evening Prayers
- 9. Vowels
- 10.'What do they mean to us..."
- 11. 'Memory'
- 12. O seasons, o chateaux..."

3.2 Introduction

Definition: To understand the French Symbolist Poetry, we need to begin with the definition of the concept of 'Symbolism'. The Merrium-Webster Dictionary,

1. 'Symbolism is the art or practice of using symbols especially by investing things with a symbolic meaning or by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations: such as
 - A. artistic imitation or invention that is a method of revealing or suggesting immaterial, ideal, or otherwise intangible truth or states.
 - B. the use of conventional or traditional signs in the representation of divine beings and spirits.'
2. A system of symbols or representations.

Britannica Dictionary definition of Symbolism is as follows:

1. the use of symbols to express or represent ideas or qualities in literature, art, etc.
2. the particular idea or quality that is expressed by a symbol.

The Symbolist Movement, a loosely organized literary and artistic movement, originated with a group of French poets in the late 19th century. It spread to painting and the theatre, and influenced the European and American literatures of the 20th century in different ways. Symbolist artists tried to express their individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of highly symbolized language.

The Symbolist poets include- the Frenchmen Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Jules Laforgue, Henri de Régnier, René Ghil, and Gustave Kahn; the Belgians Émile Verhaeren and Georges Rodenbach; the Greek-born Jean Moréas; and Francis Viéle-Griffin and Stuart Merrill, who were American by birth. The principal Symbolist critic was Rémy de Gourmont. The Symbolist criteria were applied to the novel by Joris-Karl Huysmans and to the theatre by the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck. The French poets Paul Valéry and Paul Claudel are considered to be direct 20th-century heirs of the Symbolists writers.

In the early period, Rimbaud was influenced by the **Parnassianism** in the French poetry which began in the period of 19th century (1860-1890). It was the positivist period occurring after romanticism and prior to symbolism. This cult was influenced by the author Theophile Gautier and philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. The doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake' was followed by the poets and authors. The poets tried to make the poetry perfect and faultless by removing the loose structure, undue political activism and excessive sentimentality of the romantic poetry. They selected the exotic and (neo-)classical subjects which they treated with rigidity and emotional detachment derived from Schopenhauer. Though being originated from France, Parnassianism was not restricted to French authors. Olavo Bilac, Alberto de Oliveira became the careful craftsmen of this cult.

3.3 Symbolism:

Thus, Symbolism originated in the revolt of certain French poets who were against the rigid conventions governing both technique and theme in traditional French poetry, described as Parnassian poetry. The Symbolists wished to liberate poetry from its expository functions and its formalized oratory. They wanted it as the fleeting, immediate sensations of man's inner life and experience. They attempted to extract the ineffable intuitions and sense impressions of man's inner life and communicated the underlying mystery of existence through a free and highly

personal use of metaphors and images. The forerunners of the Symbolist poetry were Verlaine and Rimbaud who were immensely influenced by the poetry and thought of Charles Baudelaire in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857).

Charles Baudelaire focused the concept of the *correspondances* between the senses and combined with the ideal of Wagner to synthesize the arts to produce an original conception of the musical qualities of poetry. Thus, to the Symbolists, the theme within a poem could be developed and “orchestrated” by the sensitive manipulation of the harmonies, tones, and colours inherent in carefully chosen words. The Symbolists’ attempt to emphasize the essential and innate qualities of the poetic medium was based on their conviction of the supremacy of art over all other means of expression or knowledge. This in turn was partly based on their idealistic conviction that underlying the materiality and individuality of the physical world was another reality whose essence could best be glimpsed through the subjective emotional responses contributing to and generated by the work of art.

The principal Symbolist poets include the Frenchmen Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Jules Laforgue, Henri de Régnier, René Ghil, and Gustave Kahn; the Belgians Émile Verhaeren and Georges Rodenbach; the Greek-born Jean Moréas; and Francis Viélé-Griffin and Stuart Merrill, who were American by birth. Rémy de Gourmont was the principal Symbolist critic. Symbolist criteria were applied most successfully to the novel by Joris-Karl Huysmans and to the theatre by the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck. The French poets Paul Valéry and Paul Claudel are sometimes considered to be direct 20th-century heirs of the Symbolists.

The masterpieces by Verlaine, *Romances sans paroles* (Songs Without Words; 1874) and Mallarmé’s *L’Après-midi d’un faune* (1876) initiated a growing interest in the emerging innovations of progressive French poets. On September 18, 1886, the Symbolist Manifesto was published by Jean Moréas in *Le Figaro* in which he attacked the descriptive tendencies of Realist theatre, Naturalist novels and Parnassian poetry. He replaced the term *décadent*, which was used to describe Baudelaire and others with the terms *symboliste* and *symbolism*. Many symbolist reviews and magazines emerged in the late 1880s which defended the movement. Mallarmé became the leader of the Symbolists, and his *Divagations* (1897) remains the most valuable statement of the movement’s aesthetics. Many Symbolist poets resorted to the composition of prose poems and the use of *vers libre* (free verse) in

their efforts to escape rigid metrical patterns and to achieve freer poetic rhythms, which has now become a fundamental form of contemporary poetry.

3.4 Arthur Rimbaud: Life and Works:

Arthur Rimbaud, in full **Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud**, (born October 20, 1854, Charleville, France—died November 10, 1891, Marseille), French poet and adventurer who won renown in the Symbolist movement and markedly influenced modern poetry. He was also known for his transgressive and surreal themes and for his influence on modern literature and arts, prefiguring surrealism.

Childhood

Rimbaud's childhood was spent at Charleville in the Ardennes region of northeastern France. He was the second son of an army captain and a local farmer's daughter. His father spent little time with the family and left the children to the sole care of their mother who was a strong-willed, bigoted woman. She poured all her ambitions on her younger son, Arthur. Though, he was pious and obedient outwardly, he was a child prodigy and a model pupil who astonished the teachers at the Collège de Charleville by his brilliance in all subjects, especially literature. Rimbaud was a voracious reader who familiarized himself very fast with the major French writers of both the past and present. He had a particular talent for Latin verse. In August 1870, he won the first prize for a Latin poem at the Concours Académique. It was his first published poem that had appeared in January 1870 in *La Revue pour Tous*. Rimbaud seemed obsessed with poetry, spending hours playing with rhyme. This firm grounding in the craft of versification gave him a complete, even extra confidence and an ambition to be acknowledged by the currently fashionable Parnassian poets, of whom he was soon producing virtuoso pastiches.

At the very young age, Rimbaud found his own distinctive voice in poems in which the sentiments swing between two extremes: revolt against a repressive hometown environment, and a passionate desire for freedom and adventure. He presented all of the unhappy adolescent's loathing and longing in these poems, which are already remarkable works. They express his disgust with the constraints of small-town life, its hypocrisies, its self-satisfaction and apathy. The phrases of sentimentality, and religion itself become the targets of his fierce cynicism. Equally ringing is the lyrical language that voices Rimbaud's yearning for freedom and predominance. Based on exquisitely perceived sense impressions, the imagery in

these poems expresses a longing for sensual union with the natural world. These early poems are characteristically Rimbaudian in their directness and power.

Rimbaud had started taking a keen interest in politics by the time the Franco-German War began in July 1870. Upon the war's outbreak the school in Charleville closed, that event marked the end of his formal education. The war served to intensify Rimbaud's rebelliousness; the elements of irreverence and scatology in his poetry grew more intense, the tone more strident, and the images more grotesque and even hallucinatory. Reading widely in the town library, Rimbaud soon became involved with revolutionary socialist theory. In an impulsive attempt to put his hopes for revolution into practice, he ran away to Paris that August but was arrested at the station for traveling without a ticket. After a brief spell in prison, he wandered through northern France and Belgium for several months. His mother had him brought back to Charleville by the police, but in February 1871, he again ran off to Paris as a volunteer in the forces of the Paris Commune, which was then under siege by regular French troops. After a frustrating three weeks there, he returned home just before the Paris Commune was mercilessly suppressed.

The collapse of his passionately felt political ideals seems to have been a turning point for Rimbaud. After that, he declared in two important letters (May 13 and 15, 1871), he has abandoned the idea of "work" and, having acknowledged his true vocation, will devote himself with all his energy to his role as a poet.

Poetic vision of Arthur Rimbaud

Rimbaud wanted to serve as a prophet, a visionary, or, in his words, a *voyant* ("a seer"). He had come to believe in a universal life force that informs or underlies all matter. This spiritual force, which Rimbaud referred to simply as "l'inconnu" ("the unknown"), can be sensed only by a chosen few. Rimbaud started to write about striving to "see" this spiritual unknown and allowing his individual consciousness to be taken over and used by it as a mere instrument. He should then be able to transmit (by means of poetry) this music of the universe to his fellow men, awakening them spiritually and leading them forward to social progress. Rimbaud had not given up his social ideals, but now intended to realize them through poetry. First, though, he had to qualify himself for the task, and he coined a now-famous phrase to describe his method: "le dérèglement de tous les sens" ("the derangement of all the senses"). Rimbaud intended to systematically undermine the normal functioning of his senses

so that he could attain visions of the “unknown.” In a voluntary martyrdom he would subject himself to fasting and pain, imbibe alcohol and drugs, and even cultivate hallucination and madness in order to expand his consciousness.

In his attempts to communicate his visions to the reader, Rimbaud became one of the first modern poets to disrupt the constraints of traditional metric forms and those rules of versification that he had already mastered so brilliantly. He decided to let his visions determine the form of his poems. He thought if the visions were formless, then the poems would be too. He began allowing images and their associations to determine the structure of his new poems, such as the mysterious sonnet “Voyelles” (“Vowels”).

Arthur Rimbaud: Major Works:

Arthur Rimbaud started writing poetry at the early age. He won the prizes for poetry at early age. At the end of August 1871, on the advice of a literary friend in Charleville, Rimbaud sent the samples of his poetry to the poet Paul Verlaine. Verlaine, impressed by their brilliance, summoned Rimbaud to Paris and sent the money for his fare. In a burst of self-confidence, Rimbaud composed “Le Bateau ivre” (“The Drunken Boat”). This is perhaps his finest poem, and one that clearly demonstrates what his method could achieve. Ostensibly, “Le Bateau ivre” describes the journey of the *voyant* in a tipsy boat that has been freed from all constraints and launched headlong into a world of sea and sky that is heaving with the erotic rhythms of a universal dynamic force. The *voyant* himself is on an ecstatic search for some unnamed ideal that he seems to glimpse through the aquatic turmoil. But monsters threaten, the dream breaks up in universal cataclysm, weariness and self-pity take over, and both boat and *voyant* capitulate. Rimbaud succeeded in his aim of matching form to vision in it. A pounding rhythm drives the poem forward through enjambment across the verses, with internal rhymes and excited repetitions mounting on alliteration as with the swell of the envisioned sea.

In the last period of his life when Rimbaud was near death, he wrote the group of delicate, tenuous poems known as *Derniers Vers* (“Last Verses”). He expresses his yearning for purification through all this suffering. Still trying to match form to vision, he expressed his strong desire for spiritual regeneration in pared-down verse forms which are almost abstract patterns of musical and symbolic allusiveness. These poems clearly show the influence of Verlaine. About this time Rimbaud also

composed the work, called to be his masterpiece, “La Chasse spirituelle” (“The Spiritual Hunt”), the manuscript of which disappeared when the two poets went to England (Verlaine and Rimbaud). Rimbaud now virtually abandoned verse composition. So, his most of his literary production would consist of prose poems.

During May 1872 winter, Rimbaud composed a series of 40 prose poems under the title *Illuminations*. These are his most ambitious attempt to develop new poetic forms from the content of his visions. The *Illuminations* consist of a series of *theatrical tableaux* in which Rimbaud creates a primitive fantasy world, an imaginary universe complete with its own mythology, its own divine resemblance, its own cities, all depicted in different images that have the vividness of delusion. In the dramas he created, he sees himself formulating his dreams; his discovery of hashish as a method of inducing visions is hailed; his ensuing nightmare anguish is relived in swirling images and convoluted syntax; and his love affair with Verlaine is recalled in cryptic images and symbols.

Rimbaud reached the height of his originality and found the form best suited to his elliptical and esoteric style in the *Illuminations*. He stripped the prose poem of its anecdotal, narrative, and descriptive content and used words for their evocative and associative power divesting them of their logical or dictionary meaning. ‘The hypnotic rhythms, the dense musical patterns, and the visual pyrotechnics of the poems work in counterpoint with Rimbaud’s playful mastery of juggled syntax, ambiguity, etymological and literary references, and bilingual puns. A unique achievement, the *Illuminations*’ innovative use of language greatly influenced the subsequent development of French poetry.’ (Web)

Une Saison en enfer, which consists of nine fragments of prose and verse, is a remarkable work of self-confession and psychological examination. It is quite different from the *Illuminations* and in fact rejects the aesthetic they represent. Rimbaud was going through a spiritual and moral crisis, and in *Une Saison en enfer* he retrospectively examines the hells he had entered in search of experience, his guilt-ridden and unhappy passion for Verlaine, and the failure of his own overambitious aesthetic. The poem consists of a series of scenes in which the narrator acts out various roles, seemingly a necessary therapy for a young man still searching for some authentic, unified identity. Within these scenes he presents a switching of moods followed by a dialectical pattern, pushing forward through opposite tendencies toward a third term that marks another step toward liberation.

Every step is presented in highly dramatic form and is treated with detachment and a characteristic, cutting irony. The irony culminates in Rimbaud's account of his excessively idealistic literary efforts. Once these follies have been relived, the remaining sections explore different possible routes toward moral salvation. The cultivation of the mind, religious conversion, and other routes are each tried but then dismissed. In the book's final section, "Adieu" ("Goodbye"), Rimbaud takes a nostalgic backward look at his past life and then moves on, declaring that his spiritual battle has been won. He deliberates a future in which he can "possess the truth in a soul and a body." The characteristic of Rimbaud is the enigmatic ambiguity of this concluding statement. Perhaps it implies both a saner, more realistic stance towards life and a healing of the split between body and soul that had so plagued him. "Adieu" has sometimes been read as Rimbaud's farewell to creative writing. It was certainly a farewell to the visionary, apocalyptic writing of the *voyant*.

3.5 Analysis of the Poems Prescribed

1. 'Evil'

While the red spittle of the grape-shot
Whistles all day in the infinite blue sky:
While the battalions, scarlet or green, fly,
By the King who jeers, *en masse*, into the pot:
While the terrible stupidity grinds and crushes,
And makes a smoking heap of a thousand men:
– Poor Dead! In summer, among the rushes,
In your joy, sacred Nature, who created them!...
– There's a God, who laughs at altar-cloths
Of damask, incense, and great gold chalices:
Who dozes to Hosannas for lullaby,
And wakes when mothers, gathered in their grief,
Weeping under their old black bonnets, sigh
And yield Him the coin knotted in their handkerchief.

Analysis

The poem speaks about the war situation. The poet witnesses the event on the battlefield and portrays the scene for the readers. The ammunition used by the battalions is seen in the blue sky by the men in scarlet or green, the king boasts about his power. He is happy to see people killed together. The stupidity of some emperor makes thousands of the soldiers lie dead in heaps of smoke.

He pities the dead soldiers that they are dead in the summer when the sacred Nature is in full bloom. It created them to enjoy the beauty and the poor soldiers are not a live. At this time, the existence of God is felt. He mocks at the incense sticks, golden goblets of wine kept for him and he dozes at the lullaby sung for him by Hosanna. He is not awake to enjoy the pleasant offerings, but he is awake to hear the weeping of mothers gathered in their grief.

“wakes when mothers, gathered in their grief,
Weeping under their old black bonnets, sigh
And yield Him the coin knotted in their handkerchief”

They offer him the coin they have secured in their handkerchief. They have nothing more to offer Him. But he is conscious about their irreparable loss.

The poem presents the images which symbolise war, the king, the poor soldiers, the presence of God and His compassion for their mothers. The grapeshot ‘whistles for the whole day’. This whistling is not of joy. He expresses the continuity of the ammunition by both sides- scarlet and green. The use of a phrase, ‘a smoking heap of a thousand men’ symbolizes the cruelty of the war which is played by those whose ‘terrible stupidity grinds and crushes. The stupidity of the rulers is the cause for the deaths, a serious result for many mothers who lose their sons for no reason. The ‘incense sticks and other offerings to God represent futility of the vain gloriousness of the masses.

The poem appeals to the hearts of the readers showing the disastrous effects of the wars and at the same time expresses his strong faith in God who is kind to the weeping women. It also can be interpreted that God has been seen by commentators either as championing the poor against the rich, or as being indifferent to everything except the wealth and trappings of religion.

Glossary

“grape-shot”: It is a type of ammunition that consists of a collection of smaller-caliber round shots packed tightly in a canvas bag and separated from the gunpowder charge by a metal wadding, rather than being a single solid projectile. When assembled, the shot resembled a cluster of grapes, hence the name.

en masse (French): all together, in one group.

Jeer: a rude and mocking remark.

Chalices: the wine cup used in the Christian Eucharist.

Hosannas: an expression of adoration, praise, or joy.

Sneering king: French troops (scarlet) and German (green) are treated with equal contempt by their respective heads of state.

2. Asleep in the Valley

A gully of green, a laughing river
Where silver tatters snag
Madly in grasses; where, from the proud
Mountain the sun shines; foaming through of light.
A young soldier, mouth open, head bare,
Neck on a pillow of cool cress,
Sleeps, stretched out in the grass, sky above,
Pale on his green bed where light teems down.

Analysis:

The poem portrays a peaceful and pleasant scene in the valley. On the cool, green background, a river is laughing; silver tatters are glistening madly in the sun. The sun is shining from the ‘proud’ mountains. He describes the river that is foaming in the light. A soldier is lying on the green grass with his mouth open, head bare and his neck on the pillow of cool cress plants. He sleeps stretched under the sky on the green grass where light bursts in full.

The soldier symbolizes the responsibility, the war against the peaceful background of the Nature. The Nature has abundant charm, freedom and warmth at the same time, it is transient. In the company of it the soldier sleeps on the green bed with 'mouth open'. The sun represents the Time.

Here, the inanimate things are humanized and the soldier, a human being, is lying still on the grass. The stillness of the soldier is suspicious. Anything including sunshine, the sound of the river and the grass cannot disturb his sleep. This contrast is spectacular in the poem.

The images placed by Rimbaud are so magnificent and picturesque that the reader can visualize the scene. The use of alliteration is significant with gully of green, silver tatters snag, sun shines, cool cress, sleeps stretched. The personification in the proud mountain, laughing river and light teems is spectacular.

3. The Dresser

It's a wide dresser carved in old, dark oak;
Now it's got that lovely look old folk have;
Its doors are open, from its depths
Intriguing fragrances flood like vintage wine.
Stuffed full, it's a ragbag of olden-day old things,
Yellowing scented linens, bits of children's
And women's clothing, tired lace,
Grandma's headscarves printed with griffins;
—This is the place of medals and locketts,
White or blond hair, portraits, the fragrance
Of dried flowers blending with the smell of fruit.
—Dresser of bygone days, you've seen some things,
And could tell a tale or two; which begin
Whenever your great dark doors slowly open.

Analysis:

The describes an old dresser, a tall piece of furniture, carved in old, dark oak. It is like the old folks as it has its doors open from its depths. It intrigues the fragrances like the vintage wine. Rimbaud compares the dresser with the vintage wine which has fragrances of the olden days. It is fully stuffed with the yellowing scented linen, bits of children's and women's clothes and grandma's headscarves which have prints of the griffin. The griffin is a mythical creature with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion, typically depicted with pointed ears and with the eagle's legs taking the place of the forelegs. It stands for grandma's being deeply rooted in the mythology, ancient stories or traditions. As if her head is covered with the old stories or mythologies. The dresser is also a place for medals and locket, white and blonde hair, portraits and the fragrances of dried flowers blending with the smell of fruit. It is the silent witness of the victories in the past, the reminisces of white and blonde hair; and the portraits and the fragrances of the dried memories having the smell of ripening of the flowers and having fruits. The combination of the images creates a kaleidoscopic picture of the past.

If you have seen a dresser of bygone days like this which can tell you the stories of the past. The stories can be of the giver and taker of the dried flowers, white and blonde hair of someone or the stories of the victories about the medals and lockets. These stories begin 'whenever your great dark doors slowly open'. The closing line converts the reader into a dresser full of the past memories.

The dresser, in this poem, is not only a piece of furniture but a gateway to the old memories everyone has secured safely like the old dresser in the house.

The dresser is the symbol of the past present in everyone's heart. Everyone is an old, dark oak dresser containing different memories as well as a tale or two maybe connected with the medal, locket, hair, dried flower or a portrait.

Glossary:

Dresser: A tall piece of furniture with cupboards below and shelves on the top; Half a piece of bedroom furniture with drawers, sometimes with a mirror on top, used especially for keeping clothes in.

Griffin: a mythical creature with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion, typically depicted with pointed ears and with the eagle's legs taking the place of the forelegs.

Vintage wine: a wine, usually of superior quality, made from selected grapes of a certain type, region, and year, then dated and usually stored for aging.

4. 'Seated',

Pus-filled growths, cratered skin, green rings under
The eyes, puffy fingers clasping thigh-bones,
Skull splashed with vague liver-spots
Like leprous growths sprouting on old walls;
In epileptic acts of love, they've grafted
Ghostly bones onto the black skeletons
Of their chairs; morning noon and night their feet
Wrap themselves round breaking legs and rods.
These old boys have always been like this—bindweed
Round their chairs; feeling bright suns thread-baring
Their skin; or, eyes glued to windows where snows fade,
Trembling the way toads tremble with pain.
And the chairs are good to them; brown-seated
Straw yields to their rears' fixed angles;
The heart of old suns glows, swaddled
In plaited ears of too-ripe corn.
There they sit, knees knocking against teeth, green pianists;
Ten fingers drum the underside of chairs;
They listen to the morse of sad barcaroles,
Heads bobbing on tides of love.
Don't make them rise! Instant shipwreck...
They struggle up, growling like tormented cats;
Shoulder-blades open, so achingly slow!

Round swollen backsides, trousers balloon.
And you listen to them bump their baldness
Against dark walls, stamp and stamp their twisted feet,
And the buttons on their clothes are wild beasts' eyes
Staring at you down long corridors.

Analysis:

The poem, 'Seated' is called to be one of Rimbaud's cruelest caricatures. The strength and originality of his poetic language are now most marked. He describes two men engaged in the act of love. They are 'pus-filled growths, cratered skin, green rings under the eyes, puffy fingers clasping thigh-bones and skull splashed with vague liver-spots like leprous growths sprouting on old walls.' The two old 'boys' in epileptic acts of love, have grafted their ghostly bones onto the black skeletons of their chairs. Since morning till night their feet wrap themselves round breaking legs and rods. They are so fixed to the chairs that it seems like the bindweed feeling bright suns thread-baring their skin; or, their eyes are glued to windows where snows fade. They tremble like the toads trembling with pain. And the chairs are good to them which are brown-seated whose straw yields to their rears' fixed angles. The heart of old suns glows, swaddled in plaited ears of too-ripe corn which is tasteless. There they sit, knees knocking against teeth as if they are the green pianists and their ten fingers drum the underside of chairs. They listen to the morse of sad barcaroles music, heads bobbing on tides of love. The poet cautions the readers not to make them rise otherwise it will result in an instant shipwreck. They struggle up, growling like tormented cats; shoulder-blades open. Their actions are achingly very slow. One can listen to them bump their baldness against the dark walls. They stamp their twisted feet. Even the buttons on their clothes are the wild beasts' eyes which stare at you down long corridors.

As mentioned above, the poem is remarkable for its originality of the language. All the images portray the picture of the poor old boys who have sad music to listen which backdrops their utter poverty.

Glossary:

Bindweed: plants of the closely relate genera mostly twining, often weedy, and producing handsome white, pink, or blue funnel-shaped flowers.

Barcarolle: A barcarolle is a **traditional folk song** sung by Venetian gondoliers, or a piece of music composed in that style.

5. Paris War-Cry

Spring's in the air; from deep
In the fertile Properties,
Which Thiers and Picard* annexed,
Growing splendours spread.
May! What a Carnival of bare arses!
Sèvres, Meudon, Bagneux, Asnières,*
Just listen to Welcome Spring Bursting out all over.
Here they come, helmet, sabre, drum;
Not driven by ancient candle-power;
Their skiffs—they've ne... ne... never been to sea—*
Slice through the bloodied waters of the lake.
Our revels now are never-ending
When in the ant-heaps where we live
Yellow hailstorms rain on our heads
Ushering in uncommon dawns.
The Gods of Love: Thiers is one,
P(r)icArd* is too; they dead-head heliotropes,
Paint Corots* with their petrol-bombs:
Here come their troops, picking off whatever moves...
They're on first-name terms with His Nibs!
Stretched out in beds of irises, Favre*
Winks to activate his tear-ducts;
He peppers up his snivels.
The City's cobblestones are hot
Despite your showers of flames;
Only one thing now for you—
You need a rocket up your...
And the fat cats* lying through

Long days of abject sloth
Will hear boughs break among
Disturbances, coloured red.

Analysis:

The poem presents the outrage of Rimbaud on crushing of the Paris Commune by the National French Army. It was a French revolutionary government that seized power from 18th March to 28th May 1871 in Paris. It governed Paris for two months. They established the policies that tended towards a progressive system which was socialist and ant-religious. It was crushed very brutally. Thousands of the Communards were killed; thousands were imprisoned; many were forced labor; some fled to other countries, and a few could resume their political careers. The brutality is harshly protested by Rimbaud in this poem.

The poem begins with the Spring felt by people around. There's a carnival of the bare people who have established the rule of Common People. Welcome Spring Bursts are all over. And they come. Taking into control the suburbs of Sèvres, Meudon, Bagneux, Asnières, Thiers and Picard get possession of the lands by force which were ruled by the Commune. Then begins the downfall of the revolution in May. They come with helmets, sabre, drum. They don't have the power of the candle i.e. love, light. The violence is visible through the bloodied waters of the lake. The celebrations of the revolutionaries are never-ending as in the ant-heaps where they live, yellow hailstorms rain on their heads heading to the uncommon dawns.

Sarcastically, he calls Thiers and Picard. as the Gods of Love. The name of Picard is made as P(r)icArd as he is pricking the innocent people. They, as dead-head heliotropes, paint Corots with their petrol-bombs. 'Corots' has a reference to strong use of reds in the landscape paintings of Jean-Baptiste Corot They come with their troops and capture whatever moves. They are so tyrannical that Rimbaud says, 'They're on first-name terms with His Nibs.' Favre is ready with his tear-ducts. He was a hugely unpopular foreign minister who negotiated the French surrender to Bismark and signed the Treaty of Frankfurt. The cobblestones of the City of Paris are hot means the common people are 'hot' with anger which is not extinguished by the showers of their flames. They cannot rule the angry community. They need rockets to move upwards. The *fat cats*, in the National Assembly, the *Ruraux* represented the interests of anti-republican property-owning classes, are lazily

looking around for the situation to be ready for their benefit. But poet alarms them saying, (they) ‘Will hear boughs break among/ Disturbances, coloured red.’

Glossary:

Paris War-Cry: The background to this sequence of eight linked quatrains is the removal, on 12th March 1839, of the French government from Paris to Versailles, 45 km. west of the capital. The Commune took control of Paris, and in response, from April, the Versailles government bombarded the suburbs. Whether Rimbaud was in Paris during the Commune is not certain, but his strong Communard sympathies are clear from this angry poem.

Thiers and Picard: Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), head of the Executive, removed the government to Versailles then brutally crushed the Paris Commune. Ernest Picard (1821-77), was a government minister with Thiers. Together, they controlled the regular troops.

Sèvres . . . Asnières: all suburbs of Paris, heavily shelled by Versailles artillery.

they’ve ne... ne... never been to sea: allusion to a traditional French children’s song with a grim storyline about sailors adrift on a boat, and casting lots to see who will be eaten.

P(r)ic-Ard: expansion to render important pun in French (Eros/Zeros).

Corots: a reference to strong use of reds in the landscape paintings of Jean-Baptiste Corot (1796–1875).

Favre: Jules Favre (1809–80), a hugely unpopular foreign minister, negotiated the French surrender to Bismark and signed the Treaty of Frankfurt (May 1871).

Socrates: Greek philosopher, here castigated presumably for his serene acceptance of death.

fat cats: in the National Assembly, the *Ruraux* represented the interests of anti-republican property-owning classes.

Sevres: a type of fine porcelain characterized by elaborate decoration on backgrounds of intense colour, made at Sèvres in the suburbs of Paris.

Meudon: (French pronunciation: [mødɔ̃]) is a municipality in the southwestern suburbs of Paris, France. It is in the département of Hauts-de-Seine.

Bagneux: is a commune in the Hauts-de-Seine department, in the southern suburbs of Paris, France.

Asnieres: a suburb of Paris, France, on the Seine.

Sabre: a heavy cavalry sword with a curved blade and a single cutting edge; a light fencing sword with a tapering, typically curved blade

6. 'Seven-year-old Poets'

To P. Demeny
And the Mother, shutting his homework,
Went off proud, well-pleased and oblivious
To the revolted heart of her boy,
In those blue eyes, on that raging brow.
All day he sweated obedience; such
Intelligence; but those give-away
Dark tics showed a sharp hypocrisy.
In the mildew gloom of corridors
He'd run by, sticking out his tongue, fists
In crotch, eyes shut tight, seeing stars.
A door opened onto evening; up
There among the banisters he'd rant
And rave in a pool of ceiling light.
Overwhelmed by summer, he'd stomp off
To the cool latrine, lock himself in,
Bent on quiet, open-nostril thought.
Some nights when the garden-patch behind
The house was washed clean by winter moons
He'd lie by a wall, covered in clay,
Stabbing his cod-eye to see what he
--
Might see, hearing the stunted trees growl.
Pity! His only companions were

Sickly, crew-cut kids, bland-eyed, pale-cheeked,
Hiding bone-yellow filth-covered shit
Stinking fingers inside their old rags,
And talking as sweetly as cretins.
And if, catching him in flagrante,
The mother was frightened, the boy bathed
Her astonishment in tenderness.
Good, she'd received the blue look—which lies!
Seven years old, writing romances
About the Great Desert, rapturous
Light of Freedom, forests, savannahs,
Suns! He'd plunder magazines, looking
At laughing Latin girls, and blushing.
When the sloe-eyed eight-year-old daughter
Of the workers next door came in, wild
And savage in her cotton frock, jumped
On him suddenly, onto his back,
Tossing her hair, he'd bite her buttocks—
She didn't believe in underwear.
Bruised all over by her heels and fists
He took her taste back into his room.
He'd fear December's ghostly Sundays.
Hair smarmed down, at a mahogany
Table, he'd read a green-edged Bible.
Dreams crowded him each night in his bed.
He had no time for God, but rather
Dirt-stained working men in overalls,
Homeward-bound on evenings of huge light
Through the criers' shouts and drums.
He'd dream of fields of love where swelling
Light, wholesome smells, and gold pubescent

Down calmly sway and take to the wing.

Analysis

This poem is a celebrated poem of childhood in which there is no innocence. It expresses the tensions between the precocious child-poet and the constraining world. The speaker in "Seven-Year-Old Poets" describes how the Mother closes the exercise book with pride and satisfaction. His mother does not notice the child rages inside his soul. The Mother is pleased with the lesson but she does not realize that her son hates the experience of being taught about the Bible. The child is obedient for most of the day but "dark twitchings" lurk beneath his personality. These dark desires sometimes manifest as rudeness or violence as he struggles to repress his true feelings. During the summer he sits in the outdoor toilet and peacefully smells "the day's odors." He sees his fellow children as "idiots." The Mother is horrified whenever she catches her son reflecting in the toilet or committing "actions of filthy pity." She tries to believe that her son is showing a great sympathy for the smelly, stupid children so she cannot be angry.

The child writes "novels about life." His dreams are filled with terrible visions and he prefers to live a solitary life. He rehearses the romantic scenes he reads in books and magazines with the girl who lives next door. The child's religious lessons make him worried as he does not feel a personal connection with God. He seeks sanctuary in his dreams and then in a small dark room where he can reread his novel over and over. At last the child lies on "pieces of unbleached canvas" and makes believe that they are sails.

The speaker in "Seven-Year-Old Poets" equates himself to the child as a way to create a bridge between two isolated individuals. The child described in the poem might be entirely fictional, he might be based on someone the speaker knows, or he might be based on the speaker himself. The exact history of the child is not important as any or all of the options reflect the speaker's desire for companionship and sympathy.

The poem frames literature as an escape from the routine world. He hates the lessons taught by his Mother. The Mother does not even notice her son's quiet resentment. However, the child's repressed negative emotions manifest as rude gestures or the moments when he sits in the outdoor toilet and smells the waste of other people. The real world does not interest the child at all. He treats everything

around him with the bitterness and resentment that he keeps for his mother. For him, the other children are "idiots" and the presence of other people is best expressed through the rotten smells of the toilet. The child sees other people as a bad smell. But the case of literature is different. Literature allows him to escape and to feel emotions which are not present in his real life. When he tries to replicate the romance he has read about with the girl next door, she attacks him and leaves. The eight-year-old girl does not understand the boy's desire to bring his literary worlds into his real life. So, the child is left with nothing more than his dreams. His life is expressed in the final image of the poem. He lies down on a piece of unremarkable canvas and convinces himself that it is a sail. His imagination allows him to escape, but the reality of his life means that he will likely be trapped in the dank, dark room forever. The form the poem's argument reaches its climactic point in the prophetic final line.

Glossary:

Paul Demeny: an aspiring poet and friend of Rimbaud's in the Charleville days, towhom one of the two 'Letters of the visionary' is addressed.

the Mother: the use of the definite article, pointedly impersonal, and a capital letter renders 'the Mother' a universal (and negative) symbol. *getting under sail:* this vivid final image heralds such great poems of the sea and new life as 'Drunken Boat'.

7. Drunken Boat'

I followed deadpan Rivers down and down,
And knew my haulers had let go the ropes.
Whooping redskins took my men as targets
And nailed them nude to technicolour posts.
I didn't give a damn about the crews,
Or the Flemish wheat and English cotton.
Once the shindig with my haulers finished
I had the current take me where I wished.
In the furious riptides last winter,
With ears as tightly shut as any child's,
I ran, and unanchored Peninsulas
Have never known such carnivals of triumph.

The storm blessed my maritime wakefulness.
Lighter than a cork I danced on the waves
Which some call eternal victim-breakers—
Ten blind nights free of idiot guiding flares.
Sweeter than sour apple-flesh to children
Green water slid inside my pine-clad hull
And washed me clean of vomit and cheap wine,
Sweeping away rudder-post and grapnel.

From that time on, I bathed in the Poem
Of the Sea, lactescent and steeped in stars,
Devouring green azures; where a drowned man
Like bleached flotsam sometimes sinks in a trance;
Where suddenly tinting the bluities,
Slow deliriums in shimmering light,
Fiercer than alcohol, vaster than lyres,
The bitter rednesses of love ferment.
I know skies splintered by lightning, breakers,
Waterspouts, undertows; I know the dusk,
And dawn, exalted like a host of doves—
And then I've seen what men believe they've seen.
I've seen low suns smeared with mystic horrors
Set fire to monster scars of violet;
Like actors in the very oldest plays
Slatted light shimmered, away on the waves.
Green nights I dreamed bedazzlements of snow,
A kiss rising to the sea's eyes slowly,
Circulation of undiscovered saps,
Blue-yellow wakefulness of phosphorsongs.
For whole months on end, I followed the swell
Charging the reefs like hysterical beasts,

Not thinking that luminous Maryfeet
Could force a muzzle onto breathy seas.
I struck, you know, amazing Floridas
Where flowers twine with panther eyes inside Men's skins!
Rainbows flung like bridles under
Sea horizons harnessed the glaucous herds.
I saw great swamps seethe like nets laid in reeds
Where a whole Leviathan lay rotting,
Collapse of water in the midst of calm
And distances tumbling into nothing.
Glaciers, silver suns, pearl seas, firecoal skies!
Hideous wreckages down in brown depths
Where enormous insect-tormented snakes
Crash from twisted trees, reeking with blackness.
I'd have liked to show children blue-water
Dorados, golden fish and fish that sing.
Foam-sprays of flowers cradled my drifting;
At times I flew on ineffable winds.
Sometimes, martyr tired of poles and wastelands,
My pitching was stilled by the sobbing sea
Which raised to me its yellow-sucker
Shadow-flowers—and I, like a woman, knelt.
Floating island where the brawls and guano
Of fierce albino birds bounced off my sides,
I sailed, while down among my fraying ropes
Drowned men descended backwards into sleep.
Now, I, boat tangled in the hair of bights,
Hurled high by hurricanes through birdless space,
Whom no protection-vessel in the world
Would fish up from the drink, half-drowned, half-crazed;
Free, smoking, got up in violet spume,

I, who holed the sky like a wall in flames
Which bears, good poet's exquisite preserve,
Lichen of sun and cerulean snot;
Mad plank streaked with electric crescents, flanked
By dark formations of speeding sea-horse,
When Julys bludgeoned ultramarine skies
And pulverized them into scorching winds;
Trembling as I heard the faraway groans
Of rutting Behemoths and swirling storms;
Eternal spinner of blue stillnesses,
I long for Europe's ancient parapets.

Analysis:

The drunken boat is the narrator relating its own existence. The boat has been let loose on the water. The crew were attacked and killed. The unmanned boat is carried with the currents of the water along and out to sea. The boat dances on the waves for 10 nights and the waves wash all traces of the dead sailors from its decks. The boat enjoys floating on the sea and going wherever it pleases. The vast expanse of the ocean allows the boat to understand itself and the world. The extraordinary journey has allowed the boat to see, experience, and dream about events, places, and things which it might never have imagined.

The images that the boat describes begin to lose their appeal. The boat begins to note the rotting, frightening sights which are also a part of its journey. These sights include a whale which "rots in the rushes" and "giant serpents devoured by bedbugs." The boat expresses its regrets and the experiences it never had before such as showing children the wonderful variety of fish it has seen. The demands of the adventure affect the boat and it believes that it has become "a martyr" which suggests that the boat has been killed in the name of travelling and exploration.

The boat capsizes and floats along the ocean on its side. It knows that it will not be rescued or repaired. The boat reflects on its achievements and the sights it has seen. It "pierced the reddening sky like a wall" and carried food across the water for "good poets." The list of accomplishments is almost delirious. The boat admits that it misses Europe and home. It suggests that it has "wept too much" and no longer takes

pleasure from sunrises or sunsets. In "The Drunken Boat" poet uses the mouthpiece of the boat to say that love has become nothing but a torment to the boat and it longs to sink once and for all in the ocean. The boat imagines itself as a child's toy "as fragile as a May butterfly." The poem ends with a declaration of liberty. The boat refuses to be constrained by society with its "pride of flags and flames" and "prison ships."

"The Drunken Boat" describes the journey of a ship after the crew has been murdered. The boat drifts across the ocean and is no longer bound by the constraints of society or the people who have guided it. The boat and the poem function as a metaphor for Arthur Rimbaud's own views about poetry. The boat represents a poet who is cut loose from the constraints and is allowed to explore the world in all its horror and glory. The accomplishments, failures, and regrets of the boat reflects those of the poet. The poem ultimately becomes a declaration of freedom and intent. The boat and Rimbaud praise independence and liberty even if they know that they will never truly be happy.

The title of the poem refers to the "drunken" boat. The kind of drunkenness referred to here is not related to alcohol. The word "drunken" describes the movement of the unmanned vessel. The boat drifts along the river as a drunken man stumbles down the street. There is a lack of control or intention other than a vague, unguided movement. The word "drunken" also refers to the intoxicating nature of liberation. The crew's absence makes the boat feel free. It no longer has to worry about its obligations or the demands placed upon it by society. The boat is free to travel the world and witness incredible sights. This freedom affects the boat deeply and Rimbaud feels the same way about poetry. The boat describes itself as bathing in "the Poem Of the Sea." The wide, poetic expanse of the empty sea is freedom to the boat just as literature and poetry is freedom for Rimbaud. The boat can go anywhere just as Rimbaud can imagine anything. The fusion between poet and boat is demonstrated in the series of eight verses which begin with the pronoun "I." The boat narrates its newfound understanding of the world and the wonderful experiences it has encountered.

For all the boat has seen and achieved, it can never go back to the past. The same freedom that has allowed it to explore the world and which has felt so liberating has left the boat a long way from home. The horrific and scary parts of the world are nothing compared to the regrets and the pain of nostalgia. 'The Drunken

Boat' finishes with an insistence from the boat and the poet that these regrets do not change the ultimate truth. In "The Drunken Boat," society limits people and traps them. The boat rejects being a part of a world where it must pass under "the terrible eyes of prison ships." The final words and the final references to society in the poem are as floating prisons which trap the unfortunate. The boat longs to be free and is willing to pay the price of regret in exchange for its freedom.

8. Evening Prayers

I live life seated, like an angel in a barber's chair,
A fussy deep-ridged beer-mug in my hand,
Neck and hypogastrium bent, my pipe-smoke
Filling out the air like ghostly sails.
Like warm droppings on a dovecote floor,
My thousand Dreams softly incandesce;
Now and then my sad heart's like alburnum wood
Bloodied by the dark, young gold of oozing sap.

Analysis:

The speaker in "Evening Prayer" spends most of his life sitting down. He drinks and smokes a pipe while he writes. His writing is an attempt to access the thousands of dreams which "gently burn inside" him. This lifestyle sometimes makes him very sad. When he has completed writing and drinking, he feels an urge inside him so he stands up. He satisfies the urge and urinates "very high and very far."

"Evening Prayer" is a self-aware, self-parodying poem which shows the speaker's comic side. Self-parodying poems exaggerate or make fun of their own nature. The speaker in "Evening Prayer" begins with two verses of four lines each. The verses are filled with carefully considered metaphors and paint a picture of himself. He is seen as a depressive, alcoholic poet who is forced to try to take the dreams out of his head and put them into words. He equates himself to "an angel" whose heart is like wood covered in golden sap. The speaker recognizes the innate absurdity of his position. He creates an elaboration justification for smoking, drinking, and writing which positions these activities as a vital part of his existence. The poems he produces are not as good as the high artistry of his opening verses would suggest. The speaker admits that the poetry is "like the warm excrement of an

old pigeonhouse." The poems are an excuse to smoke and drink and the speaker is aware of his own personal failings in this regard.

The speaker takes the idea a step further in the closing verses and ties the subject matter back to the title. He describes the end of his working day. By this time, he has drunk "thirty or forty mugs" of alcohol and desperately needs to urinate. The speaker refers to this base urge as "the bitter need" and compares the act to an offering to nature. The "Evening Prayer" of the title is the moment when the speaker stands up from his desk each evening and urinates. He describes the act like a ritual and jokes that the religious ceremony of the act is conducted with the consent of the flowers and the natural world around him. The speaker mocks himself and religion at the same time. He desecrates religion by pretending that urine can be a prayer but makes fun of himself by admitting that this ritual is all he has. The speaker may be satirizing religious people but he admits that he is not any better.

9. Vowels

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels.

One day I'll tell your embryonic births:

A, black fur-clad brilliant flies

Clustering round every cruel stench,

Defiles of darkness; E, blank spread of mists and tents,

Proud glacier spears, white kings, sigh of umbel;

I, purples, blood spat, lovely lips laughing

In anger or penitential ecstasies;

U, cycles, divine shudder of viridian seas,

Peace of pastures grazed by cattle, peace of high

Pensive foreheads rucked by alchemy;

O, the last Trumpet, strange crescendo blast,

Navigated silences of Worlds and Angels,

- O Omega, the violet radiance of Those Eyes.*

Analysis:

The speaker in "Vowels" assigns a colour to each vowel. "A" is black, "E" is white, "I" is red, "U" is green, and "O" is blue. Then he describes each vowel individually and discusses the images each one brings to his mind. "A" reminds him of a dark corset made of flies that are attracted by a bad smell. "E" reminds him of white vapours, glaciers, kings, and flowers. "I" is a purple vowel which reminds him of blood spat from a mouth and laughter coming from the beautiful lips of an angry or remorseful drunk person. "U" reminds the speaker of cycles, the movements of the green sea, and the wrinkles on an intelligent person's forehead. "O" is the most mystical of the vowels and it reminds the speaker of the idea of infinity and God's piercing stare.

'Vowels' is a sonnet written using the alexandrine meter which has 12 syllables in each line with the emphasis placed on the sixth and final syllables. The sonnet form splits the poem into two verses of four lines and two verses of three lines. Both the sonnet form and the alexandrine meter are rooted in tradition. They had been used for hundreds of years before Rimbaud wrote this poem. The use of such a specific, traditional style creates a natural juxtaposition with the abstract, modern content of "Vowels." The speaker in "Vowels" decides on a colour and a series of images which are associated with each vowel. He does not explain his reasoning or justify his choices beyond what is presented in the poem. The focus on images forces the reader to conjure their own interpretation of the speaker's meaning. There are debates about the true meaning of the poem which are echoed through French and global critics in the years since "Vowels" was published.

This is one of Rimbaud's most celebrated and discussed poems. Critics have sought to find the keys to the colour symbolism, often linking it to Rimbaud's known interest in alchemy. The most obvious *literary* analogy is Baudelaire's *Correspondances* sonnet, whose synaesthesia—the correspondence of sensory impressions so that an auditory impression, say, can be a visual one (thus, 'the *green* note of a flute')—sets up a mystical pattern of hidden meanings.

Glossary:

Those Eyes: in the French there is ambiguity here: as possessive article 'Ses [Yeux]' could mean 'his', 'her', 'its'. Rimbaud might mean God's eyes, or those of 'the young girl with violet eyes' whom he once followed in Paris. The solution

proposed by the English poet Harry Guest in one of his versions of 'Vowels' has been accepted here..

'The star's wept...' A quatrain in which the central position given to a series of colours relates it to 'Vowels'.

10. 'What do they mean to us...'

What do they mean to us, my heart, the sheets of blood
And fire, the thousand murders, the long cries
Of rage, tears of all the hells upsetting
Every order; and still the north wind across the wreck;
And vengeance? None at all!... But yes,
We still want it! Industrialists, princes, senates, Die!
Down with power, justice, history!
This we are owed. Blood! The golden flame!
All-out war, vengeance, terror,
My soul! We'll writhe among the teeth!
Vanish, Republics of this world! No more emperors,
Regiments, settlers, people!
Who'd stir the furious fires into frenzies,
If not us and those we call our brothers?
Our turn now, Romantic friends; joy now.
We'll never toil, you waves of fire!
Europe, Asia, America, disappear.
Our march of revenge has taken everything
Cities, open land!—We'll be crushed!
Volcanoes will erupt! the ocean whipped...
Oh, my friends! My heart, for sure, they are brothers.
Dark strangers, let's go! Come!
Misery! I feel myself shake, the old earth
On me, more and more yours! earth melts,
It's nothing; I'm here; I'm still here.

Analysis:

A fiercely revolutionary poem, it contains many allusions to acts of violence during the last days of the Commune. He talks about the cruel acts of the tyrants. As discussed in the poem, 'Paris War- Cry', thousands of the Communes were convicted, killed, forced labour, and executed after trials. They included women. "...my heart, the sheets of blood/ And fire, the thousand murders, the long cries/ Of rage, tears of all the hells upsetting / Every order; and still the north wind across the wreck; / And vengeance?" he asks whether he wants to take revenge and the answers are both- 'Not at all! ... But yes, ...' He wishes that industrialists, princes, and senates should die and they should be down with power, justice and history. As common, peace-loving people don't want any war, vengeance or terror. No emperors, regiments, settlers are required who turn the fire into frenzies. They should not be called to be the 'brothers'. He tells his Romantic friends that it is their turn to be joyous. As they are the flames of creativity, they will create good things. But then his tone changes to pessimism.

'Our march of revenge has taken everything
Cities, open land!—We'll be crushed!'

The actions of crushing the revolution are like 'Volcanoes will erupt! the ocean whipped ...' and then he feels himself shaking. It seems to him as if the whole old earth is upon him. The earth melts. And he feels his presence to be futile. The line, 'It's nothing; I'm here; I'm still here.' Expresses his resignation to the bitter reality.

The flame here symbolizes the positive energy, creative power of the innocent people who are turned into frenzies by the cruel rulers.

Glossary:

It's nothing . . . here: bitter resignation to abject reality of this single, final line calls to mind similar construction in such poems as 'Nina Answers Back'.

11. 'Memory'

Clear water; salty as childhood tears,

The whiteness of women's bodies assaulting the sun;

silk, pure lilies massed, oriflammes beneath walls which some Maid defended;

angels revelling;— No, the current of flowing gold, moves its dark, heavy, cool arms of grass.

It sinks; with the blue Sky as canopy, it calls down the curtain of the hill's and arch's shadow.

□

Look, the humid square offers limpid bubbles!

Water gives the ready beds fathomless pale gold:

little girls' faded green dresses imitate willows, where birds hop freely.

Purer than a gold coin, warm and yellow eyelid, the marsh marigold—your conjugal vow, Wife!— at noon sharp, from its dull mirror, envies the dear and rosy

Orb in a fuddled grey sky.

□

Madame holds herself too stiff in the next field where sons of toil flurry like snow; clutching parasol; trampling umbels; too proud for her, children in the flower-strewn grass, their noses in books bound in red morocco! Alas,

He, like a thousand angels dispersing down the road, fades beyond the mountain!

She, utterly cold and dark, runs! after the man has left!

Analysis:

This celebrated poem which might be about Rimbaud's flight from home, or about his father's abandonment of his family. The first line itself argues about his miserable childhood- 'clear water, salty as childhood tears'. 'The whiteness of women's bodies assaulting the sun' means her existence is louder than the sun. she is not the type of a woman like 'silk, pure lilies massed, oriflammes beneath walls' it was some other Maid defended. The angels are not enjoying. The current of flowing gold, moves its dark, heavy, cool arms of grass. The turns away and sinks behind the Sky as canopy. It calls down the curtain of the hill's and arch's shadow to be away. The coldness of the air in the surrounding is highlighted here. From such gloomy atmosphere, he looks out. The outer world provides a dream world to him. There are no restrictions. The water gives the ready beds with fathomless pale gold. The little girl seems like the willow and the birds hop freely. For him, the world that attracts is

“Purer than a gold coin, warm and yellow eyelid, the marsh marigold” as if your conjugal vow, Wife. At sharp noon, from its dull mirror, envies the dear and rosy orb in a fuddled grey sky. The dream of liberty fascinates his mind.

While Madame (maybe his mother for him or wife for his father) holds herself too stiff in the next field where sons of toil flurry like snow; clutching parasol; trampling umbels; too proud for her, children in the flower-strewn grass, their noses in books bound in red Morocco. He fades away beyond the mountain and she is stunned to find the reality.

“He, like a thousand angels dispersing down the road, fades beyond the mountain!

She, utterly cold and dark, runs! after the man has left!”

The title of the poem is ‘Memory’. It may refer to his own fleeing from his house away from his mother in search of liberty. It also can refer to his father’s leaving the house which is deeply engraved on the heart of a child.

Glossary:

My boat: this image of a boat tied up and stuck fast is in sharp contrast with the movement of the ‘Drunken Boat’.

12. O seasons, o chateaux..."

O seasons, o chateaux...
Which soul has no flaw?
O seasons, o chateaux...
I’ve made the magic study
Of Happiness, no one evades.
Long live happiness, each time
The Gallic cockerel crows.
But! I’ve finished with wanting,
It’s taken my life over.
That Spell! took soul and body,

And wasted all effort.
What to make of my words?
It would have them take flight.
O seasons, o chateaux!
[And, if I'm unlucky, I'll surely know ruin.
Its disregard, alas!
Must bring me instant death!

Analysis:

O seasons, o chateaux... is a much anthologized, obscure poem written in 1872. It is a part of the collection, *Illuminations*. It begins with some genuine questions like- 'Is 'season' life on earth, and 'chateau' the soul? What is the 'spell'?' The poem has been translated by many poets and has attracted much commentary. The speaker in "O seasons, o castles" calls out to the seasons and castles of his life and wonders whether any soul is "without flaws." He has studied happiness for his entire life and hopes that people can live long and enjoyable lives. The long study has taken over his life and meant that he cannot truly enjoy himself. The search has taken his "soul and body." The speaker wonders whether anything can even be understood from the writing he has produced and from the search that he has conducted. It also has some autobiographical references of his relationship with Verlaine.

The speaker in "O seasons, o castles" begins the poem and ends it by addressing the seasons and castles of his life. The seasons symbolize the passing years of his life and the castles are the dreams and ambitions he had when younger. He uses "O" before each of these words which adds a sense of remorse, indicating that the speaker believes that he has wasted his years and failed to achieve his dreams. His soul is stained because of these failures, but the speaker wonders whether anyone has claim to have a truly flawless soul. His quest is one that is experienced by many people and his regret is not uncommon.

The speaker has spent his life contemplating about the nature of 'being'. He has conducted "the magic study of happiness" which implicates his writing. His poems attempt to describe and investigate the flawed souls of humanity and wonder whether there is any rescue for the people who suffer as he does. The speaker cannot answer

this question because he has himself allowed the "magic study" to consume him. Now, he thinks that the act of writing has taken over his body and he is unable to see the world as it really is. All he has earned in his life is his writing and he is not even sure people's ability to understand any of his words. The speaker acknowledges that his melancholy is universal in nature but even admits that he is not even sure if he can express this sensation in his writing properly. And this inability can prove his life worthless. The final line returns to the plaintive cry of "o seasons, o castles" which suggests that the speaker is still haunted by his failure to realize his ambitions during his lifetime. The refrain also shows the circular structure of futility and despair.

This poem also can be interpreted as his farewell to poetry because soon afterwards he abandoned his literary career and left for Africa.

3.6 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternatives:

1. Arthur Rimbaud is a ----- poet.
A) romantic B) symbolist C) religious D) classical
2. Rimbaud added the ----- as the aspect of surrealism.
A) hallucination B) symbolism C) alliteration D) similes
3. the poem, Paris War- Cry portrays the anger about crushing -----.
A) the Paris Commune B) a riot in Paris
C) Industrialist's movement D) Lords' movement
4. The Paris Commune was a French revolutionary government in the year ----
---.
A) 1852 B) 1860 C) 1871 D) 1890
5. The Drunken Boat, the journey of a ship without crew, symbolizes relationship between ----- .
A) words and images B) human life and illusion
C) man and nature D) Art and Reality
6. 'The Seven-Year-Old-Poet' is about the ----- relationship between the Mother and the son.

4. Elaborate Rimbaud's views about war with reference to the poems you have studied.
5. 'Rimbaud's symbolism is obscure for the readers' Discuss..

Answers:

- A)**
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. B) symbolist | 2. A) hallucination |
| 3. A) the Paris Commune | 4. C) 1871 |
| 5. D) Art and Reality | 6. C) fractured |
| 7. A) alexandrine | 8. B) leaving the family |

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence. State true or false:

1. Symbolism refers to the use of representational imagery/ the use of a concrete image to represent an abstract idea.
2. A piece of furniture
3. Failure in accomplishing dreams
4. The French Rulers who crushed the revolution
5. Sleeping
6. Pessimistic
7. War situation
8. He brought the elements of hallucination and surprise in the poetry
9. His or his father's leaving house
10. All the crew is killed and so it moves like drunken man on the waves of the ocean

3.7 Exercises:

A) Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the term Symbolism.
2. Discuss the contribution of Arthur Rimbaud to French Symbolist Movement.

3. 'Arthur Rimbaud presents himself as a keen observer of the contemporary French socio-political scenario.' Discuss.
4. "O Seasons, O Chateaux" is the self-assessment of his own poetic career by Rimbaud'. Explain.

B) Write short notes:

1. Symbolism and Surrealism
2. French Revolution and Rimbaud
3. The Childhood portrayed in Rimbaud's poetry
4. Poetic Vision of Arthur Rimbaud

3.8 References to Further Study:

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Unit-4

Trnscendentalism and American Romanticism

(Poem selected from: American Literature of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology eds. Fisher, William J., H. Willard Reninger, Ralph Samuelson, and K. B. Vaid. Eurasia Publishing House (Pvt) Ltd, 1996)

4.1 Objectives

The objectives of the present unit are as follows

1. To understand the basic principles and philosophy of Transcendentalism
2. To understand the impact of Transcendentalism on 19th century American writers
3. To understand American romanticism and its impact on 19th century American literature.
4. To understand the poetry of R.W. Emerson.
5. To understand the poetry of Emily Dickinson

4.2 Introduction

It is necessary to understand the relation between the literature and the social milieu in which it is written. Literature is influenced by the moral, social and intellectual milieu of the period. Transcendentalism and Romanticism were the two important philosophical and literary movements in 19th century America. The influence of these movements can be seen on the American literature of 19th century. The present unit deals with the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Emily Dickinson, two most important poets of 19th century

4.3 Transcendentalism and American Romanticism

Transcendentalism has been variously interpreted, and misinterpreted, by various writers. 'Transcendent' means 'beyond' and 'above', hence a transcendentalist is one who believes in the existence of a divine world, beyond and above the world

of the senses. The divine cannot be understood by reason, but it can be experienced through intuition. The divine is called 'the over-soul' and the "Soul of all the worlds" by Emerson. The External World is only outer-covering of the divine. Men can know the divine through the Nature which speaks to the soul. If man comes to Nature he can see into "the heart of things". There is unity of God, Man and Nature. The transcendentalists emphasized the worth of the individual and the dignity of the soul. They taught Man to rely on his own intuition, instincts and impulses.

Transcendentalism and American Romanticism

American Romanticism developed along with romantic movements in Europe. Its beginnings can be traced back to the eighteenth century. It dominated the literary scene from around 1820 to the end of the Civil War In America and the rise of Realism. It developed as a reaction to the formal orthodoxy and Neoclassicism of the 17th and 18th centuries. American Romanticism is marked by a freedom from the authority, forms, and conventions. It replaced the neoclassic emphasis on reason with the imagination and emotions. The neoclassic emphasis on authority was replaced with emphasis on individuality.

American Romanticism was the first, full-fledged literary movement of America. The American writers of this period celebrated American beauty and identity. It is also known as The American Renaissance period This period is marked by timeless masterpieces, by authors like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. American Romanticism emerged in response to the nationalist values beginning to develop a distinct American literary style.

Transcendentalism also prospered at the time of literary Romanticism in Europe and America. Romanticism was a reaction against classical formalism and convention. It emphasized emotion, spirituality, subjectivity, and inspiration. Transcendentalism, inspired by English Romantic poets was a form of American Romanticism. It was a humanistic philosophy. it promoted respect for human capabilities. The movement was a reaction against increasing industrialization in the early nineteenth centuries. It preached against the dehumanization and materialism.

The teachings of the transcendentalists harmonised with the rise of democracy, the rise of romanticism. The revolt against Puritan Orthodoxy in America was begun by the Unitarians led by W E. Channing. The Unitarians taught, "the ultimate

reliance of a human being is, and must be, on his own mind and Conscience, his own sense of right and wrong. The power of perceiving moral distinctions is the highest faculty given to us by God." They taught the doctrine of the freedom of the will. Emerson's doctrines of self-reliance is based on the teachings of Unitarians. Their faith in the individual brought religious liberalism, political democracy, and literary romanticism to America. It inspired many works of art from the substance of American experience.

Sources of Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is an amalgam of various philosophies or ways of thought, both of the east and west, both ancient and modern. American Transcendentalists were influenced by British writers like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Carlyle; they were also influenced by German idealistic philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling. They were inspired by the writings of Goethe, Richter, and others. The ancient Greek philosophers like Plato, the Neoplatonists as Cudworth were their sources of philosophy. They drew on the teachings of Confucius, the Mohammedan Sufis, the Hindu writers of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita and the Buddhists.

Oneness of Man, God and Nature

The Transcendentalists are known for their reliance upon intuition. Transcendentalism permits contradictions, and its sources are varied. They have a belief in a fundamental monism. They also believe in the unity of Nature and God, and the immanence of God in the world. For transcendentalists, everything in the world is microcosm containing within itself all the laws and meaning of existence. The soul of each individual is identical with the soul of the world (or over-soul). Man may fulfil his divine potential through coming into contact with the truth, beauty and goodness of nature.

According to Emerson, beauty and truth are one and the same things. He states "our life is embosomed in beauty." Emerson explains the position of man through the triangular relationship of man and nature, and of man and God. In Emerson's opinion, the Over-Soul is the ground of man's existence. The Foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit. There is no limit to the possibilities in man's life. man's essential self is capable of transcending the limitations of existence and becoming one with the God. The purpose of man's life is to recognize his own

essential self and the cosmic unity. Man should seek and strive to realise this unity in his life.

Doctrine of self-reliance and individualism:

Emerson's essay "Nature" is known as "the Bible of Transcendentalism". In this essay Emerson explains the basic concepts of Man, Nature and God. Emerson's lectures and essays are expansions of those concepts with the help of new insights he gained. In the Nature, Emerson has tried to relate man to nature, on one hand, and God, on the other. He has explained how man fulfils his destiny. According to Emerson, man is at the centre of nature. Nature is helpful to him in the fulfillment of his destiny. The nature caters to man's bodily needs of the senses. Emerson considers body as a part of nature and incarnation of God in the unconscious. Man is God's superior incarnation in the conscious. Nature is the shadow and the creation of our own mind. By understanding the principles in Nature, we come to know our essential self. Man becomes conscious of the spiritual beauty of the Universe Through the perception of beauty of Nature. When our senses are harmonised with our inner self, we begin to see real beauty in nature. We are awakened to our real being. We begin to see our own selves by observing the beauty of nature and its relation to ourselves and God. Thus the Nature emancipates us.

Emerson developed and elaborated his philosophy of Transcendentalism in his Journals, lectures, essays and poems. He was a man of literature and not a philosopher. His philosophy is a way of living, not a system of thought. Emerson's concept of transcendentalism cannot be defined in any precise terms. transcendentalism is more poetry than thought. Emerson once remarked: "what is more popularly called transcendentalism among us is idealism." His view of transcendentalism includes various elements of idealism and spiritualism. It distrusts all forms of empirical thinking. It questions the authenticity of logical reasoning, divorced from actuality. Emerson's philosophy is all-inclusive. It attempts to reconcile all contraries. Most of Emerson's essays are based on his concept of the 'over-soul'.

4.4 Life and works of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson was born in 1803 and was brought up in Boston, Massachusetts. His ancestors had been in America for seven generations. Emerson's family was always poor. His father died when Emerson was eight. His mother and aunt managed to see

that he and his four brothers had a proper education. He graduated from Harvard College and became a school teacher. Later Emerson studied for the church and became the clergy of a Boston church. In 1832, however, after only three years, he resigned from the position because he could not in good conscience conduct religious ritual in which he did not believe.

Emerson married in 1829, but his wife died in 1831. After this personal loss and his resignation from his post, he travelled through Europe for a year. In England, he met Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle.

After his return from Europe, Emerson moved from Boston to Concord. He began the public lecturing and writing. Emerson spent the rest of his life in Concord. He married again in 1835 and his second wife bore him four children. The lectures were the principal means of support of Emerson and his family.

1834 to 1844 was the time of Emerson's literary flowering. During this period he formulated basic ideas and wrote many of the essays for which he is famous. He was the leading light of the Transcendentalists. He was the editor of magazine *The Dial* from 1842 to 1844. Emerson established a reputation as a sound and original thinker, orator and author. He became known throughout the nation as the Sage of Concord.

Emerson had an unshakable faith in his personal efforts and capacities. he never undervalued the significance of books, if they were read and assimilated in a critical frame of mind. Books were one of the important formative influences on Emerson's mind. Emerson's range of reading is astounding, since it reveals a mind that had a multitude of interests. His reading ranged from the ancient Greeks to his contemporary writers and philosophers. Bible was single book that influenced him most. The Bible shaped his style, formed his mental attitude. But he did not subscribe to any fundamental interpretation of the Bible.

Another influence on Emerson's mind was Nature. Although he was not a pantheist like Wordsworth, he perceived the benign influence of Nature on all sensitive and responsive minds. In his famous essay on "Nature" he writes: "The stars awaken a certain reverence because, though always present, they are inaccessible, but all natural objects make a kindred impression when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains,

reflected the wisdom of the best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood."

However, for Emerson Nature is not a limited term, implying only natural phenomena, but is an all-inclusive concept, embracing all manifestations of human nature

Emerson had read the Hindu scriptures and was profoundly influenced by Hindu philosophy. The Vedas, The The Puranas and Upanishads were all read by him, and the influence on him of Hindu Vedantic philosophy is best seen in his poetry. He regarded the Vedas as sublime. The Vedas for him were the fountains of knowledge and wisdom. His belief in the fate, Maya and Karma, all show the influence of Hindu philosophy. The influence of Hindu philosophy colours all his writings, but more particularly his poetry. In his poetry, Emerson derived a number of themes and titles from the Hindu scriptures. For instance, "Brahma" comes from the Upanishads, and "Hamatreya" from the Vishnu Purana.

Emerson was known as "the sage of concord" is "the father of American Transcendentalism". He is the founder of the "transcendental club" in Concord, and its organ The Dial, one of the most influential quarterly of the mid-century. He is the most influential figure in the history of transcendentalism in America. His small - poem Nature is called "the Bible of Transcendentalism," and his influence has been profound and far-reaching. He is at the centre of the New England Renaissance.

Emerson's Works

1. The Journals, written from 1820 to 1876, contain Emerson's first significant writing the essays and poems.
2. Nature, 1836, (Emerson's first published book)
3. "The American Scholar", 1837 and "The Divinity School Address" 1838. 4. Essays, First Series, 1841 includes Self-Reliance, The Over-Soul, Compensation, Spiritual Laws, Love and Friendship.
4. Essays, Second Series, 1843 includes The Poet, Experience and New England Reformers.
5. Miscellaneous Prose works include English Traits, 1856; The Conduct of Life, 1860; Society and Solitude, 1870; and, posthumously, Letters to Carlyle, 1883;

and Lectures and Biographical Sketches, 1844, which includes essays on Thoreau and Carlyle.

6. Poetry: The first volume of Poems appeared in 1847, followed much later by May-Day and Other Pieces, 1876. Among his more important poems are: The Sphinx, The Rhodora, Each and All, The Problem, The Snow-Storm, Concord Hymn, Hamatreya, Brahma and Days,

4.5 Check your progress 1.

Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. What is the meaning of Transcendent?
2. Which term is used by Emerson for divine or soul of all souls?
3. Which was the first, full-fledged literary movement of America?
4. Who were the contemporary writers of Ralph Waldo Emerson?
5. Which British writers influenced American Transcendentalists?
6. Which essay by Emerson is known as the Bible of Transcendentalism?
7. According to Emerson, what is at the centre of nature?
8. What were Emerson's initial professions?
9. Which magazine was edited by Emerson?
10. Who was known as the sage of Concord?

4.6 Poems of Emerson

1. The Problem

Text of the poem

I like a church; I like a cowl;
I love a prophet of the soul;
and on my heart monastic aisles
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowed churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,
Which I could not on me endure?

Not from a vain or shallow thought
His awful Jove young Phidias brought;
Never from lips of cunning fell
The thrilling Delphic oracle;
Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,--
The canticles of love and woe;
The hand that rounded Peter's dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in a sad sincerity;
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;--
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?
Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,
Painting with morn each annual cell?
Or how the sacred pine-tree adds
To her old leaves new myriads?
Such and so grew these holy piles,
Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.
Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,

As the best gem upon her zone;
And Morning opes with hast her lids,
To gaze upon the Pyramids;
O'er england's abbeys bends the sky,
As on its friends, with kindred eye;
For, out of Thought's interior sphere,
These wonders rose to upper air;
And nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat.

These temples grew as grows the grass;
Art might obey, but not surpass.
The passive master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o'er him planned;
And the same power that reared the shrine,
Bestrode the stibes that knelt within.
Ever the fiery Pntecost
Girds with one flame the countless host,
Trances the heart through chanting choirs,
And through the priest the mind inspired.
The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost

The heedless world hath never lost.
I know what say the fathers wise,--
The Book itself before me lies,
Old Chrysostom, best Augustine,
And he who blent both in his line,
The younger Golden Lips or mines,
Taylor, the Shakspeare of divines.
His words are music in my ear,
I see his cowled portrait dear;
And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

Meaning and explanation of the poem:

Introduction:

Emerson belonged to a priestly family. He was trained for the profession of clergy. During 1829 to 1832 he worked as a professional clergy. He realized undue importance of rituals and dogmas in institutional religion. These rituals subdue the true spirit and nobility of the religion.

His poem *The Problem* is a dilemma emerged from his realization of practical implication of religion and his ideological setup of mind. The poem depicts a conflict raging within the mind and heart of the poet. He believes that religion and undue importance given to dogmas are the obstacles in attainment of true God. Emerson has great honour and respect for the profession of clergy. But he realizes that it lacks the divine inspiration. According to Emerson, institutional religion is an outward show that affects spiritual purity of over-soul. Therefore, he does not want to remain the clergy.

The poem, 'The Problem' composed in 1840, is an autobiographical poem. It is remarkable for logical thought development. He gives examples of architectural beauty and the great religious authorities. He emphasizes the significance of divine inspiration and deep dedication. He tries to justify his decision of denial of holding the position of the clergy.

The speaker in the poem has liking for and close association with the church. He is very much attracted towards the hood put on by the clergy. It gives the impression of a crown worn by the clergy. He likes to listen the sweet music of devotees. Still he declares that he cannot wear the gown of clergy.

The divine inspiration moved Phidias, the reputed Greek sculptor, to carve a beautiful statue of Jupiter. The oracles of Apollo cannot flow out of the cunning lips. It flows out from the divinely inspired heart.

The intensity of the hymns can be realized only from the prayers of sincere belief. Michelangelo, an Italian sculptor was able to design St. Peter's Cathedral only because of his deep devotion. He could impart long lasting beauty to the stone because of the skill and the divine inspiration.

The earth feels proud of the structures like Parthenon in Athens because they have arose from the divine inspiration and solemn love. The sun is also tempted to gaze at the majestic pyramids. These artistic creations are eternal for their beauty. The divine thought offers them the permanence that can be compared with the mountains.

The architects who designed the monumental places of beauty are just passive instruments. The creations are the products of great inspiration of divinity. The Divine spirit inspires even the tribal to worship.

The speaker of the poem also remembers the greatness of the church fathers like Crysostom, St. Augustine and Jeromy Taylor, who is remembered as the Shakespeare of the church. In spite of his faith in the greatness of religious institutions, he firmly denies to be a professional clergy.

2. The Snow-storm

Text of the poem

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.

The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and, at the gate,
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

Meaning and explanation of the poem:

This poem is a colourful and ecstatic depiction of a night-long snowstorm and the art that is revealed in the morning. The poem portrays the sudden appearance of the storm and the way in which everyone had to shelter inside. All travel was stopped

and everyone turned inward. But the wind which is called by the poet as a skilled and powerful craftsman, was working on his structures.

When the sun came up the next morning the narrator took note of everything that had been created overnight. There were turrets and bastions, swan-like creations and wreaths that appeared to be made of marble.

It is a two stanza poem divided into uneven sets of lines. The first stanza has nine lines and the second stanza has nineteen. Emerson has not unified these lines with a specific rhyme scheme. But there are examples of half-rhyme throughout the poem.

3. Ode Inscribed to W H Channing

Text of the poem

Though loath to grieve
The evil time's sole patriot,
I cannot leave
My honied thought
For the priest's cant,
Or statesman's rant.

If I refuse
My study for their politique,
Which at the best is trick,
The angry Muse
Puts confusion in my brain.

But who is he that prates
Of the culture of mankind,
Of better arts and life?
Go, blindworm, go,
Behold the famous States
Harrying Mexico
With rifle and with knife!

Or who, with accent bolder,
Dare praise the freedom-loving mountaineer?
I found by thee, O rushing Contoocook!
And in thy valleys, Agiochook!
The jackals of the negro-holder.

The God who made New Hampshire
Taunted the lofty land
With little men; —
Small bat and wren
House in the oak: —
If earth-fire cleave
The upheaved land, and bury the folk,
The southern crocodile would grieve.
Virtue palters; Right is hence;
Freedom praised, but hid;
Funeral eloquence
Rattles the coffin-lid.

What boots thy zeal,
O glowing friend,
That would indignant rend
The northland from the south?
Wherefore? to what good end?
Boston Bay and Bunker Hill
Would serve things still; —
Things are of the snake.

The horseman serves the horse,
The neat-herd serves the neat,
The merchant serves the purse,

The eater serves his meat;
'T is the day of the chattel
Web to weave, and corn to grind;
Things are in the saddle,
And ride mankind.

There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled,—
Law for man, and law for thing;
The last builds town and fleet,
But it runs wild,
And doth the man unking.

'T is fit the forest fall,
The steep be graded,
The mountain tunnelled,
The sand shaded,
The orchard planted,
The glebe tilled,
The prairie granted,
The steamer built.

Let man serve law for man;
Live for friendship, live for love,
For truth's and harmony's behoof;
The state may follow how it can,
As Olympus follows Jove.

Yet do not I implore
The wrinkled shopman to my sounding woods,
Nor bid the unwilling senator

Ask votes of thrushes in the solitudes.
Every one to his chosen work; —
Foolish hands may mix and mar;
Wise and sure the issues are.
Round they roll till dark is light,
Sex to sex, and even to odd; —
The over-god
Who marries Right to Might,
Who peoples, unpeoples, —
He who exterminates
Races by stronger races,
Black by white faces, —
Knows to bring honey
Out of the lion;
Grafts gentlest scion
On pirate and Turk.

The Cossack eats Poland,
Like stolen fruit;
Her last noble is ruined,
Her last poet mute;
Straight into double band
The victors divide;
Half for freedom strike and stand; —
The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

This poem is Emerson's answer to the question whether the poet and thinker involve and affect politics and how. This poem was written before the American Civil War when the question of slavery had begun to divide the nation.

The poem is a statement of Emerson's views regarding the contemporary issue of humanitarian reform. He also comments on the artist's responsibility and role in the socio-political life of a nation. Emerson was asked by W. H. Channing to make a statement on slavery. Emerson refused to take side in the political debate about whether to abolish slavery by dividing the country into the North and South or to unite the states and let slavery remain. The poem is an answer to the debate about whether a poet, artist and philosopher should take sides in political debates.

Emerson who was a poet and philosopher, decided to say something. This poem is addressed to Channing, who had asked him to speak on the issue.

Emerson refused to take side, but he says that the problem is with the culture of America, the culture of things not human beings. According to him, Americans should make fundamental changes at the very roots of their culture and behavior. Another historical person, Daniel Webster is also mentioned in the poem. Webster was known for his ideas of materialistic improvement of life which would gradually solve problems from their very roots. Emerson severely criticizes Webster's attitude. The poem is Emerson's clarification of his reason for remaining aloof in the matter. It is a declaration of his strong feeling regarding the issues. The poem answers with a universally applicable philosophy how the problem of the American conflict can be solved.

The Americans had forgotten the real values which make life meaningful. their culture was that of "things". Americans had reduced humanity to a thing, and elevated thing to a place of eminence. Emerson suggests a solution: humans should live for "friendship" for "love", and for "truth's. People should not be too passionate and get taken in by the long sermons of the priest that do not value human beings but the system. one should not be stuck to the politicians' loud and meaningless speeches.

4. And 5. Hamatreya

Text of the poem

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint,
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood.
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,

Saying, "'Tis mine, my children's and my name's.
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.
They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,
And sighed for all that bounded their domain;
"This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,
And misty lowland, where to go for peat.
The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.
'Tis good, when you have crossed the sea and back,
To find the sit fast acres where you left them."

Ah! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds
Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.
Hear what the Earth say:—

EARTH-SONG

“Mine and yours;
Mine, not yours.
Earth endures;
Stars abide—
Shine down in the old sea;
Old are the shores;
But where are old men?
I who have seen much,
Such have I never seen.

“The lawyer’s deed
Ran sure,
In tail,
To them and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
Forevermore.

“Here is the land,
Shaggy with wood,
With its old valley,
Mound and flood.
But the heritors?—
Fled like the flood's foam.
The lawyer and the laws,
And the kingdom,
Clean swept here from.

“They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone,
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?”

When I heard the Earth-song
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

Hamatreya explores the permanence of mother earth in comparison to the transience of human beings. Emerson was fascinated with the Hindu scriptures and the sacred Vedas. This poem is based on a passage of the Vishnu Purana. The title of the poem is a shortened form of Hail Maitraya. Emerson narrates what the sage named Parashara taught his disciple Maitreya in response to the disciple’s query regarding the real worth of earthly possessions. He speaks about the “Earth-Song” and the story of a few landowners to clarify what the sage told his disciple about the real meaning of life. The poem is about how human beings spend their lives accumulating wealth without focusing on the fact that they are mortals.

There are three sections in the poem. In first section, Emerson talks about some men namely Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, and Flint. They are boastful about their wealth. But they are ignorant of their mortality. In the second section, entitled “Earth-Song”, Emerson tells what earth thinks about those men. Earth is in a mocking mood about their foolishness. In the last section, the speaker shares his reaction after hearing the story of those men and the song of the earth.

This poem deals with someone named Maitreya. The poem is based on a conversation between the sage Parashara and his disciple Maitreya.

This poem comprises of three sections. In the first section, there are three stanzas. In this section Emerson presents the themes of greed and mortality. In the second section, entitled “Earth-Song”, Emerson presents what the earth told the speaker. In the last section, one can find the reaction of the speaker after listening to the song. It is a free verse that doesn’t have any specific rhyme scheme. In the “Earth-Song”, there are short lines, packed with internal rhythm. Apart from that, the overall poem doesn’t contain any regular metrical pattern.

Several literary devices are used in this poem by Emerson. He uses personification in following line, “How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!” The second stanza begins with a rhetorical question. He uses a metaphor in “their furrows plough.” Emerson compares furrows in farmland to the graves. In the “Earth-Song”, there is an antithesis in the beginning. A simile is used in the line, “Fled like the flood’s foam.” In “flood’s foam” there is an alliteration of the “f” sound. The poet uses a simile and refers to the “chill of the grave” which puts an end to one’s lust.

6. Days

Text of the poem:

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, or sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

This is a short poem linking the passage of time with man's endless desires. Days personify this subject throughout the poem. Days symbolize the passage of time. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker says that the "days" and time passes by fast but silently. The speaker reveals that with time, the ever-growing desires of man are granted. However, time seems to grant man's desires out of obligation, even pity because the men easily fall apart if their desires are not fulfilled.

Towards the end, the speaker distinguishes himself from these men, telling of his contentment in his "pleached garden." He does not have grand desires and takes the simplest things the "Days" have to offer. At the end of the poem, the speaker notices the Day's scorn only after it leaves.

The poem gives the message that Man's desires change, grow, or die with time. The central themes of the poem are Desire and mortality. It is an allegorical poem which explores philosophical themes of time and transience through a simple narrative. The poem is packed with transcendental references and mystery. It is a single stanza poem comprising eleven lines. The poem does not have a rhyme scheme or meter.

7. Brahma

Text of the poem

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
I am the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Meaning and explanation of the poem:

This poem was written by Emerson in 1856. It is named after Brahma, the Hindu god of creation. Brahma is one of the gods in Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh). The poem presents a faithful version of a basic idea in the Bhagawad Gita namely the souls' immortality.

According to Hinduism, Brahman, is the ultimate soul of the universe- "an uncreated, illimitable and timeless essence of being". Emerson expresses his spiritual vision that comes from his reading of Hinduism, Confucianism, and Islamic Sufism.

Brahma is the speaker in this poem. He presents himself as the centre of this universe. Whatever happens in this world happens because of Brahma. He is timeless, immortal and permanent. He can't be destroyed and is omnipresent. A person may be killed physically, but his soul is immortal. It passes from one life to another and is eternal and immortal. Nothing is secret to Brahma. Shadow and sunlight are same for Him. Shame and fame are at the same level for him. The vanquished gods also appear to Him. He lives in Heaven. He can't be doubted because He Himself is doubter and doubt. Nothing is far or forgotten to Brahma. If anyone sings, Brahma is the music. If anyone flies, Brahma is the wings. Brahma knows that human beings are competing to get him. But Brahma suggests mankind to develop goodness and reach close to him. The speaker concludes the poem with a suggestion that if people find his way to Brahma's essence, they will have all that they need for all eternity.

This poem is the expression of transcendentalism. According to this philosophy, we are the product of the same One-soul. The self of one individual is as important as the self of the other individual. We should learn to rely on ourselves. Self-reliance is an important aspect of American transcendentalism.

Emerson through this poem is conveying the same message. If we want to achieve Brahma, goodness is the only solution. This poem is the celebration of the self. Brahma represents the eternal, infinite soul of universe.

8. Terminus

Text of the poem

It is time to be old,
To take in sail:—
The god of bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,
Came to me in his fatal rounds,
And said: “No more!
No farther shoot
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.
Fancy departs: no more invent;
Contract thy firmament
To compass of a tent.
There’s not enough for this and that,
Make thy option which of two;
Economize the failing river,
Not the less revere the Giver,
Leave the many and hold the few.
Timely wise accept the terms,
Soften the fall with wary foot;
A little while
Still plan and smile,
And,—fault of novel germs,—

Mature the unfallen fruit.
Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,
Bad husbands of their fires,
Who, when they gave thee breath,
Failed to bequeath
The needful sinew stark as once,
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins,—
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,
Amid the gladiators, halt and numb.”

As the bird trims her to the gale,
I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:
“Lowly faithful, banish fear,
Right onward drive unharmed;
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charmed.”

Meaning and explanation of the poem

It is a two stanza poem divided into one section of thirty-two lines and another of eight. The lines do not follow a specific rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. The poem is primarily composed of couplets and triplets.

‘Terminus’ speaks on themes of death, time, and fate. The tone is contemplative as the poet explores these very serious themes. In spite of serious themes, the mood is uplifting. It presents a renewed understanding of what old age and death should and can be.

The poem is a depiction of the changes one goes through as they age and reach the threshold of death.

Emerson in this poem conveys the words of Terminus, the Greek god of endings and boundaries. Terminus addresses the speaker of the poem, an older man, and tells him that the time has come for him to limit his youthful ambitions. The old man should not seek to grow new fruits, as a young tree. He should take care of the fruits he has. And when the time comes, he should embrace death.

Emerson comments on the inevitability of old age and the harsh certainty of death. Emerson makes this point by referring to the name Terminus, the Roman god of endings and boundaries—this makes the god thematically relevant to the poem. The character of Terminus is a personification of time.

4.7 Check your progress 2.

1. Which parts of a clergy's outfit does Emerson like?
2. Who is the reputed Greek sculptor mentioned by Emerson in the poem 'The Problem'?
3. Who designed St. Peter's Cathedral?
4. Who is remembered as the Shakespeare of the church?
5. According to Emerson, who announces the arrival of the snow?
6. Who is called the mason in the poem The Snowstorm?
7. Who asked Emerson to make a statement on question of slavery?
8. According to Emerson what should the humans live for?
9. What is the source of the poem 'Hamatreya'?
10. What is the central theme of Hamatreya?
11. Who mocks the owners of the fields and farms?
12. What are the central themes of the poem 'Days'?
13. What is personified in the poem 'Days'?
14. What do Days symbolize?
15. How does the speaker of the poem 'Days' distinguish himself from other men?

16. What does Brahma represent?
17. According to the speaker of the poem Brahma, who can find Brahma?
18. Which Hindu text inspired Emerson to write Brahma?
19. What are the major themes of Terminus?
20. Who is the Greek god of endings and boundaries?
21. What does Terminus tell the speaker of the poem?

4.8 Life and works of Emily Dickenson.

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 and died on May 15, 1886. She was Little-known during her life, she has since been regarded as one of the most important figures in American poetry. Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. She studied at the Amherst Academy for seven years. Later she briefly attended the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Dickinson lived much of her life in isolation. She was Considered an eccentric by locals. She developed a liking for white clothing and was known for her reluctance to greet guests. Dickinson never married, and most of her friendships were based upon correspondence.

She was a prolific writer, but her only publications during her lifetime were 10 of her nearly 1,800 poems. Her poems were unique; they contain short lines, lack titles, and often use slant rhyme. Many of her poems deal with themes of death and immortality.

After her death in 1886, Lavinia, Dickinson's younger sister, discovered her poems and published them. Her first collection of poetry was published in 1890 by personal acquaintances Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd. A complete collection of her poems was published for the first time when Thomas H. Johnson published *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* in 1955. Emily Dickinson is one of America's greatest poets of all time. She is now known as one of the most important American poets, and her poetry is widely read

4.9 Poems of Emily Dickinson

1. Because I could not stop for Death

Text of the poem

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me,
The Carriage held but just Ourselves,
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility,

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring,
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain,
We passed the Setting Sun,

Or rather – He passed Us,
The Dews drew quivering and Chill,
For only Gossamer, my Gown,
My Tippet – only Tulle,

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground,
The Roof was scarcely visible,
The Cornice – in the Ground,

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet

Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

This is one of Emily Dickinson's most popular poems and was composed around 1863. In the poem, a woman speaker tells the story of how she was visited by "Death," personified as a "kindly" gentleman, and taken for a ride in his carriage. This ride takes the speaker past symbols of the different stages of life, before coming to a stop at most likely her own grave.

The poem can be read as the anticipation of a heavenly Christian afterlife. The poem does not offer easy answers to life's greatest mystery: what happens when people die.

The speaker in the poem narrates her experience: I couldn't stop for "Death," so instead he came to get me. I climbed in his carriage. The carriage held just the two of us—and Eternal Life.

We drove unhurriedly, with Death in no rush. I had left all my work and pleasures behind, in order to be respectful of his gentlemanly nature.

We passed by a school, where children played during their break time. Then we crossed fields of crops—which seemed to stare at us. We passed the sun as it set in the sky. Actually, we didn't pass the sun—it passed us. After the sunset, dew formed and I started shivering. I was cold because I was only wearing a thin gown and a lightweight scarf. Our next stop was at what looked like a house which was partly buried in the ground. I could just see the roof. Even the ceiling was in the ground.

Since that day, centuries have passed. It feels as though less than a day has gone by. I realized that Death's horses were headed in the direction of eternity.

The central themes of the poem are Death, Immortality and Eternity. The poem is an exploration of both the inevitability of death and the uncertainties that surround what happens after death. In the poem, the speaker takes a ride with a personified Death. They are heading towards her place in the afterlife. The poem's tone establishes this journey as something beyond the speaker's control. It's not clear if

the speaker is already dead, or she is traveling towards death. Her death is presented as natural, strange and inescapable.

The poem's opening lines make this clear. The speaker couldn't stop for Death but Death has stopped for her. Death is presented as a gentleman, "kindly" stopping his carriage for her. This suggests an acceptance of, death on the part of the speaker. Also in the carriage is Immortality. It's not clear if this is another personified figure. But the presence of Immortality refers to one of humanity's deepest questions: what happens when people die?

2. A Bird, came down the Walk

Text of the poem

A Bird, came down the Walk –
He did not know I saw -
He bit an Angle Worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then, he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass -
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass -

He glanced with rapid eyes,
That hurried all abroad -
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought,
He stirred his Velvet Head. -

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers,
And rowed him softer Home -

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon,
Leap, plashless as they swim.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem the speaker's encounter with a bird leads to thoughts about the frightening side of nature and its beauty. The bird is at once a predator, vulnerable animal and a beautiful spark of life. this poem uses unconventional syntax. The order of words in a sentence). It was published only after Dickinson's death, it first appeared in a posthumous collection, Poems, in 1891.

The speaker in the poem describes her encounter with the bird: A bird came down my front walkway. He didn't know that I could see him. He bit an earthworm in half and ate it raw.

Then he drank a dewdrop from a blade of grass and hopped towards the wall to get out of a beetle's way. His eyes nervously darted all around him. They looked like scared beads. He moved his soft, velvety head. I offered the bird a crumb. But the bird spread his wings and flew away. His wings moved more softly through the air than oars that dip into the ocean without making a ripple, or than butterflies that leap into the air at midday and swim through the sky without making a splash.

The central themes of the poem are The Beauty and Brutality of Nature.

The speaker watches a bird with fascination. Nature seems to be a place of both beauty and danger. The poem implies that human beings are as much a part of that beauty and peril as animals are.

The speaker's encounter with a bird in the front walk is marked by a sense of danger. The speaker sees the bird biting a worm in half and eating it raw. The personification of both the bird and the worm indicates the unease speaker feels at this sight. The speaker feels some pity for the poor little worm killed and eaten by the bird. Nature seems to be a brutal place.

The bird is not just a predator, but also prey. The bird eats the worm but he is also afraid of being eaten by some other animal like cat. When the speaker offers the

bird a crumb “Like one in danger, Cautious,” this line suggests that the speaker, too, feels natural dangers. The speaker is fascinated and charmed by the bird’s beauty.

3. I felt a Funeral in my Brain

Text of the poem

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum -
Kept beating - beating - till I thought
My mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space - began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race,
Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down -
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing - then -

Meaning and explanation of the poem

This poem was written in 1861. It was the beginning of Dickinson's most creative period. The poem employs metaphor to explore themes of madness, despair. The poet depicts a series of events based around a "funeral" that is revealed within the speaker's brain. The events start deep within the speaker's mind, the poem gradually expands to probe cosmic mysteries whose answers are silence.

The speaker feels as if a funeral service is taking place within her own mind. It feels like the funeral attendees are walking inside the speaker's head. Whatever they're walking on might break under the strain and then cause reason itself to fall through the hole in the speaker's mind.

The mourners finally take seats for the funeral service. This service doesn't contain any words. The speaker can only make out a repetitive, drum beats. The noise overwhelms the speaker, causing the speaker's mind to go blank.

The service ends and the funeral procession begins. The mourners lift a coffin and carry it as they walk across. It creaks like an old wooden floor. Everyone in the funeral procession wears heavy boots made out of lead. Their walking puts strain on the speaker's mind. Suddenly, there's the sound of bells ringing. The sound of bells seems to be coming from the whole world at once.

The speaker feels that people exist only to listen to the world's ringing. The speaker feels as though she is no longer human but has become some strange creature. The speaker is alone in her own body and mind.

Finally, one of the metaphorical floorboards in the speaker's mind breaks, the speaker falls further and further down the hole. While falling, she seems to collide with entire worlds, until the speaker's mind shuts down altogether. After this state, the poem ends abruptly.

The central themes of the poem are Madness and loss of sanity. The poem depicts the difficulty of understanding the mysterious thoughts and feelings that happen inside mind. the poem can be read as depicting the helplessness that accompany losing one's grip on reality. The poem can also be interpreted as narrating a terrifying descent into madness.

The speaker's mind seems passive and confused Throughout the poem. The Funeral of the opening line can be read as the death of the speaker's sanity. The loss of sanity is a painful experience for the speaker.

In the last stanza, Reason breaks and the speaker plunges down. This stanza shows how the speaker's mind has finally lost all control. The rational mind of the speaker has shut down. The poem evokes a sense of wonder and terror.

The speaker describes mourning and a loss of control. The reader can think of the poem as offering a personal depiction of despair. The speaker tracks despair from its onset to the darkest abyss of loneliness.

The metaphor of a funeral in the brain reveals the speaker's state of mind. The speaker's brain contains a Funeral and Mourners. Despair becomes a mysterious phenomenon without a cause.

The funeral depicts how despair can seem unending. The poem also suggests despair through physical metaphors. They cause the mind to go numb. The poem represents despair as a force that beats the mind to numbness.

4. Wild Nights – Wild Nights

Text of the poem

Wild nights - Wild nights!
Were I with thee
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile - the winds -
To a Heart in port -
Done with the Compass -
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden -
Ah - the Sea!
Might I but moor - tonight -
In thee!

Meaning and explanation of the poem

The speaker of this poem begins by exclaiming about wild nights. The image suggests literal stormy nights and nights of passion. If only she were with her lover, nights like this would bring them immense pleasure.

According to the speaker, wild winds can have no effect on a heart that is safely lodged in port. The image of a ship safely lodged in the port suggests that the speaker imagines herself as a sailor or a boat, and her beloved as a safe harbour. The speaker's heart has no more need of the tools of navigation.

The speaker presents a very different image of her imagined ocean. It is no longer a dangerous and tempestuous place, but a Paradise. At the end of poem the speaker returns to the image of the beloved as a harbour.

The central theme of the poem is sexual passion. The poem is explosion of desire. The speaker imagines herself as both a sailor and a boat on a stormy ocean, wishing to be resting in the harbour of her love. The central image of the poem is a strong sexual innuendo. The poem presents passionate love as something paradoxical. It is both wild and comforting, dangerous and secure.

The speaker imagines that her experience of wild nights would be transformed into “luxury” if her beloved were with her. The word luxury had sexual connotations in Dickinson’s time. It suggest a passionate sexuality. The security of satisfied love would create a place of safety and rest within her wild desire. In the last stanza, the speaker’s use of religious imagery completes her picture of passion as a thing that is at the same time stormy and calm. From the wild nights the speaker transitions into a different image: “rowing in Eden.” Eden, the paradise from the Bible, is an image of perfection and of passionate sexuality.

Another important theme in the poem is longing and absence. the speaker’s unnamed beloved never appears in the poem; the poem is simply the speaker imagining how great things would be if the beloved were with her. The poem suggests that there is a strange pleasure in the longing for someone.

5. Success is counted sweetest

Text of the poem

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.
Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of victory
As he defeated – dying –
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear

Meaning and explanation of the poem

This poem was written in 1859. In this poem the speaker claims that success is best understood by those who fail. She goes on to illustrate this claim by contrasting a victorious army with a fallen soldier from the other side.

According to the speaker in the poem, people who always fail appreciate success the most. In order to truly value success, you have to really, really need it. Not a single soldier in the victorious army has as clear an appreciation of the meaning of triumph as does a dying soldier from the opposing army.

The central themes of the poem are Success, Lack of success and Desire for success.

The speaker in the poem argues that “success” is valued most by those who have failed. According to her, Success is a kind of a paradox. The more successful a person is, the less he appreciates it. The desire for success is strongest in those who need it most. The less likely success is to come to someone, the more intensely they

desire it. According to her success is something deliciously luxurious to those who don't have it. The poem's central theme is not limited to the specific examples given. Its message applies to many situations in life.

6. I am Nobody! Who are you?

Text of the poem

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!
How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem an unnamed speaker introduces herself to the reader—as "Nobody." before realizing that the addressee is also "Nobody". This hints at a community of "Nobodies". These nobodies don't make as much noise as all the "Somebodies," who long for attention and admiration. The poem argues that being humble, withdrawn, shy, or private is just fine. Such a way of life has many virtues. The poem questions the value of public admiration, something which eluded Dickinson.

According to the speaker it would be very boring to be a "Somebody." The speaker equates being a somebody to being a frog. Some bodies spend their time talking to anyone who will give them attention and admiration. The speaker compares it to frogs making their noises in a swamp.

The central themes of the poem are Anonymity and Solitude. It is a powerful poem that questions the need for attention. It attempts to highlight the virtues of anonymity and isolation. It is a poem in praise of quiet, individual contemplation. The individuals who choose to be "Nobodies" over "Somebodies" also form a community. There's nothing wrong with or shameful about being nobody.

4.10 Check your progress 3.

1. When was Emily Dickinson born?
2. When did Emily Dickinson die?
3. Where did Emily Dickinson study?
4. Who discovered and published Emily Dickinson's poems after her death?
5. When was A complete collection of Dickinson's poems published for the first time?
6. Who published a complete collection of Dickinson's poems?
7. What are the central themes of the poem 'Because I could not Stop for Death'?
8. Who is riding in the carriage with the speaker and death?
9. Who is personified in the poem 'Because I could not stop for Death'?
10. Why does the speaker of the poem 'Because I could not stop for death' start shivering?
11. What did the bird do when the speaker was watching him?
12. What do the eyes of the bird look like?
13. What does the speaker offer the bird?
14. What are the central themes of the poem 'A Bird Came down the Walk'?
15. What are the central themes of 'I Felt a Funeral in my Brain'?
16. What sounds does the speaker of 'I Felt a Funeral in my Brain' hear?
17. What are the mourners in the funeral procession wearing?
18. What are the central themes of 'Wild Nights – Wild Nights'?
19. What tools are used by sailors for navigation?
20. What is the central image in the poem 'Wild Nights – Wild Nights'?
21. Which religious imagery is presented in the last stanza of 'Wild Nights – Wild Nights'?
22. According to the speaker in the poem, 'Success is counted sweetest' who appreciate success the most?

23. What are the central themes of the poem 'Success is counted sweetest'?
24. What argument does the speaker of the poem 'Success is counted sweetest' offer to prove her point?
25. What example does the speaker of the poem 'Success is counted sweetest' give to prove her point?
26. What are the central themes of the poem 'I am Nobody! Who are you?'?
27. What does the speaker compare being Somebody to?
28. According to the speaker, how do Somebodies spend their time?

4.11 Answers to check your progress

Check your progress 1.

1. Beyond and above
2. Over-soul
3. American Romanticism
4. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson.
5. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Carlyle
6. Nature
7. Man
8. He became a school teacher and then a clergy.
9. The Dial
10. R.W. Emerson

Answers to Check your progress 2.

1. Hood and gown
2. Phidias
3. Michelangelo, an Italian sculptor
4. Jeromy Taylor
5. All the trumpets of the sky

6. The north wind.
7. W. H. Channing
8. Love, friendship and truth.
9. Hamatreya is based on a passage of the Vishnu Purana
10. Greed and mortality
11. The earth
12. Desires, mortality, passage of time
13. Days.
14. Passage of time
15. He is contented in his pleached garden and He does not have grand desires.
16. The eternal, infinite soul of universe
17. Meek lover of good.
18. Bhagvat Gita
19. Death, time, and fate
20. Terminus
21. Terminus tells him that the time has come for him to limit his youthful ambitions. The old man should not seek to grow new fruits, as a young tree. He should take care of the fruits he has.

Answers to Check your progress 3.

1. on December 10, 1830.
2. on May 15, 1886
3. She studied at the Amherst Academy
4. Lavinia, her younger sister.
5. in 1955.
6. Thomas H. Johnson
7. Death, Immortality and Eternity.

8. Immortality.
9. Death.
10. Because she was only wearing a thin gown and a lightweight scarf.
11. He bit an earthworm in half and ate it raw. Then he drank a dewdrop from a blade of grass and hopped towards the wall to get out of a beetle's way.
12. They look like scary beads.
13. She offered him a crumb.
14. The Beauty and Brutality of Nature.
15. Madness and loss of sanity
16. Treading of the boots of the mourners, beating of drums, ringing of bells and creaking of planks.
17. Everyone in the funeral procession wears heavy boots made out of lead.
18. Sexual passion, desire, longing and absence.
19. Compass and chart.
20. The speaker imagines herself as a ship and her lover as a safe harbour.
21. Rowing in Eden.
22. People who always fail.
23. Success, Lack of success and Desire for success
24. The speaker in the poem argues that "success" is valued most by those who have failed. According to her, Success is a kind of a paradox. The more successful a person is, the less he appreciates it.
25. She gives example of a soldier of a defeated army who understands what the success means.
26. The central themes of the poem are Anonymity and Solitude
27. Being somebody is compared to being a frog.
28. They spend their time talking to anyone who will give them attention and admiration

4.12 Books for further reading

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