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Preface

Dear Students,

This book contains Self- Learning Material on the paper Modern and Postmodern British Literature. You must have seen the detailed syllabus prescribed for this paper. The syllabus contains the book from which certain chapters have been prescribed for you for detailed study of the topics stated in the syllabus. Besides there is a list of reference books for additional reading on those topics. In this book, there are four Units dealing with the topics in the syllabus, in a detailed manner, making them simple for you to understand. In addition to that, there are one sentences or one word questions interseperated in each unit along with some objective type questions also. They are meant for making you go back to the unit again and again to search the answers so that you become more and more familiar with the topics and ideas contained in the unit. For Self- check, there are answers of these questions given at the end of each unit. Try to answer the questions in the self-check exercise and then only see the answers given at the end of the unit. This will help you to correct your own answers.

Even though each unit in this book extensively deals with the topics in the syllabus, these are only notes for your guidance. You ought to refer to the original materials in the books prescribed. The units in this book are topics simplified for your guidance. You should supplement this material from your own additional reading.

There are exercises given at the end of each unit, which contain broad answer type questions, which you may face in the final examination. Try to write answers for these questions with the help of this book. Model answers are also provided for these practical exercises, which should help you in your final examination. Study each unit carefully and whenever possible try to refer to the topics from the books prescribed.

We wish you best luck in your final examination.

- Editors

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Each Unit begins with the section objectives -

Objectives are directive and indicative of :

1. what has been presented in the unit and
2. what is expected from you
3. what you are expected to know pertaining to the specific unit, once you have completed working on the unit.

The self check exercises with possible answers will help you understand the unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answers only after you write your answers. These exercises are not to be submitted to us for evaluation. They have been provided to you as study tools to keep you in the right track as you study the unit.

Dear Students

The SLM is simply a supporting material for the study of this paper. It is also advised to see the syllabus for 2024-25 and study the reference books & other related material for the detailed study of the paper.

Unit-1
Modern British Drama
Text : *Saint Joan* by G. B. Shaw

Contents:

1.0 Objective:

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

1. Understand the plot, characterization, and themes in *Saint Joan*.
2. Explain the concept of the "drama of ideas."
3. Understand Shaw's writing style.
4. Explore the relationship between history and literary art.

1.1 Introduction to *Saint Joan*:

Saint Joan is a play written by the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, first performed in 1923. The play is a dramatization of the life of Joan of Arc, the 15th-century French military heroine who led her nation to several victories during the Hundred Years' War and was later captured, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake.

Shaw's portrayal of Joan is unique, focusing on her as a complex and dynamic character—a visionary and a leader, but also a young woman with strong political and religious convictions. The play is often considered a "drama of ideas," as it delves into themes such as nationalism, individualism, and the conflict between established authority and progressive change. Shaw presents Joan as a figure who challenges the norms of her time, questioning both political and religious institutions, which leads to her tragic end.

Saint Joan is not only a historical drama but also a reflection on the nature of sainthood, martyrdom, and the clash between human progress and traditional power structures. Shaw's sharp wit, insightful dialogue, and philosophical undertones make it a compelling exploration of history and its relevance to contemporary issues. The play ultimately questions whether society can accept revolutionary figures without turning them into legends after their demise.

1.2 A note on Modern Drama:

Modern drama refers to plays written and performed from the late 19th century to the present day. It is a part of modern literature and reflects the challenges, complexities, and realities of modern life. Unlike traditional drama, which often focuses on heroic characters and epic themes, modern drama deals with ordinary

people and their everyday struggles. It aims to make audiences think about society, human emotions, and relationships.

1.2.1 Key Features of Modern Drama

1. Realism

Modern drama often portrays life as it is, focusing on real issues and genuine emotions. Characters in modern plays are ordinary people dealing with problems like family conflicts, poverty, love, and loss. This shift towards realism makes the stories more relatable to audiences.

2. Focus on Social Issues

Modern playwrights often explore social problems like inequality, gender roles, political oppression, and moral dilemmas. These plays question traditional norms and challenge the audience to think critically about societal issues.

3. Experimentation with Form

Unlike traditional plays, which followed strict rules of structure, modern drama experiments with storytelling. Some plays abandon the classic division into acts and scenes or use non-linear timelines, flashbacks, or symbolic elements to tell their stories.

4. Psychological Depth

Modern drama delves deeply into the minds and emotions of its characters. It examines their inner struggles, motivations, and desires, often influenced by developments in psychology, especially the ideas of Sigmund Freud.

5. Everyday Language

The dialogue in modern drama is closer to the way people speak in real life. This makes the plays more natural and relatable, moving away from the formal or poetic language of earlier times.

1.2.2 Major Themes in Modern Drama

1. **Alienation**: Modern plays often show characters feeling isolated or disconnected from society due to industrialization, urbanization, or cultural changes.

2. **Identity and Individuality**: Many plays explore the search for self-identity and the struggle to maintain individuality in a conformist world.
3. **Critique of Authority**: Modern drama frequently challenges authority figures, institutions, or traditional beliefs, reflecting the changing values of society.

1.2.3 Important Modern Dramatists

1. Henrik Ibsen (Norway)

Known as the "father of modern drama," Ibsen wrote plays like *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, which questioned societal norms and explored personal freedom.

2. George Bernard Shaw (England)

Shaw's plays, such as *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara*, combine wit and social criticism to address issues like class inequality and gender roles.

3. Anton Chekhov (Russia)

Chekhov's works, including *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Seagull*, focus on human emotions and the subtle changes in relationships.

4. Samuel Beckett (Ireland)

A pioneer of the "Theatre of the Absurd," Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* presents existential questions about life, meaning, and time.

5. Arthur Miller (America)

Miller's plays, such as *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*, explore themes like ambition, morality, and social responsibility.

1.2.4 Influence of Modern Drama

Modern drama has had a lasting impact on theatre and society. It paved the way for new styles like absurdist drama, expressionism, and postmodern theatre. By addressing real-world issues and experimenting with form, it has made theatre a powerful medium for social commentary and artistic expression.

1.2.5 Conclusion

Modern drama represents a shift from grand tales and formal traditions to realistic and relatable stories about human life. By exploring social, emotional, and

psychological themes, it connects deeply with audiences, making them reflect on the complexities of the modern world.

1.3 About the author:

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) was a renowned Irish playwright, critic, and social reformer who made a lasting impact on English literature. Over a dramatic career spanning sixty years, Shaw produced sixty works, including thirty major plays. He is regarded as the second most important British playwright after Shakespeare. Among his significant works are *Man and Superman*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *St. Joan*, *Pygmalion*, and *Arms and the Man*.

Shaw was a unique literary figure, celebrated for his 'theatre of ideas.' He used plays as a medium to promote intellectual debate and challenge societal norms, emphasizing clarity and rational discourse over emotional appeal. He preferred to stimulate the audience's minds, encouraging them to question established beliefs and social injustices.

His contributions were not limited to literature. Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925 for his contributions to drama, and he later received an Oscar in 1938 for his work on the film adaptation of *Pygmalion*. This makes him the only person to have achieved both honors.

Despite having no particular writing style or poetic form, Shaw's plays are distinguished by their lucidity, wit, and emphasis on dialogue. A tireless crusader for social justice and equality, he was known for his radical nationalism, disregard for conventions, and advocacy for the intellectual empowerment of the public. Shaw's fascination with language also extended to a keen interest in the sounds and meanings of words.

In the later years of his life, Shaw suffered a fall while pruning trees, which led to a fractured hip. While bedridden, he developed kidney failure and passed away on 2nd November 1950. His legacy remains as a champion of social reform and a literary figure who reshaped British theatre.

1.4 List of characters:

i) Joan of Arc (often referred to simply as "The Maid"): Joan of Arc is the central historical character of the play. She is a 17-year-old, simple country girl who is uneducated yet intelligent. She claims to hear voices from heaven and faithfully

obeys them. She demonstrates her military knowledge by showing where to place canons and artilleries on the battlefield. Her honesty and innocence appeal to readers. Her belief in the rightness of her own conscience and her refusal to submit to the authority of the Church has led Shaw and others to consider her the first Protestant to be martyred by the Catholic Church.

ii) Robert de Baudricourt: A gentlemanly squire from Joan's district of Lorraine, he is the first person of importance to support Joan's plans. With his help, Joan gets her first armor and her first opportunity to demonstrate her military skills.

iii) Bertrand de Poulengey (Polly): One of Joan's first supporters, he helps her get a meeting with Robert de Baudricourt, and later rides with her in the Battle of Orleans.

iv) The Archbishop of Rheims: A churchman who initially sees Joan as a devout and innocent girl, closely connected to God. However, as Joan continues to be right and eventually crowns the Dauphin as king, the Archbishop grows disillusioned with her and ultimately turns against her.

v) Monseigneur de la Trémouille: The Lord Chamberlain in the Dauphin's court and the "commander-in-chief" of the French forces. He is used to intimidating the Dauphin and deeply resents Joan when she is given command of the French army.

vi) The Dauphin: Later crowned Charles VII in the Rheims Cathedral, the Dauphin is portrayed as weak, whiny, and indifferent to matters of the court and the country. Joan forces him to act more like a man and take on a leadership role he does not want.

vii) Gilles de Rais (Bluebeard): A captain in the army and a devoted follower of The Maid even though he is not a religious person.

viii) Dunois (The Bastard): A young, popular, and capable leader of the French forces who recognizes Joan's military talent, but in the final battle, he is unsure whether she should be saved.

ix) The Earl of Warwick: The English earl in charge of the English forces and Joan's most bitter secular opponent. He sees Joan's belief that people should be loyal directly to the king as a threat to the loyalty feudal lords expect from their serfs. He demands Joan's death to preserve the feudal system.

x) John de Stogumber: The Earl of Warwick's chaplain. At first, he is a harsh and fierce accuser of Joan, viewing her simply as a witch who should be burned immediately. He doesn't understand the complex arguments about Joan's threat to the Church and the aristocracy. However, the most dramatic change in the play happens with de Stogumber; after witnessing Joan's execution, he becomes a weak, broken man who spends the rest of his life doing good deeds to ease his guilt over his attacks against her.

xi) Peter Cauchon: The academic theologian who represents the "wisdom of the Church." He sees Joan as a direct threat to the Church's power and is proud that he has always followed the Church's opinions without asserting his own individuality. For Joan to follow her own conscience, rely on her own judgment, and communicate directly with God without the Church's involvement is, in Cauchon's view, the worst form of heresy.

xii) The Inquisitor: Physically, the Inquisitor appears to be a kind and gentle elderly man. However, he represents the strictest institutions of the Church. He firmly believes in the rightness of these institutions and in the Church's collected wisdom. He thinks that individual conscience must always be controlled by the authority of the Church. His long, rambling speech on heresy reveals him as a defender of these institutions and someone who rejects any form of individualism.

xiii) Brother Martin Ladvenu: A sympathetic young priest who wants to save Joan's life and is genuinely worried about her inability to understand the charges against her. He believes her only fault is her ignorance, but after she is sentenced, he accepts her imprisonment as fair. However, he holds up the cross for Joan to see while she is at the stake, and he plays a key role in her later rehabilitation.

1.5 Summary of the play:

A young country girl, in 1429, named Joan of Arc, also known as The Maid, insists on meeting with Robert de Baudricourt and refuses to leave until he agrees. She tells him she needs horses and armor to go to the Dauphin (King) of France and to lift the siege of Orleans, a city held by the English forces. Joan is confident she can succeed because Saints Margaret and Catherine have told her what to do. Impressed by Joan's determination, Captain de Baudricourt grants her request.

When Joan arrives at the Dauphin's castle, she faces many challenges, especially from the Dauphin himself, who wants to avoid wars and fighting. Despite hearing about France's desperate situation, the court ignores Joan's demands for action. However, alone with the Dauphin, she manages to inspire enough courage in him that he allows her to lead the army, believing she can't make things any worse.

Joan goes to the Loire River near Orleans, where she meets Dunois, the commander of the French forces. He explains that they must wait for the wind to change before attacking, but Joan insists on moving forward immediately. Suddenly, the wind shifts in their favor, and Dunois pledges his loyalty to her.

Meanwhile, in the English camp, Warwick, the English leader, and his chaplain, de Stogumber, claim that Joan must be a witch, as they can't explain their losses any other way. The Bishop of Beauvais, Peter Cauchon, arrives and discusses Joan's fate. He worries that Joan's actions challenge the Church's authority, as she follows her own conscience instead of Church guidance. Warwick, concerned about the stability of the feudal system, believes Joan's message could lead common people to pledge allegiance directly to the king, undermining the power of local lords. Both agree that Joan must be executed.

After more victories, Joan fulfills her promise by driving the English back and having the Dauphin crowned king at the Cathedral in Rheims. After the ceremony, Joan wants to continue fighting to capture Paris, but the newly crowned king is content, Dunois hesitates, and the Archbishop becomes wary of Joan's growing pride. Realizing she stands alone, Joan declares that she will face her enemies without support from the military, the state, or the Church.

Nine months later, Joan is on trial for heresy, having been in chains during this time. Her accusers repeatedly question her about the legitimacy of her "voices." Under pressure, Joan admits that her voices might not have been from heaven but from Satan. After this admission, her judges sentence her to life in prison on bread and water. Joan, horrified by the punishment, tears up her confession. She is immediately taken to the stake and burned as a witch. Afterward, the Executioner reports that her heart did not burn.

Twenty-five years later, in the Epilogue, Joan appears before the former Dauphin, now king, and her past accusers, who have been condemned by a later court. The court has declared Joan innocent of all charges and found her judges

guilty of various crimes. The scene then shifts to 1920, when Joan is declared a saint by the Church. Now, she has the chance to return to life, and she asks if they want her to come back. They are horrified by the idea and beg her to stay dead. Joan then asks God, "O Lord, how long before the world will be ready to accept its saints?"

1.6 Detail analysis of the play:

Saint Joan is divided into a Preface and six main scenes, followed by an Epilogue. Unlike the other plays Shaw divides the play into scenes and not into Acts. Let's study the Preface, the scenes and the Epilogue in detail.

1.6.1 The Preface:

Shaw often writes long prefaces to his plays, where he comments on the themes and issues raised in them. He also presents his ideas through his prefaces. The Preface to *Saint Joan* is one of his longest and gives many of his views on Joan from a more objective perspective. It is divided into forty-one sections. Shaw sees Joan as one of the first Protestant martyrs and a forerunner of women's equality. Joan was burned as a heretic for two main reasons:

1. Even though Joan never denied the Church and often sought comfort in it, she listened to her own conscience and reason instead of following Church authority. This made her, in Shaw's view, the "first Protestant."
2. She was a pioneer in rational clothing for women, choosing to dress practically rather than according to traditional standards. However, this so-called "unwomanly" behavior was one reason she was condemned and burned.

Joan was innocent in all things. She was like Socrates because, without meaning to, she embarrassed people in power. It is very dangerous to reveal the ignorance of those in authority, and both Joan and Socrates were executed for doing so. In reality, Joan was a simple country girl who, while uneducated, was quite intelligent. She couldn't read or write, but she dictated letters and understood the political and military situation in France. She had the common sense to put her ideas into action. Because no one believed a simple girl could be so capable, Joan said that her ideas came from "voices and visions." According to Shaw, some people have such vivid imaginations that they hear their own ideas as if they were real voices. In this way, Joan felt that the clear understanding of situations came to her from an outside

source, when it was really her own intelligence and imagination, combined with her courage and common sense.

These qualities made Joan a saint, but her inability to grasp the complexities of medieval society and the Church led to her execution. Over the centuries, Joan has inspired many writers to portray her in different ways, often exaggerating her qualities or misinterpreting her actions. From Shakespeare to Voltaire, from Schiller to Mark Twain, and others, Joan's story has been retold according to the writers' own times. Shaw believes that none have accurately portrayed her because to understand Joan, one must understand the world she lived in. He says: "To see her in her proper perspective, you must understand Christendom and the Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Feudal System as they existed in the Middle Ages." In those days, there were no neutral trials, so Joan was not judged as a traitor to France but as a heretic against God. Her judges cared only about the authority of the Universal Church, not about national borders, and could not accept Joan challenging the Church's power.

Joan's execution was "just like dozens of less famous heretics who were burned at the time." Shaw points out that even today, cruel punishments continue. Just as the medieval Church couldn't tolerate Joan's independence, the modern world cannot accept anyone who questions the power of those in authority. We are no closer today to accepting a genius or a saint than people were in Joan's time. If Joan had not been captured and executed, she likely would have driven the English out of France and then retired to her home. But, according to Shaw, "the real Joan was never marvelous enough for us," so writers often changed the facts of her life to suit their own purposes.

Writing a historical play has many challenges. Shaw compares Shakespeare's historical plays with his own. Shakespeare never dealt with the larger forces of law, religion, and patriotism that drive people's actions, while Shaw tries to explore these themes. He believes he has an advantage over earlier writers because he is further removed from the Middle Ages and can see them more clearly. Shaw considers his play a tragedy, not a melodrama; there are no villains in *Saint Joan*, only characters trapped by their time. The Epilogue is necessary, even if not historical, because if the play shows Joan's execution, then it also needs to show her canonization. This provides a balance between "the tragedy of her death" and "the comedy of later attempts to make up for it."

1.6.2 Scene 1 Summary:

The scene is set in the spring of 1429 A.D. at the castle of Captain Robert de Baudricourt, a young, handsome but rather dull man. Sir Robert is angry because there are no eggs. His steward says it's an "act of God" and that the hens will not lay because "we are bewitched... as long as The Maid is at the door." Sir Robert is shocked to learn that The Maid from Lorraine is still waiting outside since he dismissed her two days ago, but she refuses to leave without an interview. Frustrated, he goes to the window and tells her to come up.

When Joan enters, she is a strong, healthy country girl, about sixteen or seventeen years old. She immediately tells Sir Robert that he must give her a horse, armor, and some soldiers, and send her to the Dauphin. Sir Robert is offended that someone would dare to give him orders and is stunned to hear that the "lord" giving these orders is the "Lord of Heaven." He thinks the girl is crazy. Joan then lists the costs of the armor and horse, adding that she won't need many soldiers because the Dauphin will provide more to "lift the siege of Orleans." She says that the voices of Saints Catherine and Margaret have told her it will happen. Joan also mentions that one of Sir Robert's noblemen, Bertrand de Poulengey (or Polly), wants to join her.

Hearing this, Sir Robert dismisses Joan and calls for "Polly." At first, Sir Robert scolds Polly, suspecting an inappropriate relationship, but Polly assures him there's nothing of the sort. Sir Robert points out that Joan is just a "country girl," a "bourgeoise," and seems mad. However, Poulengey talks about the dire military situation: the English and their French allies, the Burgundians, control more than half of France, the Dauphin is stuck "like a rat in a corner" and is doing nothing, and even Dunois (The Bastard) can't save Orleans. He says they need a miracle: "We want a few mad people now. Look at where the sane ones have gotten us!"

Poulengey offers to pay for the horse, which makes Sir Robert hesitate. He calls for Joan again. Joan insists that she is following the instructions of her "voices" (which she won't explain further) and believes the English "are only men" and should be forced to return to "their own country and their own language." She predicts that Sir Robert will live to see the day "when there will not be an English soldier on French soil" and when there will be one king—"God's French one."

Sir Robert is finally persuaded. He thinks that the troops and even the Dauphin might be inspired by Joan's conviction and courage. It's worth a try, he decides. He

orders Joan to go to Chinon with Poulengey as her escort, gives her a soldier's armor, and she leaves joyfully. In the end, Sir Robert admits, "There is something about her." The scene concludes with the hens suddenly "laying like mad."

Analysis: In the opening scene, important aspects of Joan's character are revealed. She is strong-willed and direct, unlike Sir Robert de Baudricourt, who is indecisive and easily influenced. Joan's determination easily overpowers Sir Robert's doubts. As the Steward says, "Sir, she is so positive." When Joan talks about her mission from God, Sir Robert immediately thinks she's mad, linking her voices to her sanity—something that will later lead to her death.

There's a humorous element when Sir Robert's hens start laying eggs after Joan gets her way, hinting at her mysterious influence. Shaw also makes it clear that Joan is not motivated by sexuality; she is portrayed as asexual throughout the play, countering any suggestions of romantic or sexual appeal.

The idea of miracles is introduced: France's desperate situation seems to require one, and Joan's exceptional nature fits this need. Saints are abnormal by definition, and Joan is certainly unique—she's a young country girl who hears voices, dresses as a man, and leads an army against the powerful English. Her inspiration is what makes her successful, even if her grasp of battle tactics is instinctive.

Shaw uses the recurring "miracle" of the eggs to make a point: once people believe someone is a saint, they often attribute all kinds of miracles to them.

1.6.3 Scene 2 Summary:

The scene is set in the waiting room outside the throne room of the Dauphin's castle in Chinon. The Archbishop of Rheims and la Trémouille are discussing how much money they have lent to the Dauphin, who is still nearly broke. A young man named Gilles de Rais, known as Bluebeard, enters and says that Joan has made a big impression on the soldiers. Captain La Hire confirms this, saying she must be "an angel dressed as a soldier" because she overcame great obstacles to get to Chinon.

The Dauphin, a young man of twenty-six, comes in with a letter from Sir Robert de Baudricourt about Joan. The Archbishop and Chamberlain intimidate the Dauphin, refusing to let him see Joan because they don't think she is respectable. Bluebeard then suggests a test: he will pretend to be the Dauphin, and if Joan can't tell the difference, she's a fraud; if she can, she might truly be heaven-sent. They also

discuss how desperate the situation in Orleans is and how even the famous commander, Dunois, can't change things. They agree that only a miracle can help. When the Dauphin and Bluebeard leave to set up the test, the Archbishop and the Chamberlain talk about what makes a miracle. For the Archbishop, a miracle is anything that creates faith, and he believes it's the Church's role to nourish that faith.

The curtain opens, revealing the full throne room, filled with members of the royal court. Joan, dressed in a soldier's outfit with short hair, is brought in. The ladies of the court laugh at her clothes, but Joan is unfazed. When Bluebeard tries to trick her, she quickly dismisses him and picks out the real Dauphin from the crowd. She tells him she has been sent to drive out the English and crown him king at the Cathedral in Rheims. The Archbishop is consulted and, after speaking with Joan, believes she is sincere. He asks everyone to leave Joan alone with the Dauphin.

Once they are alone, Charles, the Dauphin, admits he is scared and unhappy. Unlike the others, he doesn’t enjoy war and just wants to live a peaceful life. Joan tells him she will give him courage, but Charles is not interested; he just wants a comfortable bed and to avoid danger. Joan, however, insists that she will crown him king in Rheims. Her passion and belief gradually start to inspire Charles. Finally, he calls back the court and declares that Joan will have command of the army. The Chamberlain objects, claiming he is the commander, but Joan stands firm, pushing Charles to be brave. He defies the Chamberlain as Joan draws her sword, kneels, and calls out, “Who is for God and His Maid? Who is for Orleans with me?” All the knights draw their swords in support, and the Archbishop blesses them.

Analysis: The supernatural side of Joan is highlighted by the changes she brings about in the common soldiers. Even the toughest of them stop swearing, leading La Hire to call her "an angel dressed as a soldier." The common people’s faith in Joan never falters, as seen later in the Epilogue, even though the Church condemns her. The Archbishop points out that Joan is not "respectable" because she wears men's clothes, making her "unwomanly." This issue with her clothing will play a key role in her trial. Additionally, war has traditionally been a man’s domain, but here is a young, seventeen-year-old girl taking charge. Even the Dauphin, who is weak and uncertain, needs Joan to guide him.

The Archbishop's definition of a miracle—any event that creates faith—unintentionally describes Joan's whole life, but this is ignored at her trial when her achievements are dismissed.

The first two scenes show contrasting characters. Sir Robert de Baudricourt is enthusiastic but clueless about warfare, while the courtiers fully understand what needs to be done but lack dedication and spirit. They are stuck in their own selfishness, especially the Dauphin, who hates war and his royal duties. The fact that Joan can inspire such a reluctant leader shows her "miraculous" influence.

This scene also foreshadows Joan's downfall. She is ultimately condemned because she chooses to follow her own inner voices instead of the Church's authority. The Archbishop hints at this when he says the Church must guide people for their own good and "nourish their faith by poetry." Joan, however, represents those who follow their conscience over the Church's authority, making her a symbol of early Protestantism.

1.6.4 Scene 3 Summary:

This scene takes place on the south bank of the Loire River, near Orléans, about seven weeks later. Dunois, known as "The Bastard of Orléans," is pacing along the riverbank, frustrated that the wind is blowing in the wrong direction. He keeps looking at the flag on his lance, which is pointing the wrong way. A page arrives, and Dunois immediately asks where The Maid is. Joan then appears, dressed in full armor. As she arrives, the west wind suddenly dies down, though Dunois is too preoccupied to notice.

When Joan realizes Dunois is "The Bastard of Orléans," she questions why they are on this side of the river when the English and Orléans are on the other side. She wants to cross the bridge right away and attack the English forces. Dunois explains that older and wiser military experts say such a move is impossible, but Joan dismisses them as "fools" and insists on immediate action.

Dunois warns her that the soldiers won't follow her into certain danger, but Joan replies, "I won't look back to see if anyone is following me." She declares that she will charge the fort first and dares Dunois to come with her. Dunois suggests they should sail upriver and attack the English from behind, but he adds that they "must wait until God changes the wind." He asks Joan to go to a church and pray for an east

wind. They leave to find a church, but suddenly, the page shouts that the wind has changed. Joan and Dunois rush back, and Dunois, convinced that God has spoken, pledges his loyalty to Joan if she leads the army.

Analysis: In this short scene, Dunois is shown as a charming, romantic hero. His opening speech about the west wind paints him as a "Soldier Poet." He is a good match for Joan, The Maid. As a romantic, Dunois believes Joan is "in love with war," while earlier, the Archbishop said Joan was in love with religion. But Joan is not in love with either; she is simply following her dedication (or the voices she hears). Her greatness is highlighted in this scene by how she can easily win over experienced soldiers like Dunois, who is a practical soldier that carefully considers the tactical difficulties before acting. In contrast, Joan moves immediately—driven by inspiration.

This scene also emphasizes the miraculous aspect of Joan's presence. Here, the miracle is the sudden change of the wind. Dunois had been waiting a long time for the wind to shift, and it happens just as Joan is ready to attack. This is enough for Dunois to believe Joan has miraculous powers. Joan, like the west wind, is a force that moves steadily towards her goal without over thinking the bigger picture—she is simply "blown" toward victory.

1.6.5 Scene 4 Summary:

The scene takes place in the English camp, where Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, discusses the surprising French victories with his chaplain, de Stogumber. They can only explain these defeats as the result of "witchcraft and sorcery." They believe that no ordinary girl could have defeated the English unless she was "an accursed witch." Warwick is prepared to pay a large ransom to capture Joan and burn her as a witch.

A page then announces the arrival of Peter Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais. Warwick explains that Joan has arranged for Charles to be crowned at Rheims, leaving the English powerless. Warwick believes Joan is a sorceress and should be handed over to the Inquisition. De Stogumber is even more certain of her guilt, emphasizing her many victories over the English and her miraculous survival on the battlefield.

Cauchon is not fully convinced that Joan's victories are due to witchcraft. He suggests that some credit should go to French leadership, though he acknowledges that Joan does have supernatural powers, but attributes them to the Devil. He sees her as a heretic, not a witch, because she bypasses the Church and claims to hear directly from God. This, he says, challenges the very foundation of the Catholic Church. To Cauchon, Joan's actions suggest she believes she is the Church, which he calls the worst form of heresy. He argues that the Church must protect souls, and his duty is to save Joan's soul, even if it means condemning her. He compares Joan to other heretics throughout history who claimed to have personal revelations from God.

Warwick, however, is not concerned with the religious aspect of Joan's actions. He is more worried about her threat to the social order of Europe. Joan's ideas, he fears, would undermine the feudal system, where the king is just the first among nobles. She envisions a system where the king answers only to God and the nobility loses its power and lands, turning everything over to the Church. This shift would make the common people's allegiance go directly to the king, weakening the influence of the nobles.

Cauchon is not disturbed by Joan's challenge to the feudal order. He recognizes that Warwick's main concern is about power, not theology. Warwick argues that Joan's ideas would remove any authority between a person and their king or God, a concept he calls "Protestantism." Cauchon also extends this idea to "Nationalism," saying that Joan is encouraging people to take pride in their own countries—"France for the French, England for the English." This is a challenge to the Church's universal rule over all nations.

De Stogumber is confused by these complex ideas, focusing instead on Joan's rebellion against tradition—she wears men's clothes, listens to her own voices instead of the Church, and associates with the Devil. Despite his confusion, all agree that Joan must "die for the people."

Analysis: Shaw once said that the play *Saint Joan* truly begins with the fourth scene, with the earlier scenes serving as mere setup. While his comment is a bit exaggerated, the first three scenes are crucial for establishing the basic conflicts. The fourth scene, however, introduces the deeper philosophical and ideological debates that drive the rest of the play.

In this scene, Shaw highlights Joan's supernatural influence. For de Stogumber, who doesn't grasp the complex ideas of Protestantism and Nationalism, Joan's repeated victories can only be explained by witchcraft. The more people label her a witch, the more likely that belief is to spread. However, Bishop Cauchon does not see her as a witch but rather a more dangerous threat—a heretic.

The scene centers on a debate between Warwick, who represents the feudal lords, and Cauchon, who represents the Church. Warwick's argument is that Joan threatens the feudal system because she encourages common people to pledge allegiance directly to the king, bypassing the local lords. If Joan succeeds, the feudal system will collapse.

Cauchon's concern is that Joan undermines the authority of the Church. She encourages people to speak directly to God, making the Church's role as an intermediary unnecessary. She also promotes loyalty to nations rather than the Universal Church, weakening its power.

Ironically, Warwick and Cauchon do not share the same reasons for wanting Joan dead, but they agree she is a threat to both the feudal system and the Church's authority. Meanwhile, de Stogumber, oblivious to the deeper issues, simply wants Joan eliminated without understanding why.

1.6.6 Scene 5 Summary:

This scene takes place inside the Cathedral at Rheims, right after the Dauphin is crowned King Charles VII. Joan is kneeling in prayer, while Dunois enters, urging her to come outside and greet the cheering crowds. Joan declines, saying she wants the new king, Charles, to have all the glory. Dunois points out that, despite her popularity with the common soldiers and the public, she has few allies at Court. When Joan doesn't understand why, Dunois explains that her success has made powerful men look foolish, especially since she, not the Archbishop, crowned Charles. If that's the case, Joan says, she will return to her farm—after taking Paris. Dunois warns that some would rather see her fall into enemy hands, but Joan's faith in her voices gives her the courage to continue.

Bluebeard and La Hire enter, with Charles complaining about his uncomfortable coronation robes and the smell of the holy oil. He is delighted to hear that Joan plans to return home, which disappoints her. Suddenly, she suggests they should take Paris

before she leaves, horrifying the king, who wants a treaty and no more fighting. The Archbishop arrives, attempting to restrain Joan's impulsiveness. When she speaks sharply to him, he accuses her of pride and warns that her behavior will bring divine punishment. Joan insists that her voices guide her, reminding everyone of her past successes. "You don't know how to fight or use cannons," she declares, "but I do."

Dunois interrupts, acknowledging that while God may have been with her before, it is now time to rely on experience, not miracles. He criticizes Joan for not considering costs or manpower. He also warns that if she is captured, no one will ransom her—not even himself. Joan assumes the Crown will rescue her, but Charles denies it, saying he is out of money after the costly coronation. Joan then turns to the Church for support, but the Archbishop tells her she will be condemned as a witch. Joan is shocked, insisting she has only followed God's will. The Archbishop says her voices are just echoes of her stubbornness, warning that if she continues to ignore the Church, she will be abandoned by the Church, Crown, and Army. "You will stand alone: absolutely alone."

Joan responds that she has always been alone, just as France is alone, and even God is alone. She hoped to find allies in the French Court, but now understands that her strength lies in her solitude, just like God's. In God's name, she vows to fight until her last breath. She will turn to the common people who love her, finding comfort in their support despite the hostility of powerful men. Even if she is burned at the stake, she believes her spirit will remain in the hearts of the common people forever. She leaves, saying, "God be with me."

The others fall silent. Then, Bluebeard remarks that Joan is "quite impossible." Dunois admits he would jump into a river fully armored to save her, but if she falls into enemy hands during a reckless campaign, he would leave her to her fate. La Hire, on the other hand, is ready to follow her to the end, even to Hell. The Archbishop is troubled by doubt, while Charles only wishes Joan would be quiet and go home.

Analysis: After Scene Four introduces the ideas and forces opposing Joan, Scene Five focuses on Joan herself at a critical point in her life. She decides to trust her voices over the authority of the Church and other advisors. Joan believes these voices could guide anyone willing to listen, showing her mystic nature.

In a key speech, Joan reflects on loneliness, realizing her duty is to a higher power, not earthly leaders. This isolates her from France's powers, leaving her supported only by the love of ordinary people. At the start of the scene, Joan prays for guidance and humbly avoids the crowd's praise. When Dunois mentions her enemies, Joan struggles to understand their hostility, as she only aims to help France. Like Socrates, who was misunderstood for exposing ignorance, Joan cannot grasp why people resent her efforts.

Even her strongest supporters question her reliance on her voices, though her victories have proven her military skill. When Joan claims she knows more about battle than the professionals, others see this as arrogance. The Archbishop calls it hubris, comparing her to tragic Greek figures like Oedipus. Yet Joan's "pride" lies in her unwavering belief in her voices and her achievements. This belief alienates her from France, the Church, and the Army, as others view her as disobedient and proud. Despite this, Joan remains confident in the truth of her voices and the practical success they have brought her.

1.6.7 Scene 6 Summary:

This scene takes place in a large hall set up for Joan's trial. The prisoner's seat is a simple wooden stool, surrounded by a circular table. It has been nine months since Joan was captured. Warwick has paid to ransom Joan and handed her over to the Church to be tried for heresy. Though Warwick cannot attend the trial, he speaks to Bishop Cauchon to check on its progress. The court has already conducted several public and private hearings with little result.

Cauchon introduces Warwick to the Inquisitor, a calm elderly man, and Canon John D'Estivet, the prosecutor. The Inquisitor says they are ready to move forward, while Warwick insists Joan must die for political reasons. Ironically, Joan hurts her case by speaking openly, often saying things considered blasphemous.

When the court gathers, De Stogumber and Canon de Courcelles complain that their long list of charges against Joan has been cut down to twelve. The Inquisitor, supported by Cauchon, dismisses the unnecessary accusations, focusing instead on heresy. A young priest, Ladvenu, suggests Joan's actions might come from her simplicity, but the Inquisitor explains in a long speech that heresy often starts with good, humble people who sincerely believe they are inspired by God. He warns that Joan's judges must avoid cruelty or excessive sympathy.

Joan, chained and visibly worn from her imprisonment, is brought in. The prosecutor questions her harshly, and when Joan hesitates to swear to tell the truth again, she is threatened with torture. Cauchon finally asks Joan if she will submit to the authority of the Church. Joan agrees only if it does not force her to deny her voices, which she believes are from God. This refusal to fully submit outrages her accusers, who see it as heresy.

Despite Ladvenu's pleas for her to accept the Church's authority, Joan insists she is loyal to God first. When questioned about wearing men's clothing, Joan defends herself, explaining it was necessary for safety among soldiers and in prison. Her responses are seen as defiant, and the court reminds her of the executioner waiting behind her. Joan, terrified of burning at the stake, agrees to confess her voices were false and signs a recantation.

Joan's confession saves her from excommunication, but she is sentenced to lifelong imprisonment on bread and water. Overcome with fear of a dark, miserable prison, Joan tears up the confession and declares she cannot live without freedom and light. She accuses the court of injustice and rejects their authority.

The court declares Joan a "relapsed heretic," and she is condemned to be burned at the stake. As she is led away, Ladvenu accompanies her to offer final prayers. Cauchon hesitates, but the Inquisitor insists the trial followed the Church's rules, though the English pushed for Joan's execution.

After Joan's death, De Stogumber, devastated by the sight of her burning, breaks down in guilt and remorse. Ladvenu, deeply moved, recounts how Joan, even at the stake, cared for others, showing her faith in God. The Executioner reports that Joan's heart did not burn, and her ashes were thrown into a river. Warwick reflects skeptically, wondering if they have truly heard the last of Joan of Arc.

Analysis: This scene is powerfully dramatic. Joan sits on a rough wooden stool, surrounded by her accusers, with no one to defend her except her own innocence. The Church denies her a defense counsel, claiming they only want to save her soul. This claim is both hypocritical and ironic, as even the Inquisitor later admits Joan was innocent. Shaw uses this to place the audience firmly on Joan's side.

The Inquisitor knows Joan's innocence is more dangerous than a deliberate rebellion. If the Church allowed individuals to follow their own consciences, the Church's authority would collapse. Joan does not aim to destroy the Church, but her

unwavering trust in her voices—a symbol of her conscience—threatens its power. When Joan refuses to place the Church's authority above her faith in God, she is condemned as a heretic. Her statement that she would disobey the Church if it went against God's will seals her fate.

The Inquisitor explains that heresy often begins with innocent, well-meaning people like Joan who trust their personal judgment over the Church's authority. To preserve its control, the Church cannot allow anyone to challenge its interpretations, even unintentionally. Joan, despite her innocence, must die to maintain the Church's authority and the feudal system.

Joan's answers during her trial, rooted in common sense and honesty, expose the foolishness of her accusers. For example, she defends wearing men's clothes as practical for her safety, but this is twisted into a crime. Her refusal to blindly submit to authority shows her strength and integrity, but it is used against her. When Joan tears up her recantation, choosing death over life in a dark dungeon, she makes a powerful statement about freedom. For her, living without the open sky, church bells, and freedom is worse than death.

In this act of defiance, Joan becomes Shaw's symbol of the "Life Force," a spirit that cannot be confined. Her courage in choosing death leads to her eventual sainthood, transforming her into a timeless figure of strength and faith. The dramatic shift in De Stogumber's character—who moves from hatred to guilt and repentance after witnessing Joan's execution—highlights the profound impact of her sacrifice.

1.6.8 Epilogue:

The scene is set in King Charles' bedroom, twenty-five years after the previous events. Charles, who was once the Dauphin, puts down his book and rings for his servant. Ladvenu enters, holding the same cross he carried when Joan was burned at the stake. He announces that Joan has been declared innocent in a new trial, twenty-five years after her death. Her judges have been called corrupt and dishonest. However, Charles only cares about clearing the rumor that he was crowned by a witch, not about Joan's innocence. He adds that if Joan were alive today, she would be burned again within six months. Shocked, Ladvenu leaves.

Charles rings for his servant again, but the candles go out, and Joan's silhouette appears in a flash of lightning. She tells him he is dreaming and asks what has

happened in the last twenty-five years. Charles says that she made him a stronger person; he is now known as Charles the Victorious, and Joan has just been declared innocent. Joan reacts without much emotion, saying sarcastically that her judges were just as honest as any other fools who kill their superiors. Charles thinks Joan should be grateful for his efforts, but then Peter Cauchon appears, disagreeing with the king. Cauchon complains about how he has been punished—excommunicated, his body dug up, and thrown in the sewer—all to honor Joan. He insists he was fair and good. Charles only notes that it's always the "good men" who cause the biggest troubles, while he has simply served France. Joan asks if the English have truly left, and Dunois, "The Bastard," appears to confirm that he kept his promise: the English are gone. He explains that the French won using Joan's strategies, and he regrets not stopping the priests from burning her.

Suddenly, a strange, rough voice sings a song, and an English soldier appears. He explains he gets one day off from Hell each year because of a good deed—giving Joan two sticks tied together as a cross before she was burned. He says Hell isn't that bad, with emperors, popes, and kings for company. Then an old, white-haired priest, de Stogumber, enters. He never recovered from watching Joan's execution and now wanders around telling people to be kind. He doesn't recognize Joan, believing she's dead, until the Executioner arrives, announcing that Joan's spirit is alive because her heart didn't burn. Warwick then appears to congratulate Joan on being declared innocent, explaining that burning her wasn't personal—it was just politics.

A man dressed in 1920s clothes suddenly appears, causing everyone to laugh at his modern outfit. Ignoring them, he reads a proclamation announcing that Joan has been made a saint and will be honored every year on May 30th, the day she was burned. Suddenly, images of statues of Joan in front of cathedrals appear, and everyone kneels to praise her. Each person explains how different groups now admire Joan.

Joan interrupts their praise, saying that as a saint, she can perform miracles, and asks if she should return to life. This idea frightens everyone, and they quickly apologize, saying they prefer her to stay dead. One by one, they leave, leaving Joan alone with the English soldier who gave her the crude cross. As he tries to comfort her, the clock strikes midnight, and he is called back to Hell. Surrounded by a glowing white light, Joan asks God when the world will be ready to accept His saints: "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Analysis: The Epilogue takes place twenty-five years after the main events of the play. It is called an Epilogue, not Scene VII, because it exists in a dreamlike world, exploring Joan's legacy and her reactions after death. During these twenty-five years, efforts have been made to clear Joan's name, and the scene opens on the day her conviction is finally reversed—something the audience has already expected.

The main idea of the Epilogue is expressed through King Charles VII's initial remark: if Joan were to return, she would be burned again within six months. This sentiment is echoed by Joan's final question, "How long, O Lord, how long?"—asking how long it will take for the world to accept its saints and geniuses.

Implied in the scene is that Joan's "rehabilitation" may be politically motivated; King Charles wants to erase the stain of being crowned by a convicted witch. Additionally, the scene suggests that Joan's death could have been avoided, but society is often unwilling to accept those who challenge the status quo. Shaw uses the Epilogue to critique his own society's resistance to new, radical ideas, which were controversial in his time but are more accepted today.

As each character who once praised Joan now rejects the idea of her return, the theme is reinforced. Cauchon insists that mortal eyes still can't distinguish saints from heretics, and others find excuses to discourage her return. Joan ends up alone, just as she was in Scene Five when she spoke of the loneliness of France and God. The Epilogue implies that the world may never be ready to embrace its saints or its geniuses.

1.7 Check your progress:

I. Choose the correct option from the following

1. According to Shaw, why was Joan of Arc considered a "Protestant martyr"?
   a) She openly criticized the Church and its teachings.
   b) She chose to listen to her own conscience rather than Church authority.
   c) She was a member of a Protestant denomination.
   d) She had a personal vision of a Protestant leader.
2. What is one reason Shaw believes previous portrayals of Joan of Arc are inaccurate?
   a) They do not depict her military achievements accurately.

b) They ignore her ability to dictate letters despite being uneducated.

c) They fail to understand the historical context of the Middle Ages.

d) They exaggerate her clothing choices.

3. Why does Sir Robert initially dismiss Joan's request for armor, a horse, and soldiers?

a) He does not have enough resources to fulfill her request.

b) He believes Joan is not of noble birth and unqualified to lead.

c) He thinks she is motivated by personal gain.

d) He suspects she is working for the English.

4. What event causes Sir Robert to reconsider Joan's demands?

a) Poulengey's willingness to pay for the horse.

b) Joan's clear and accurate description of battle tactics.

c) The Dauphin's direct order to help Joan.

d) The sudden disappearance of the English soldiers.

5. How does Joan prove herself to the Dauphin and the court in Chinon?

a) By winning a duel against Captain La Hire.

b) By predicting the outcome of the battle at Orleans.

c) By correctly identifying the real Dauphin from a group of courtiers.

d) By reciting a prayer known only to the Dauphin.

6. According to the Archbishop, what qualifies as a miracle?

a) A supernatural event that defies explanation.

b) A religious blessing from the Church.

c) A prophecy that comes true.

d) Any event that inspires faith in people.

7. What event convinces Dunois to fully support Joan and pledge his loyalty?

a) Joan's insistence on attacking immediately despite the odds.

b) The sudden change of the wind, which favors their attack.

c) The successful construction of a bridge over the Loire River.

d) Joan's victory in a duel against an English soldier.

8. How does Joan respond when Dunois warns her that soldiers might not follow her into danger?
    a) She agrees to reconsider her plan.
    b) She decides to wait for more favorable conditions.
    c) She says she will charge ahead without looking back to see if they follow.
    d) She suggests praying for a miracle to change their minds.
9. According to Bishop Cauchon, why is Joan considered a heretic rather than a witch?
    a) She claims to perform miracles on the battlefield.
    b) She challenges the authority of the Church by bypassing it and claiming to hear directly from God.
    c) She wears men's clothing, which defies traditional norms.
    d) She leads the French army to repeated victories over the English.
10. What is Warwick's primary concern regarding Joan's influence?
    a) The potential collapse of the feudal system and the loss of noble power.
    b) Her encouragement of Nationalism and weakening of the Church.
    c) Her ability to perform supernatural acts.
    d) Her disregard for traditional gender roles by wearing men's clothing.
11. Why does the Archbishop warn Joan about divine punishment?
    a) She refuses to share the glory of her victories with the Church.
    b) She disregards the authority of the Church and follows her voices.
    c) She wants to continue fighting instead of returning to her farm.
    d) She challenges the military expertise of her allies.
12. What does Joan come to realize about her strength by the end of the scene?
    a) It lies in her alliances with powerful men at Court.
    b) It comes from following the Church's guidance.
    c) It depends on her ability to lead the French Army.
    d) It is rooted in the love and support of ordinary people.

13. Why does Joan tear up her confession during the trial?

a) She is frustrated with the prosecutor's harsh questioning.

b) She believes that living in a dark prison is worse than death.

c) She is afraid of the threat of torture and execution.

d) She wants to maintain loyalty to the Church's authority.

14. What is the main reason the Church condemns Joan as a heretic?

a) She refuses to abandon wearing men's clothing.

b) She leads the French soldiers to unexpected victories.

c) She trusts her personal judgment over the Church's authority.

d) She questions the legitimacy of the Church's teachings.

15. What is the primary reason King Charles VII is interested in Joan's rehabilitation?

a) He wants to clear the rumor that he was crowned by a witch.

b) He wants to honor Joan's legacy.

c) He feels guilty about her death.

d) He believes Joan was a saint.

16. What is the main theme highlighted in the Epilogue?

a) The triumph of the Church's authority.

b) The ongoing resistance to accept saints and geniuses during their lifetime.

c) The political power of King Charles VII.

d) The lasting influence of English occupation in France.

II. Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. Who wrote the play *Saint Joan*?
2. What historical figure is the play *Saint Joan* based on?
3. What is the main accusation against Joan during her trial?
4. Who is the character that crowns Charles as king with Joan's help?
5. What sign does Joan claim to receive from God to guide her actions?
6. What happens to Joan at the end of the play?
7. How long after Joan's death is her conviction overturned?

8. Who is the main antagonist in the play who believes Joan's actions are dangerous to the Church?
9. In the Epilogue, what is Joan's reaction when she is praised as a saint?
10. What does King Charles VII suggest would happen if Joan returned to life?

1.7.1 Answers to check your progress:

I) 1 – b, 2 – c, 3 – b, 4 – a, 5 – c,
6 – d, 7 – b, 8 – c, 9 – b, 10 – a,
11 – b, 12 – d, 13 – b, 14 – c, 15 – a, 16 – b

II)
1. George Bernard Shaw
2. Joan of Arc
3. Heresy
4. The Dauphin (later King Charles VII)
5. Voices
6. She is burned at the stake
7. Twenty-five years
8. Bishop Cauchon
9. She questions if the world is ready to accept saints
10. She would be burned again within six months.

1.8 Exercises:

1. How does the historical backdrop of the Hundred Years' War influence the events of the play?
2. What does *Saint Joan* tell us about the relationship between politics and religion in medieval Europe?
3. How does Shaw's preface to the play provide insight into his interpretation of Joan's story?
4. How does Shaw's play reflect the values and conflicts of his own time?
5. How do the themes of *Saint Joan* remain relevant in the modern world?
6. Give a critical analysis of *Saint Joan*.

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Unit-2
Modern British Fiction
Graham Greene (1904-1991) – *The Power and The Glory* (1940)

Contents:

2.0 Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

a) understand Modern British Fiction.

b) know Graham Greene's contribution to modern novel

c) know the plot summary of *The Power and The Glory*

d) know the major and minor characters in *The Power and The Glory*

e) understand the themes and other aspects of the novel.

2.1 General Topic: Modern British Fiction

Modern British Fiction: A Critical Overview

The period from 1901-1939 is often referred to as the Modernist Period. Modernism responds to rapid transformations in Western society, including urbanization, the growth of industry, and World War I. It is a difficult term to define, but at its most basic, it was an avant-garde movement in literature and art that sought to break away from ordinary social values, commercialism, and the literary tradition that preceded it. Thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernst Mach, and Sigmund Freud greatly influenced this movement. These men challenged traditional ways of thinking, something that defined the individualism of the Modernist movement. Modernism's pessimism was in part the product of the devastation of World War I, which many writers experienced personally on the battlefield. The modernist artist was a critic of the art that existed earlier. At the heart of modernist art was the belief that the previously sustaining elements of human life, like religious beliefs, social mores, and artistic convictions, had been destroyed or proven false or fragile. This sense of fragmentation led to a literature built out of fragments of myth, history, personal experience, or earlier art.

Modern British fiction, spanning much of the 20th century, reflects the profound shifts in society, culture, and philosophy that defined the historical period. From the end of the Victorian era to the postmodern age, British fiction underwent substantial transformation, responding to the wars, revolutions, technological advancements, and evolving intellectual movements that shaped the world. This section explores the evolution of modern British fiction in terms of its historical context, major literary forms, key authors and their works, and the distinctive characteristics that have come to define the genre.

Historical Context: The Rise of Modernism

The dawn of the 20th century was a period of dramatic change in British society, both politically and culturally. The previous century had witnessed the height of the British Empire, but by the early 1900s, the empire began its inevitable decline, marked by two world wars, economic upheaval, and shifting colonial dynamics. These historical changes laid the groundwork for a literature that increasingly grappled with themes of disillusionment, alienation, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world.

Modern British fiction can be viewed through the lens of the two World Wars (1914–1918 and 1939–1945), the interwar period, the post-war era, and the eventual rise of postmodernism in the late 20th century. The First World War had a particularly profound effect on British writers, as the brutal reality of industrialized warfare destroyed long-held notions of progress and civilization. Writers such as Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and D.H. Lawrence responded by challenging traditional narrative structures and experimenting with language, form, and subject matter. Their works sought to capture the psychological and emotional trauma of the war and its aftermath. The Second World War continued to influence British fiction, though the post-war period was marked by a growing sense of recovery and renewal. Yet, the disillusionment of the preceding decades did not fade entirely. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of new voices in literature, such as Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and John Osborne, whose works often explored the realities of postwar British life. Finally, by the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of postmodernism in literature, marked by a focus on irony, self-reflexivity, and the questioning of grand narratives, further shaped the landscape of British fiction.

Major Literary Forms in Modern British Fiction

The transition from Victorian realism to modernist experimentation gave rise to several distinct literary forms. Among the most prominent of these were the novel, the short story, and poetry, though the boundaries between genres often became fluid during this period.

Short Story

The movement toward psychological realism, as well as symbolism and the Aestheticism are reflected in the short story as practiced by precursors of modernism, such as Oskar Wilde, Thomas Hardy, and Joseph Conrad, Katherine Mansfield; and by the novelists who wrote and published short stories, such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence Collections such as Hardy's *Life's Little Ironies* (1894), Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914),

Science Fiction

Following the lead of Victorian period writers like H.G. Wells, writer Aldous Huxley wrote his dystopian novel, *Brave New World* (1931), during the Modernist period. The novel is set in a futuristic London where people are discouraged from thinking freely and are instead taught according to their role in a caste system.

Huxley also anticipates developments in reproductive technology and subconscious education.

The Novel

The novel remained the central form of British fiction throughout the modern era. Modernist writers transformed the novel, emphasizing subjectivity, internal consciousness, and the disruption of linear narratives. Authors such as James Joyce, who had a significant influence on British fiction despite being Irish, and Virginia Woolf, experimented with stream-of-consciousness techniques and time shifts, challenging readers to engage with the text on a deeper, more introspective level. Writers like D.H. Lawrence brought attention to issues of sexuality, psychological conflict, and the role of the individual in society, imbuing their novels with a sense of social critique. His novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) is one of his most famous and controversial one and discusses a relationship between a working class man and an upper class woman. James Joyce found success with his novel *Ulysses* (1922). *Ulysses* is divided into 18 chapters, each with themes and characters relating to the *Odyssey* Virginia Woolf another major novelist of the period wrote primarily about upper-middle-class women and their responsibilities. Her famous works include, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando (*1928), and *A Room of One's Own* (1929).The works of E.M. Forster, on the other hand, dealt with themes of class, identity, and social change in the context of British society. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924) offered insight into the moral complexities of empire and class relations during the early 20th century. Postwar British novels, such as those by Kingsley Amis *Lucky Jim,* (1954) and John Wain *Hurry on Down,* (1953), tackled the concerns of the postwar generation, often with a satirical tone and a focus on the banalities of daily life.

Several authors writing in the modernist period would continue to write well into the post-modernist period. Two examples of this are Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Evelyn Waugh is known for his satirical works; *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) This novel looks at the appeal of the wealthier society as Charles meets upper class citizens during his time at Oxford University. Waugh, a convert to the Catholic faith, also incorporates Catholicism into his novel and leaves the protagonist questioning the religion several times throughout the story. Graham Greene's novels encompass thriller and crime story techniques and often explored serious social and moral

issues. His novel *Brighton Rock* (1938) follows the teenage sociopath, Pinkie, and his murder of someone who threatened his gang.

The General Characteristic Features, Recurrent Themes, and Techniques of Modern British Fiction

Modern British fiction, a term that encompasses a broad spectrum of narrative forms and literary movements from the early 20th century to the present day, stands as a profound reflection of the complex social, political, and cultural transformations that have shaped Britain in the modern era. From the aftermath of World War I to the globalized, post-colonial world of the 21st century, the evolution of British literature has mirrored the dynamic and often turbulent nature of British society itself. In This section will explore the defining characteristics, recurrent themes, and narrative techniques that characterize modern British fiction, tracing how these elements have evolved and contributed to the development of literary traditions.

Characteristics of Modern British Fiction

Modern British fiction is marked by a distinctive departure from the certainties and moral frameworks of Victorian literature. This break is primarily the result of profound cultural shifts that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the two World Wars, the decline of the British Empire, industrialization, and the rise of mass media. Writers of modern British fiction are often preoccupied with exploring the individual's experience in an increasingly fragmented and disorienting world. One of the central characteristics of modern British fiction is its exploration of psychological depth. This focus on the inner workings of the mind is evident in the works of authors such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, who use stream-of-consciousness techniques to present fragmented, nonlinear experiences of reality. This emphasis on psychology reflects a broader shift in modernist literature towards subjective reality, whereby authors question the reliability of external, objective truths and instead delve into the mind's complexities.

Another significant feature is the break with traditional narrative forms. Modern British fiction often give up linear plots and conventional character development, opting instead for experimental structures and disjointed timelines. This fragmentation of form is exemplified in works like Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and T.S. Eliot's poetry, where the flow of time becomes elastic and multiple perspectives collide. These deviations from traditional narrative forms serve to undermine the

illusion of coherent, stable identities, a theme that resonates with the existential concerns of the era. Moreover, modern British fiction is imbued with a sense of alienation and disillusionment. The devastation wrought by the two World Wars, the disintegration of the British Empire, and the rapid pace of industrialization left many writers questioning the purpose and direction of modern life. This sense of alienation is often mirrored in the isolation and fragmentation of characters, who struggle to find meaning in a world that seems increasingly indifferent or hostile.

Recurrent Themes in Modern British Fiction

The themes explored in modern British fiction are as diverse as the authors themselves, but certain recurrent motifs can be identified across different works and genres. Authors have explored a range of issues such as identity, class, post colonialism, migration, individual versus collective experience, alienation, gender dynamics, and the fractured nature of historical narratives. These themes intersect in nuanced ways, reflecting the complexities of contemporary life. These themes often reflect the historical and social anxieties of the time, as well as the broader existential concerns of the modernist period.

I. Alienation and the Search for Identity

One of the most pervasive themes in modern British fiction is the exploration of alienation and the individual's search for identity. Characters often find themselves estranged from society, struggling to understand their place in a world that seems to offer no clear answers. This theme is prominent in Golding's 'Lord of the Flies'. The search for meaning, often in the face of societal or personal crisis, is another recurrent theme explored in novels like D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

II. Postcolonialism and Migration

Postcolonial themes have remained at the forefront of modern British fiction, with many authors grappling with the legacies of British imperialism and the dynamics of a multicultural society. Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) is a pivotal example, dealing with the tangled histories of immigration, assimilation, and identity. The novel explores the complex intersections of race, class, and ethnicity, particularly in the context of the British immigrant experience. By focusing on the Iqbal, Jones, and Chalfen families, Smith deftly illustrates how historical and contemporary migration issues shape British society and individual identity. The theme of migration also appears prominently in the works of authors like Monica

Ali's *Brick Lane* , which explores the intersection of tradition and modernity in the context of the Bangladeshi diaspora in London.

The recurring motif of migration in these works can be seen as an exploration of the anxieties and challenges faced by individuals caught between two cultures. At the same time, the novels probe the broader social and political implications of immigration in a Britain that is often resistant to change. Through postcolonial lenses, modern British fiction grapples with the notion of belonging and the friction between national identity and global forces.

III. Class and Social Mobility

Class has long been a central concern in British literature, and this theme remains pervasive in contemporary works. Writers continue to interrogate the effects of class on individual aspirations and social mobility, examining how the rigid social structure of Britain continues to shape individuals' opportunities and experiences. Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* (1978) and *Amsterdam* (1998) provide nuanced portrayals of characters navigating the complexities of class. McEwan's works often depict characters whose personal struggles reflect larger societal issues, such as the decline of traditional class structures and the effects of consumerism.

Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* and its sequel *Bring Up the Bodies* similarly explore the relationship between power, class, and social mobility, though in a historical context. Through the figure of Thomas Cromwell, Mantel offers a rich commentary on how class and social status are intricately linked to political and religious power. Cromwell's rise from humble beginnings to a position of immense influence highlights the fluctuating nature of class status and the ways in which individuals manipulate social structures to secure personal gain.

More recently, the works of authors like Kazuo Ishiguro *Never Let Me Go*, interrogate the implications of class within dystopian frameworks. In Ishiguro's world, the subjugation of certain classes is explored through the lives of clones, whose societal position is preordained. The theme of class becomes a vehicle for exploring issues of agency, identity, and the ethics of exploitation in contemporary society.

IV. Memory and History

The modern British novel frequently interrogates the relationship between memory and history. This can be seen in the ways in which authors attempt to represent the past, particularly in the context of historical trauma, such as the wars and the decline of the British Empire. Many modern British writers, including Kazuo Ishiguro, whose *The Remains of the Day e*xplores the psychological scars of postwar British society, use unreliable narration to blur the line between memory and history. Characters are often shown to misremember, repress, or reinterpret their pasts, raising questions about the reliability of historical narratives and the ways in which personal history is shaped by larger political forces.

Techniques of Modern British Fiction

Modern British fiction, particularly from the early 20th century onwards, marks a profound departure from the conventions of Victorian and Edwardian literature. The evolution of narrative techniques, influenced by historical upheavals, intellectual developments, and philosophical movements, has led to the emergence of a more experimental and self-reflexive approach to storytelling. Writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, William Golding, and Ian McEwan exemplify these shifts, employing techniques that challenge traditional notions of plot, character, and language. This section explores the key techniques that define modern British fiction, such as stream of consciousness, unreliable narration, fragmentation, and metafiction, highlighting how they reflect the complexities of modern existence and consciousness.

Stream of Consciousness

One of the most revolutionary techniques in modern British fiction is the use of "stream of consciousness," a narrative style that seeks to represent the continuous flow of thoughts and feelings within a character's mind. Popularized by authors such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, this technique deliberately eschews traditional narrative structures in favor of a more fluid, disjointed representation of consciousness. In Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, for instance, the narrative moves seamlessly between characters' inner thoughts and external events, without the strict linearity found in earlier novels. The technique reflects the subjective experience of time and memory, as well as the fragmented nature of consciousness. Woolf's stream of consciousness allows readers to experience the characters' interior lives, capturing

the disjointed, often incoherent nature of thought, and offering a more direct access to the human psyche. Similarly, Joyce's *Ulysses* employs stream of consciousness to explore the intricate layers of thought, memory, and perception that characterize the modern individual.

Unreliable Narration

Another prominent feature of modern British fiction is the use of unreliable narrators. This narrative technique challenges readers' assumptions about truth, objectivity, and the reliability of perception. In novels such as Ford Madox's *The Good Soldier* and Ian McEwan's *Atonement,* the narrator's subjective biases, limited knowledge, or deliberate deceit complicate the reader's understanding of the plot and characters. In *The Good Soldier*, for example, the narrator, John Dowell, presents a skewed and incomplete account of events, leading to a disorienting experience for the reader, who must question the reliability of his narrative. Similarly, in *Atonement,* the young Briony Tallis serves as an unreliable narrator, whose misinterpretation of events leads to a catastrophic error that shapes the entire novel. McEwan's use of an unreliable narrator raises questions about memory, guilt, and the ethics of storytelling, forcing readers to confront the subjective nature of truth.

Fragmentation and Non-linear Time

Fragmentation, both in terms of narrative structure and thematic content, is another key technique that defines modern British fiction. Modernist writers were often disillusioned by the perceived breakdown of social, political, and cultural certainties following the World Wars, and their works reflect this fragmentation through disjointed and non-linear storytelling. In William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, the narrative fragments the idyllic notion of childhood innocence by contrasting it with the brutal realities of human nature. The novel's structure, which oscillates between moments of social cohesion and violent disorder, mirrors the disintegration of civilized norms in the face of primal instincts. Similarly, the non-linear structure of works like Woolf's *To the Lighthouse,* reflects the subjective experience of time. By moving backward and forward in time, shifting perspectives between characters, and intertwining past and present, Woolf captures the fluidity and complexity of human

2.2 Text: Graham Greene*: The Power and The Glory*

Graham Greene: Life and works

Graham Greene (1904-1991) stands as one of the most significant British authors of the 20th century, renowned for his diverse body of work, which includes novels, short stories, plays, screenplays, and essays. His writing is characterized by its deep engagement with the moral and political complexities of the modern world. Greene's work spans multiple genres, often blending elements of thriller, espionage, and literary fiction. His exploration of themes such as political intrigue, religious faith, moral ambiguity, and human vulnerability has had a lasting impact on British literature, earning him a reputation as a writer who was both deeply intellectual and widely accessible.

Early Life and Literary Development:

Born in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, Greene was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, where he developed an early interest in literature and began writing. After university, he worked as a writer and sub-editor for *The Times* and later became a foreign correspondent for *The Spectator*. Greene's early experiences, particularly his travels and exposure to world conflicts, would significantly shape the themes of his later work. Greene's personal life was marked by a strong tension between his Catholic faith and his complex relationships with morality, which would come to inform much of his writing. He was a self-professed "Catholic agnostic," which influenced his exploration of faith, doubt, sin, and redemption in his characters.

Thematic Focus and Literary Style

Greene's novels are often marked by a profound sense of moral conflict, a reflection of his own struggles with faith and sin. His protagonists frequently find themselves caught in situations where personal and political choices are inseparable, and the line between good and evil is blurred. His works often examine the intersection of individual conscience with larger political and social forces.

In addition to the moral complexities in his novels, Greene was a master of suspense and tension. Many of his works feature elements of the thriller genre, incorporating espionage, political intrigue, and crisis situations. However, Greene transcended the conventions of the thriller, using suspense not just as a plot device but as a means of exploring deeper existential and spiritual dilemmas. His style is

also marked by a deep sense of irony and ambiguity. While his characters frequently face life-or-death dilemmas, Greene often refrains from offering clear-cut resolutions, leaving readers to grapple with the complexities of human behavior, the unpredictability of fate, and the difficulties of understanding divine will.

Major Works

Brighton Rock (1938)

One of Greene's most famous early novels, *Brighton Rock* is a crime thriller set in the seaside resort of Brighton. The novel tells the story of Pinkie Brown, a teenage gangster whose cruel and violent nature contrasts with his internal struggles with faith and guilt. The novel combines elements of noir fiction with a deep moral exploration of sin and redemption. Pinkie's eventual conflict with a devout Catholic, Ida Arnold, serves as a vehicle for Greene's meditation on the nature of good and evil.

The novel's exploration of the darker aspects of human nature, particularly the tension between religious faith and moral corruption, marked a significant departure from the traditional English crime novel. Greene's use of Catholic symbolism, particularly the recurring image of the "soul," would become a hallmark of his work.

The Power and the Glory (1940)

Perhaps Greene's finest achievement in terms of thematic depth, *The Power and the Glory* is set during the Mexican anti-Catholic persecutions of the 1930s. The novel follows a nameless, morally compromised priest who struggles to maintain his faith and perform his duties in the face of persecution. The novel examines themes of grace, sin, and the complexities of human imperfection, offering a nuanced portrayal of a priest who is both a sinner and a martyr.

The novel's exploration of the human condition in the context of religious and political conflict solidified Greene's reputation as a writer with both intellectual depth and a strong moral sensibility. Critics have hailed *The Power and the Glory* as a masterpiece of 20th-century literature, a work that transcends its specific religious and political context to offer a universal meditation on the nature of faith and redemption.

The Heart of the Matter *(*1948)

Set during World War II in a West African British colony, *The Heart of the Matter* focuses on Major Henry Scobie, a police officer whose internal struggles with guilt, duty, and moral compromise drive the narrative. Scobie's failure to reconcile his personal life, professional duty, and religious beliefs creates a tragic and emotionally intense narrative.

The novel explores the theme of moral failure, particularly the ways in which individuals can betray their own beliefs and values. Greene's depiction of Scobie's struggle with both faith and conscience is deeply existential, reflecting his ongoing preoccupation with the problem of human frailty in the face of suffering and temptation.

Our Man in Havana (1958)

Our Man in Havana represents a shift in tone from Greene's more serious and somber novels. This satirical spy novel tells the story of an Englishman named Jim Wormold, who is recruited by the British Secret Service to be a spy in Cuba, despite having no real information to offer. Instead, he fabricates reports to please his superiors, inadvertently stumbling into a real espionage plot.

The novel is a comedic yet biting commentary on the absurdities of the Cold War and the nature of espionage. Greene uses humor to critique political machinations, the bureaucratic mindset, and the dangers of ideologically driven actions. The novel's witty exploration of falsehoods, deception, and the chaos of international politics showcases Greene's versatility as a writer.

The Quiet American *(*1955)

Set in Vietnam during the First Indochina War, *The Quiet American* is one of Greene's most politically charged novels. It centers on Thomas Fowler, a British journalist covering the war, and his complicated relationship with Alden Pyle, an idealistic American who becomes involved in the conflict in a way that brings tragic consequences. The novel critiques both Western colonialism and the American foreign policy approach in the Cold War era, providing a sharp analysis of political idealism, moral ambiguity, and the human cost of war.

The Quiet American is notable for its exploration of the moral complexities of political engagement. Greene's portrayal of the conflict in Vietnam is both critical

and prescient, anticipating the disastrous consequences of American intervention in Southeast Asia. The novel continues to be studied for its insights into the geopolitics of the Cold War and its portrayal of the tangled relationships between personal and political choices.

Introduction to the novel, *The Power and The Glory*

The Power and the Glory (1940) is one of Graham Greene's most celebrated works, set in a Mexican state during a period of anti-Catholic persecution. The novel follows the journey of a nameless, flawed, and alcoholic priest who remains loyal to his faith despite the oppressive atmosphere of government repression. Greene explores themes of morality, redemption, faith, and the struggle between spiritual and temporal power. It is often regarded as Greene's masterpiece, grappling with questions of belief and authority, of doubt and compassion, in a bleak setting where poverty and struggle rule the day. The novel was awarded the Hawthornden Prize and was loosely adapted into the 1947 John Ford film *The Fugitive*, starring Henry Fonda.

Setting and Context:

The novel is set in Mexico during the 1930s, at a time when the government is aggressively suppressing the Catholic Church. The Mexican government, led by secular forces, views the Church as a symbol of political and social control. Laws have been passed to eliminate clerical power, and priests are hunted, arrested, and executed. The Church's influence is outlawed, and many priests have either fled or been forced into hiding. In this grim context, Greene's novel depicts the internal and external battles of a single, unnamed priest.

2.3 List of Characters

The Priest

The priest or "the whiskey priest" as he sometimes refers to himself, is the protagonist of the novel He is a nameless flawed and deeply human Catholic priest. He lives and preaches in Mexico during a time when the Government is actively persecuting religion. He often chastises himself for impulses and reactions that are very normal and very human.

The Lieutenant

The Lieutenant is a believer in the law but a staunch opponent of the Catholic Church. The lieutenant's hatred of the Church stems from a traumatic event in his childhood.He is a symbol of the Mexican government during the 1930s, an increasingly ant-Catholic period. The Lieutenant despises the indulgences and hypocrisy of the Church, and seeks to punish the priest for his wrongs.

The Mestizo

He is a person the priest meets about halfway through his journey and who continues to reappear throughout the last half of the novel.

Coral Fellows

Coral is a young American girl whom the priest meets in the beginning of the novel.

The boy

He is a youngster growing up in this violent and impoverished land. The boy listens with skepticism to stories about Juan, a martyred boy. He meets the priest in the beginning of the novel and, by the end, is impressed by him.

Brigida

She is an illegitimate daughter of the priest. Brigida meets with her father briefly during his stay at her village.

Maria

Brigida's mother and the woman with whom the priest had a brief but extremely significant affair.

Padre Jose

He is the only other priest in the novel besides the protagonist.

Mr.Tench

He is an Englishman living in Mexico and working as a dentist.

The Gringo

He is an American outlaw, and the other "hunted man" in this novel..

Captain Fellows

He is Coral's father. Captain Fellows is a benign, ineffectual, plantation owner, who tries to remain cheerful and optimistic in the face of difficult times and an isolated existence.

Mrs. Fellows

She is Coral's mother. She is a neurotic, hysterical woman

Mr. Lehr

He is a German-American living in Mexico.

Miss Lehr

She is Mr. Lehr's sister who came to join her brother in Mexico after his wife died.

The woman

The woman is nameless like her son, she tries to keep her children in touch with the Catholic faith by reading them stories of saints' lives.

Juan

He is a young man whom we encounter in this novel only through the stories that are told about him.

The pious woman

The pious woman is the character whom the priest meets during his night in jail. She is too proud of herself

The jefe

He is lieutenant's boss.

2.4 Plot Overview:

The priest is on the run, moving from one hiding place to another in an effort to avoid being caught by the police, particularly a relentless Lieutenant who is determined to wipe out all traces of the Church. He is a deeply flawed man whose faith is shaky. He is an alcoholic, and he feels deeply inadequate for the monumental responsibility he bears as the last remaining priest in the region. Despite his flaws and his personal guilt, he is still driven by a sense of duty to serve his people and

maintain his role as a spiritual guide. The priest is also haunted by a past failure before fleeing his parish, he had abandoned a lover, a young woman with whom he had an affair, and had failed to confront his own weakness and desire. In hiding, he is frequently tempted by his weaknesses, yet he continues to perform his duties in secret saying Mass, hearing confessions, and offering the sacraments to the few who still seek him out.

Throughout his journey, he encounters various characters who represent the different facets of human experience under repression. There's a young Mestizo man, who initially seeks to betray the priest for a reward, but later experiences a transformation of conscience. There is also an impoverished woman who desperately needs a priest to help her dying child. In these encounters, Greene demonstrates the complex moral landscape the priest navigates, showing the moral ambiguity of every character and situation.

The priest's ultimate trial comes when he is betrayed by the same mestizo and captured by the authorities. In prison, he faces the interrogation of the relentless Lieutenant, who embodies the secular, modern world's disdain for religion and faith. The priest is offered the chance to save his life if he publicly renounces his vocation and faith, but he refuses. He recognizes that his duty to his flock is greater than his fear of death.

As the priest faces his execution, Greene reflects on the nature of faith and redemption. Despite his deep flaws, the priest ultimately fulfills his spiritual duty. His martyrdom, while tragic, offers a final, powerful example of the "power" of the Church, even in the face of violent opposition. Greene does not idealize the priest, but rather depicts him as a deeply human figure, someone who is constantly struggling with doubt, sin, and weakness, yet still capable of acts of profound spiritual significance.

2.5 Detailed Summary of the novel

Let us study the detailed summary of the novel *The Power and The Glory*. When novel opens in a small Mexican town, an English dentist, Mr. Tench, finds himself encountering a mysterious stranger while collecting ether. The stranger, waiting for a boat to Vera Cruz, speaks in English and carries a bottle of contraband alcohol. A shared drink is enjoyed, during which the stranger becomes noticeably anxious. Their conversation is interrupted by a boy, seeking help for his ailing mother. The stranger

agrees to accompany the boy, though it means missing his boat. After the stranger departs, Mr. Tench discovers a religious book about a Christian martyr hidden in an oven. On his way back to the river, the sound of a melancholy song sung by a young girl is heard, and it is then realized that the boat's whistle has been missed by the stranger.

Meanwhile, the lieutenant, dissatisfied with the performance of his police force, is informed by the governor that priests are still operating in the state. He criticizes their indulgent lifestyles, equating them to criminals like James Calver. His belief in executing a priest as an act of virtue is steadfast, and a plan to take hostages from every town in order to capture one is set in motion. He views religion as a foundation for lies and holds the belief that life is ultimately meaningless. In a separate location, a woman reads a story about a murdered boy and a boy seeking help for his "dying" mother. This mother is not, in fact, dying, and the conversation shifts to Padre Jose, a priest who left the Church to avoid execution.

Mr. Tench, composing a letter to his wife Sylvia, with whom he has lost contact, reflects on the presence of the mysterious visitor. His writing is interrupted by a knock on the door. Meanwhile, Padre Jose, walking through a cemetery, is approached by a group asking him to pray for a young girl being buried. Fearing the authorities, he denies them, knowing that he cannot trust them to keep the event a secret. He feels powerless, though the mourners continue to beg. Elsewhere, a boy expresses doubt about a religious story his mother reads to him, and his father, disillusioned with the Church, mourns its decline. Coral Fellows, curious about her mother's beliefs, asks about them, but Mrs. Fellows grows tired and closes her book. Coral, still curious, notices the absence of her father and feels unwell.

The lieutenant, informed that the governor has granted him permission to capture the outlaw priest by any means, prepares to take hostages. When a boy throws a stone at him, claiming it to be part of a game, the lieutenant reacts with amusement but wishes to rid the child of ignorance. The priest, meanwhile, is determined to flee from the law and, despite not planning to return to his hometown, heads there after the police close in. Upon arrival, he meets Maria, who is displeased with him. His initial hopes fade when he learns that the police are taking hostages from towns where he is rumored to have stayed. Maria helps him find shelter for the night and introduces him to Brigida, a young girl whom the priest quickly realizes is

his daughter, born of a brief relationship. Despite the lack of conversation, the priest feels a strong desire to protect her.

Before dawn, the priest leads a mass for the villagers but is interrupted by news that the police are closing in. As the officers encircle the town, the lieutenant gathers the villagers, asking them to introduce themselves. When the priest steps forward, the lieutenant questions him, asking to see his hands. Weathered from weeks of evading capture, the priest's hands no longer resemble those of a clergyman, so the lieutenant dismisses him. With no one betraying the priest, the lieutenant selects a hostage. The priest offers to take the man's place, but the lieutenant declines. Afterward, the priest bids a strained farewell to Maria and searches for his discarded suitcase at the town dump. There, he encounters Brigida again, who reveals that the other children mock her because of him. Filled with a desire to shield her from the world's cruelty, the priest realizes it's too late to change her fate.

The priest travels south and reaches La Candelaria, where a Mestizo is encountered, and directions to Carmen are requested. After crossing a river, the Mestizo follows, claiming to also be heading to Carmen. Tension grows between the two as the Mestizo questions the priest's identity. They stop for the night, and the priest begins to suspect the Mestizo might be a traitor. As they continue their journey, the priest, reflecting on his responsibilities, swaps places with the sick Mestizo, allowing him to ride the mule while he walks. Eventually, the Mestizo confronts him, and the priest admits his identity. Upon reaching Carmen, the priest parts ways with the Mestizo, who angrily complains about the lack of payment.

In a nearby city, a clergyman watches a crowd and meets a beggar asking for money. Though pretending to seek alcohol, the priest is actually looking for wine for mass. They head to a riverside hotel, where the beggar plans to introduce him to a contact for purchasing liquor. The governor's cousin eventually arrives at the hotel and agrees to sell the priest a bottle of brandy and wine. The priest offers the cousin some brandy, but he opts for wine, drinking it quickly and toasting repeatedly. As the wine disappears, the priest watches with sorrow, realizing the wine he had intended for mass is being consumed by the cousin and later by the jefe. The men, thinking the priest's tears are due to drunkenness, comment on his poetic soul. The jefe reveals they are searching for an outlaw priest and that they have a detainee who can identify him. The conversation turns to religious terms, and the priest quietly slips the brandy into his coat pocket before leaving.

It begins to rain outside, and the priest seeks refuge in a cantina. After accidentally bumping into a man playing billiards, the sound of the brandy bottle in his pocket draws attention. The men mock the priest for hiding alcohol, prompting him to flee. They chase him through the streets until he reaches Padre Jose's house, hoping for refuge. However, Padre Jose refuses to help, and the priest is soon captured by the group, which includes officers. They don't recognize him as the fugitive priest, and instead, fine him for the liquor, taking him into custody when he cannot pay.

In prison, the priest navigates through the disoriented inmates and hears requests for cigarettes and food. The conversation turns to priests, and one inmate blames them for his misfortune. Realizing he can't hide his identity, the priest admits he is a priest and calls himself a "whisky priest." He confesses his fear of death, his unworthiness, and his illegitimate child. A fellow prisoner reassures him, and the priest feels a connection to the inmates he'd long been fleeing. A devout woman, imprisoned for hiding religious items, criticizes him, but he responds with empathy, which only frustrates her further.

The following day, the priest is summoned to clear human waste in the cells. He encounters the Mestizo, who, realizing the priest's identity, refrains from reporting him. The priest finishes his task and is taken to see the lieutenant. They fail to recognize each other, and the priest is given five pesos and sent on his way after a brief conversation. The priest visits the Fellows' home, hoping for help but finds it abandoned. Hungry, he searches the house and barn, finding only an old, disabled dog. In desperation, he steals the bone from the dog, promising to share it but ends up eating it all.

After leaving the Fellows' estate, the priest finds refuge in a deserted village, where only a woman lingers nearby. When he steps outside, she vanishes into the woods but soon reappears. Suspicious, the priest explores the dark hut and uncovers a blood-soaked child hidden beneath maize. The child dies in his arms. The woman, speaking limited Spanish, reveals that the violence is caused by the "Americano," an outlaw. She asks the priest to accompany her to a church for her son's burial. Despite doubts about finding a church, the priest agrees.

After traveling for two days, the priest is astonished to find a plateau adorned with Christian crosses. The woman lays her child at the base of the tallest cross, praying despite the priest's warnings of an impending storm. Unable to convince her to leave, the priest abandons her, feeling guilty and worried about her safety if the gringo is still near. He returns, but the woman is gone. Consumed by remorse, he consumes a sugar cube left by the child's body, hoping for a miracle to revive him. Feeling abandoned, the priest moves on, physically drained and emotionally unsettled.

Eventually, a man with a firearm approaches the priest. The priest, no longer afraid of capture, reveals his identity. The man, pleased to encounter a priest, informs him that the area is a safe zone for religious practice, meaning the priest is no longer in danger from the authorities. The priest finds shelter with Mr. and Miss Lehr, German-American Protestants, who are cautious about Catholicism. He reflects on his own guilt, feeling a sharp contrast between the comfort of his stay and the suffering he has witnessed. While walking through the village, he is warmly welcomed by the locals, eager for him to perform baptisms and confessions. He charges a modest fee but is disturbed by how easily he returns to old habits. As he hears confessions, he struggles to engage with the villagers and feels a deep sense of failure.

The next day, the priest prepares to leave for Las Casas. Before departing, the Mestizo arrives with news that the gringo, wounded in a shootout, is asking for a priest before he dies. Despite the danger, the priest decides to return and offer forgiveness, convinced it is his duty. Before he leaves, he gives the money he earned from the baptisms to the schoolteacher, aware that he won't need it where he's going.

During their journey back, the Mestizo insists he is not deceiving the priest, but the priest subtly recognizes the mestizo's lies. As they approach the small huts where the gringo is thought to be, the priest sends away the mule driver, much to the mestizo's dismay. The priest feels no anger but sorrow for the mestizo's role in the plot to kill him. They reach the hut, where the gringo lies dying. He doesn't resemble the feared outlaw but rather a weary vagrant. Despite the priest's pleas for confession, the gringo refuses, convinced of his damnation, and eventually dies.

As the priest is preparing to leave, the lieutenant appears at the entrance, having cornered the priest. The priest accepts his fate with calmness and gratitude for the time spent with the gringo. The lieutenant, sitting with the priest due to the storm, reveals his disdain for the church, but the priest surprisingly agrees, acknowledging the church's flaws. He admits he stayed in the area not out of bravery, but due to his own pride. The lieutenant, frustrated by the priest's self-awareness, offers him a bottle of brandy, and the two talk as the storm rages outside.

Later, the lieutenant visits Padre Jose, asking him to hear the confession of a priest about to be executed. Padre Jose, though compassionate, refuses, fearing the lieutenant's intentions. The priest, meanwhile, contemplates his failings in his cell, struggling to repent. He scolds himself for focusing on his daughter and not humanity at large. As he reflects on his years spent evading the law, he realizes he has done little to fulfill his priestly duties. In the morning, any hope he had felt fades as he faces the reality of his situation.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Fellows lies ill in bed, with Captain Fellows caring for her. They discuss the priest who had visited those months ago. Mr. Tench, a dentist, is working on the jefe's dental issues when he learns from his wife's letter that she has embraced faith. As he watches a firing squad prepare to execute the priest, he sees him die with a final, unclear utterance, likely asking for pardon. Overcome with loneliness, Tench decides to leave Mexico.

Later, a woman recounts the tale of a young martyr, Juan, who dies bravely. Her son, disheartened by the execution of the priest, wonders if heroes still exist. He spits at the lieutenant and later dreams of the priest, who winks at him. When he wakes, a stranger knocks at the door, revealing himself to be another priest on the run, prompting the boy to welcome him inside. This marks the continuation of the priest's journey and the cycle of sacrifice and faith in the land.

2.6 Themes in the Novel

1. Government Vs Religion

The Power and the Glory deals with the interplay between secular authority and spiritual belief in a society marked by political turmoil and religious persecution. It is set against the backdrop of 1930s Mexico, and examines the antagonistic relationship between the Mexican government which is controlled by the Red Shirts and

Catholicism. Greene portrays the Red Shirts as a oppressive force seeking to exterminate Catholicism and establish its own authority as the ultimate power. The lieutenant, representing the government's ruthless pursuit of ideological purity, is relentless in his mission to hunt down and eliminate priests. He views them as a threat to the regime's control over the masses. His determination to enforce anti-clerical laws and suppress religious dissent demonstrates the government's larger attempt to maintain absolute control over the populace.

On the other hand, Greene portrays Catholicism as a subversive force that provides consolation to those in need while openly opposing governmental oppression. Catholic priests continue to perform sacraments in secret despite the danger and persecution they endure. Despite his feelings of inadequacy and personal failure, the whisky priest in particular proves to be a force of moral integrity and spiritual perseverance. The whisky priest purposefully gives his life in the novel's climax because there is a remote chance that someone will want to confess their sins to him. Despite his anxiety, he bravely dies because he believes he is serving a greater good. Catholicism is portrayed in the book as a significant power that is generally better than the Red Shirts' administration, even though it does not claim to be a flawless system

2. Disparity between Representation and Reality

Greene wants to highlight the difference between life as it is lived and life as it is remembered, There are several instances of storytelling throughout the novel. The tale of Juan, the young martyr, serves as the best illustration. At the end of the book, it is clear that Juan's martyrdom story differs greatly from the priest's. From the beginning to the end, Juan's life has been marked by poise, loyalty, and most importantly, unwavering faith. The priest is undoubtedly a kind man, especially nearing the end of the novel, yet he nevertheless meets death with fear and is unable to turn from his sins. However, by justapozing the two stories of martyrdom Greene is not only drawing attention to the priest's flaws but also proving the real life different from idealistic one. There are frequent references in narrative. For instance, the lieutenant does not recognize the priest because he lacks the delicate hands that a conventional priest would have, and the priest observes how little the gringo resembles his image on the wanted poster in the police office The novelist is interested in trying to create reality as it is truly experienced.

3. Confession

In Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, the theme of confession plays a central and multifaceted role. The novel is set in Mexico during a period of anti-Catholic persecution, where the Church is outlawed, and priests are hunted down. The protagonist, often referred to as the "whisky priest," is an unnamed Catholic priest who finds himself on the run, escaping capture by the authorities. Throughout the novel, confession serves as a key theme in exploring the moral and spiritual struggles of the characters, particularly the whisky priest, as it relates to sin, redemption, and the human conditions.

At its core, confession in *The Power and the Glory* serves as an avenue for the whisky priest to grapple with his personal sins, his guilt, and his sense of duty. The priest is deeply aware of his failings, both as a priest and as a man. His alcoholism, his moments of cowardice, and his sense of inadequacy as a spiritual leader are burdens that weigh heavily on him. Throughout the novel, his internal struggle revolves around his ability to reconcile his imperfections with the role he must play in the lives of others. Confession, for him, is not merely a ritual but a deep moral conflict. He is trapped in a paradox where, as a priest, he is supposed to be a moral authority, yet he is profoundly flawed and aware of his own sins.In several key moments, the whisky priest encounters people who seek him out for confession, despite his self-loathing and uncertainty about his worthiness to absolve others. These interactions highlight the tension between the priest's inner turmoil and his role as a conduit for divine grace. For example, when the priest meets a dying man who wishes to confess, it forces the priest to confront his own sense of inadequacy and worthlessness. Despite his own doubts, the priest continues to perform his duties, underscoring the theme that redemption is not just for the innocent or the pure but is available even to the deeply flawed.

Another profound aspects of confession in the novel is its role in facilitating redemption. For the whisky priest, who is aware of his many failings, the act of offering confession to others is a reminder that the grace of God is not contingent on human perfection. Even though the priest himself is unworthy in his own eyes, he continues to fulfill his spiritual duties. His performance of the sacrament of confession offers a paradoxical form of grace—not only to those who receive absolution but also to himself. This dual role of the priest—sinner and saint—embodies Greene's exploration of the complexities of faith, grace, and human

weakness. The power of confession in the novel is also demonstrated in its ability to affect the lives of those who partake in it. Many of the characters who seek the whisky priest's guidance are able to experience some form of redemption or solace, despite their own troubled lives. The act of confession becomes an affirmation of faith, and through it, the characters are given a sense of peace or clarity, even in the face of oppressive forces.

In this way, confession is depicted not as a mere legalistic ritual but as a means by which individuals can confront their sins and find a form of spiritual renewal. It is presented as a moral struggle, as a way of redemption of sins as well as affirmation of faith in the novel. The characters in this novel are unable to symbolically receive communion, neither can they symbolically "confess" to one another. The Fellows have long ago lost the ability to communicate; the mestizo threatens to use the guise of Confession to trap the priest into admitting his ministry; and the priest's death is occasioned by his return to a police state to shriveCalver.

4. Duty ,Sacrifice and Persecution

In *The Power and the Glory*, presents the whisky priest's struggle with his own flaws and moral shortcomings while struggling to sustain his responsibilities to the Catholic community he serves.. In one instance, the whisky priest is present while the lieutenant takes a hostage, but he decides not to reveal his identity. In this moment, the priest's behavior is not entirely selfish, as he genuinely believes .The whiskey priest feels obliged to continue serving his congregation in spite of the threat posed by the government's anti-clerical policies, putting his personal safety at risk in order to perform his spiritual duties. But as the story goes on, the whisky priest's feeling of obligation becomes more and more tangled as he struggles with his own desires and his previous transgressions. Specifically, his refusal to surrender gets challenging when the government start capturing and killing captives in an effort to force him to surrender.It is his duty to save himself because he is one of the few representations of the Catholic Church left in this society. However, he nonetheless knows that the reason people are dying is because he is still alive. The whisky priest is soon completely rejected by many of the little settlements, who want him to leave so he won't endanger them. The priest had previously wished to assist these people, but he now discovers that his efforts have only resulted in more mortality and hopelessness. The communities are actually assisting him by giving him food, housing, and even lying on his behalf. His minor sacraments, meanwhile, seem to be

an uneven transaction. By putting himself right in the lieutenant's path to hear the "gringo" criminal's confession, the whiskey priest ultimately performs a redemptive act of self-sacrifice to himself. The priest performs this act of pure selflessness not just for the benefit of the criminal but also for the sake of the larger community, which the police will no longer harass after he is apprehended. Greene challenges readers to think on the ethical difficulties of obligation and selflessness in the face of persecution by using the priest's internal struggle. Although the book does not criticize the whisky priest for trying to follow his convictions, it does acknowledge that his obligation to his community comes before his duties.

Duty is a central theme in *The Power and the Glory*, particularly the sense of religious duty embodied by the priest. Despite being an alcoholic, morally ambiguous, and increasingly overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy, the priest feels a deep obligation to continue his priestly duties. This duty is not born out of self-righteousness but from a profound sense of responsibility to his flock. Greene contrasts the priest's duty with that of the government officials who view their work as a duty to the state, as they attempt to root out the church, seeing it as a threat to national stability. Greene highlights that the priest's duty is not just a matter of performing religious rituals, but of offering comfort, hope, and a moral compass to the oppressed and persecuted people of Mexico.

Sacrifice, both personal and spiritual, is another recurring theme in *The Power and the Glory*. The priest's life is one of constant sacrifice. His personal desires such as the longing for safety, peace, or a simple life are consistently overshadowed by his obligation to serve his people. Throughout the novel, the priest sacrifices his own well-being, freedom, and happiness in the face of persecution. His internal battle is as much about his personal sins and failings as it is about his religious calling. He does not seek martyrdom, yet his inevitable martyrdom comes as a result of his decision to fulfill his duty to the people, despite the personal cost. The theme of sacrifice extends beyond the priest to include other characters, such as the people who continue to support him in the face of danger. The priest's eventual martyrdom serves as the ultimate expression of sacrifice, which, although deeply painful and tragic, becomes a redemptive act. His death becomes a testament to the theme of selflessness and the cost of living a life of duty.

Persecution is a driving force in the novel, as it shapes not only the external conditions of the characters' lives but also their internal conflicts. The government's

persecution of the church, represented by the relentless pursuit of the priest, is a manifestation of the wider ideological battle between secularism and religion. The priest, as a figure of defiance, is hunted by the authorities who see his continued presence as a symbol of rebellion against the state's control.

2.7 Symbols in the Novel

1. Alcohol

In the novel alcohol appears as a very complicated symbol. It is undoubtedly a metaphor for the "whiskey priest" and his terrible weakness. Alcohol is also the target of attempts to enact prohibition-style laws, which frame it as a representation of all bad activity that cannot be eliminated by law, not even by law at the point of a gun. However, alcohol also assumes a positive symbolic element that unites the sacred and the profane because it is a required component of the Catholic liturgy for doctrinal sacraments.

2. Christian Symbolism

In the novel *The Power and The Glory* different characters seem to stand in for figures from the New Testament. The most obvious example is the mestizo, whom the priest expressly refers to as "Judas." During his night in the hut with the mestizo, the priest has trouble keeping himself awake, recalling the night Jesus spends in the garden with the disciples who cannot seem to keep themselves awake. At the end of the novel we come across the priest's death as reminiscent of Christ's willing sacrifice and his execution at the hands of the authorities. The priest's journey through Mexico is his *Via Crucis* (Way of the Cross), and the novel is filled with comparisons between the priest and Christ. The protagonist's salvation is worked out upon a "true cross," which ironically necessitates his staying away from Vera Cruz. Greene is extremely careful to emphasize that his characters have the free will to decide their own paths in life, and are not merely playing out some predetermined scheme. When the priest ascends to the mountain plateau with the Indian woman, he sees only crooked crosses, illuminated by a low hanging Star of Bethlehem. Falling short of salvation, he feels that he is .crowned with thorns as his sharp hat rim presses into his head.

Other biblical personages such as Fellows is Pilate-like in his willingness to relinquish the priest to the state .Coral Fellows is crucified by coming into puberty;

she wearily leans against the hot, hard wall of the banana station. Young Juan's story is a parody of the Gospel according to Saint John. The priest, unable to enter the village of his birth, is like Moses, shut out from the Promised Land. He baptizes a boy as "Brigitta" instead of "Pedro'' The mestizo is a Judas-figure. And Calver becomes the "bad thief," more concerned with escape than with salvation; his name, of course,

2.8 Character Analysis

1. The Priest:

A flawed but morally upright Catholic priest, the whisky priest is making his way throughout Mexico, seeking refuge wherever he can in an attempt to avoid the Red Shirts, the country's leading political organization that has banned Catholicism. He risks his life to save others on multiple occasions in the book. But according to his Catholic faith, he is also a sinner because he has an alcohol addiction and fathered an unmarried child named Brigitta. The whisky priest feels incredibly bad for his transgressions and questions if he is worthy of serving as a priest. In the end, he chooses to continue in his line of work because he thinks that without him, the word of God will vanish from Mexico, even as the lieutenant begins capturing hostages. and

The whisky priest spends a large portion of the book attempting to flee to a safer place, but although he eventually succeeds, he feels aimless. He understands that it is his responsibility as a priest to be among the most disadvantaged people. He also understands that he will never feel that he has lived a comfortable life and atoned for his sins. While attempting to hear James Calver's confession, he is eventually taken prisoner by the Red Shirts. The whisky priest is open about his feelings and human needs, even though he has a great believe in God. Before being put to death by firing squad, he acknowledges that sin may be beautiful and experiences terror.

2. The Lieutenant :

The person in charge of the hunt for the whisky priest is the lieutenant. The lieutenant hates Catholicism and wants to see it eradicated completely because of his bad religious experiences as a young lad. He is therefore prepared to make any excuse in order to obtain the whisky priest. He specifically kidnaps people from the villages he believes the whisky priest is hiding in. He murders the hostages when

they fail to provide him with the knowledge he seeks. He is not cruel by nature but he thinks that it is necessary to exterminate Catholicism and so treats the priest.But at the end of the novel readers find his changed perception. Though, he supports Government to execute the Priest he feels regret of his action and a strange sense of emptiness and despondency. The character of Lieutenant stands as a symbol of the Mexican government during an increasingly ant-Catholic period during the 1930s.

3. The mestizo

In *The Power and the Glory*, the character of the mestizo functions as a "Judas" figure, recurring at pivotal moments throughout the priest's journey. His role is marked by irony in his action although he consistently seeks to undermine the priest, he inadvertently creates situations that allow the priest to demonstrate acts of moral heroism. This dynamic begins subtly when the priest, despite the mestizo's self-interested motives, shows compassion by refusing to abandon him when he falls ill. The priest goes so far as to arrange transportation for the mestizo, sending him toward safety.

The mestizo, however, tracks the priest down after crossing the border, setting in motion a trap that forces the priest into a difficult moral reckoning. In this moment, the priest is confronted with an opportunity to recommit to his ideals of duty and selflessness, rejecting the prospect of an easy life and reaffirming his role as a servant of his faith. The priest's response to the mestizo's request for prayer indicating that forgiveness is not a commodity to be handed out casually but requires genuine repentance marks a crucial shift in the narrative. The priest's admonition to the mestizo that he must undergo true soul-searching if he wishes to seek absolution echoes the priest's own internal conflict, as he himself yearns for confession but lacks the spiritual community to provide it.

In a broader sense, the mestizo can be interpreted as a distorted reflection of the priest. The priest, having wrestled with his own flaws and self-interested motivations, strives for humility and spiritual purity, while the mestizo is solely motivated by self-gain. However, the priest's interactions with the mestizo humanize the latter character, revealing the mestizo's vulnerability and, at moments, evoking sympathy for him. This complex relationship underscores the thematic exploration of redemption, self-sacrifice, and the tension between personal integrity and external circumstances in the novel. Ultimately, the mestizo's actions catalyze the priest's

growth, further complicating the distinction between good and evil and highlighting the paradoxical nature of his spiritual journey.

4. Padre Jose:

Padré Jose is a former priest living in Mexico's capital city. Although he feels guilty, he resists performing religious rituals for anyone in fear of getting killed. He is a contrasting character to the Priest. Unlike the priest, he yielded to the government's demands and relinquished his faith and practice as a priest. He is a priest who chose to marry his housekeeper to avoid being shot or having to leave. He is seen as a weak and dominated character unworthy of respect and devoid of conviction. He feels living his present life is a kind of martyrdom, worse than the traditional kind, which involves death rather than lifelong torment.

5. Mr. Tench:

Mr. Tench is an Englishman who has moved to the Mexican state with the hope of making a fortune and eventually returning to England. He is a dentist by profession, who considers himself the best in town. He lives a solitary and purposeless life in Mexico, lacking meaningful social connections. Despite being English, he doesn't express a strong attachment to England. Mr. Tench is characterized by his constant complaining and tendency to feel sorry for himself.

2.9 Check your progress

1. What is the profession of Mr. Tench?
2. Who is the Lieutenant's boss?
3. Who does the priest meet at the abandoned estate of The Fellows?
4. What does the boy realize about the executed priest?
5. What two things are against the law in the novel?
6. Who are the Lehrs?
7. What two things does the gringo attempt to give the priest?
8. What does the mestizo want from the priest?
9. Why is the priest on the run from the police at the beginning of the novel?
10. Where does the priest hide out after missing the boat?

11. What is the priest's first destination at the beginning of the novel?
12. Who does the priest befriend on plantation owner's estate?
13. What does the priest do for the villager's in the town square?
14. What does the lieutenant do when he arrives in the village?
15. Who does the priest meet on his way to the town of Carmen?

2.10 Answers to check your progress

1. Dentist
2. The Jefe
3. An Indian Woman
4. That he was martyr and hero
5. Catholicism and alcohol
6. They are Lutherans from Germany and are brother and sister.
7. A gun and a knife, both refused by the priest.
8. He wants the priest to allow him confession.
9. He is the last remaining clergyman in a state where religion has been outlawed, making him target for the authorities.
10. In a barn on the plantation owner's estate.
11. A boat that will take him out of capital city.
12. The plantation owner's daughter.
13. Says mass for the villagers.
14. Takes a hostage.
15. The mestizo

2.11 Exercise

1. Discuss Graham Greene's religious views reflected in *The Power and The Glory.*
2. Compare and contrast the characters of The Whiskey Priest and The Lieutenant.

3. How does Graham Greene explore the theme of morality in *The Power and The Glory?*

4 How does Greene's portrayal of the priest in *The Power and The Glory* reflect broader political and religious conflicts in the 20 th century?

5. Explain the conflict between the Church and the State in Graham Greene‟s *The Power and the Glory.*

2.12 References and Further Reading

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Unit-3
Post War British Drama
Carly Churchill (1938) – *Top Girls* (1982)

Contents

3.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- know about Post War British Drama
- know about the life (and works) of Caryl Churchill
- know the plot summery of the play *Top Girls*
- learn about the characters in *Top Girls*
- learn the themes and other aspects in *Top Girls*
- be able to answer the questions on the play *Top Girls*

3.1 Introduction:

Since its earliest productions, Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* was regarded as a unique play about the challenges working women face in the contemporary business world and society at large. Premiering on 28th August, 1982, in the Royal Court Theatre in London (before making its New York debut on 28th December 1982, in the Public Theatre), *Top Girls* won an Obie Award in 1983 and was the runner-up for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. The play is regularly performed around the world and has quickly become part of the canon of women's theater. *Top Girls* helped solidify Churchill's reputation as an important playwright.

This unit begins with the discussion about a brief survey of Post War British Drama, and continues to take into account a few biographical details of a renowned British writer, Caryl Churchill (1938-). It also presents the detailed summary of Churchill's famous play *Top Girls*, the analysis of the characters in the play and the critical commentary on the themes, motifs and symbols used in the play.

3.2 Post War British Drama

The Second World War profoundly influenced British society, reshaping its cultural, political, and economic fabric. British drama, as a cultural mirror, underwent transformative changes after 1945, moving away from the genteel drawing-room comedies and escapist entertainments of earlier decades. Instead, playwrights turned to grittier, more realistic portrayals of life, using the stage to address social issues, critique traditional values, and explore existential dilemmas. This era witnessed the emergence of key theatrical movements and a significant rise in the contributions of women playwrights, who brought fresh perspectives and experimental approaches to British theatre.

A) Theatrical Movements of Post-War British Drama

i) The Angry Young Men Movement

The 1950s saw the rise of the Angry Young Men, a group of working- and lower-middle-class playwrights and novelists who rejected the genteel conventions of pre-war British theatre. They were disillusioned by post-war Britain's social stratification and the unfulfilled promises of progress and equality. The term "Angry Young Men" originated from the press coverage of John Osborne's landmark play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), which became emblematic of the movement. Osborne's

Look Back in Anger became the manifesto of this movement, introducing audiences to Jimmy Porter, an articulate yet bitter anti-hero whose anger symbolized a generational frustration with class stagnation. Plays within this movement depicted the struggles of ordinary people, highlighting the dissatisfaction of the working class and their alienation from the traditional social order.

Osborne's work paved the way for other playwrights, such as Arnold Wesker, who chronicled the lives of working-class families in plays like *The Wesker Trilogy* (*Chicken Soup with Barley, Roots, I'm Talking about Jerusalem*) (1959). These dramatists rejected escapism, instead portraying the raw realities of their time. The Angry Young Men movement had a profound impact on British culture and drama: i) It revitalized British theatre, breaking away from its genteel traditions and paving the way for realism and socially engaged narratives; ii) The movement influenced later dramatists such as Harold Pinter, David Storey, and Edward Bond, who continued exploring themes of alienation and class struggles; iii) It inspired the Kitchen Sink Realism movement, which further emphasized the domestic lives and struggles of the working class.

The Angry Young Men movement was a defining moment in British cultural history, challenging the complacency of post-war society and bringing the struggles of ordinary people to the stage and page. While its influence waned in the 1960s, its legacy persists in the ongoing exploration of class, alienation, and identity in British drama and literature. Through their bold rejection of convention, the Angry Young Men reshaped the theatrical landscape, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of Britain.

ii) The Theatre of the Absurd

Another influential movement was the Theatre of the Absurd, emerging in Britain in the 1950s under the influence of existential philosophy and the works of European playwrights like Samuel Beckett. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) disrupted conventional dramatic structures, presenting a minimalist narrative where two characters wait endlessly for someone who never arrives. This play, emblematic of absurdist theatre, explored the futility of existence and the breakdown of communication, themes that resonated in a post-war world grappling with existential uncertainty.

The Theatre of the Absurd emerged as a significant movement in the mid-20th century, reflecting the existential anxieties of a world reeling from the devastations of two world wars and grappling with the growing disillusionment with traditional structures of meaning, such as religion, morality, and politics. Inspired by existential philosophy, particularly the works of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, this movement portrayed life as inherently meaningless and human existence as absurd.

The term "Theatre of the Absurd" was popularized by the critic Martin Esslin in his 1961 book of the same name, where he examined the works of playwrights who shared a common philosophical outlook rather than a deliberate association or manifesto. The movement flourished from the 1940s to the 1960s, with works that broke away from conventional dramaturgy to create innovative forms of theatre.

Harold Pinter followed in Beckett's footsteps with works such as *The Birthday Party* (1957) and *The Caretaker* (1960), which infused mundane settings with an undercurrent of menace and ambiguity. Pinter's distinctive style, marked by silences and elliptical dialogue, exposed the fragility of human relationships and the threat of external forces. Though Pinter's works are often categorized as "comedies of menace," they share many features with the Theatre of the Absurd, particularly the themes of alienation and the breakdown of communication.

Jean Genet plays – *The Maids* (1947) and *The Balcony* (1956) – are often ritualistic and explore themes of power, identity, and the performative nature of life. Eugène Ionesco's plays – *The Bald Soprano* (1950) and *Rhinoceros* (1959) – are characterized by their surrealism, satirical humor, and critique of societal conventions.

The Theatre of the Absurd captured the philosophical and existential concerns of a disoriented post-war world. Through its rejection of traditional theatrical conventions and its focus on the absurdity of existence, the movement redefined the possibilities of drama, leaving an indelible mark on modern theatre. By confronting audiences with the chaotic and meaningless nature of life, it challenged them to grapple with the profound questions of human existence.

iii) Kitchen Sink Realism

Kitchen Sink Realism is a British cultural movement that emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s, primarily in theatre, film, and literature. It is characterized by its focus on the everyday struggles of working-class individuals, particularly in the

context of post-war Britain. The term "kitchen sink" originates from the movement's portrayal of domestic settings, often including gritty, unvarnished depictions of mundane life, such as scenes set in kitchens complete with the proverbial sink.

This movement sought to challenge the polished, escapist, and idealized portrayals of life in traditional art forms by presenting a raw and unflinching view of reality. It was heavily influenced by the social changes and disillusionment of post-war Britain, offering a stark contrast to the genteel drawing-room dramas and romanticized narratives of the earlier decades.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, Kitchen Sink Realism emerged as a response to the social issues of the working class. These plays shifted the focus from grand themes to the everyday struggles of working-class characters, often set in small, domestic spaces like kitchens or living rooms. Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958) stands out as a seminal work within this movement. Written when Delaney was only 19, the play challenged societal norms by addressing issues such as interracial relationships, single motherhood, and homosexuality. Delaney's compassionate portrayal of marginalized characters offered a counter-narrative to the male-dominated perspectives of the Angry Young Men.

Kitchen Sink Realism was a transformative movement that brought the lives and struggles of ordinary people into the cultural spotlight. By rejecting traditional, idealized portrayals of life, it created a raw, authentic, and socially conscious form of art that resonated deeply with audiences. Its impact on British theatre, film, and literature endures, continuing to inspire works that confront social inequalities and give voice to the marginalized. Through its unflinching honesty, Kitchen Sink Realism remains a vital part of the cultural narrative, reflecting the complexities of human existence.

iv) Feminist Theatre

Feminist Theatre is a genre of performance art and dramatic writing that emerged as part of the broader feminist movement in the 20th century. It seeks to challenge patriarchal ideologies, deconstruct traditional gender roles, and amplify women's voices in a domain historically dominated by men. Feminist Theatre not only addresses women's issues but also explores the intersections of gender with class, race, sexuality, and identity, offering a platform for marginalized experiences.

This form of theatre has evolved through various waves of feminism, each bringing unique perspectives and approaches to theatrical practice. It serves as a tool for consciousness-raising, political activism, and the reclamation of agency, aiming to subvert societal norms and imagine alternative, egalitarian realities.

The feminist movement of the 1970s brought a wave of change to British drama, as women playwrights began challenging patriarchal structures both in society and on stage. Feminist theatre emerged as a space for women to tell their own stories and critique gender inequality. Caryl Churchill became one of the most significant voices of this movement, blending feminist themes with experimental dramaturgy. Her play *Top Girls* (1982) explores the sacrifices women make for professional success, juxtaposing historical female figures with modern-day characters to interrogate the cost of ambition in a male-dominated world.

Feminist Theatre emerged alongside the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on issues such as gender inequality, reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and the deconstruction of traditional gender roles. Theatres and playwrights used their work to support feminist ideals, challenging the male-dominated narratives that had long prevailed in dramatic literature and performance.

Sarah Kane's works [*Crave* (1998), *Blasted* (1995)] often categorized as "In-Yer-Face" theatre, explore themes of violence, mental illness, and sexual identity from a feminist perspective. Another important feminist playwright, Pam Gems, used biographical drama to highlight the lives of complex, independent women. Her play *Piaf* (1978) examines the life of French singer Édith Piaf, portraying her as a figure of resilience and passion. Similarly, Sarah Daniels addressed issues such as gender violence and societal expectations in works like *Ripen Our Darkness* (1981).

Feminist Theatre has been a transformative force in drama, challenging traditional narratives and championing gender equality. By giving voice to women's experiences and interrogating societal norms, it has not only enriched the theatrical landscape but also contributed to broader cultural and social change. Through its ongoing evolution, Feminist Theatre continues to question power structures and imagine a more inclusive, equitable world.

B) Contributions of Women Playwrights in Post-War Drama

The contributions of women playwrights during and after the post-war period brought fresh perspectives to British theatre, expanding its thematic and formal boundaries. While early post-war drama was largely dominated by male voices, women playwrights began to assert their presence, focusing on experiences that had long been neglected or misrepresented.

i) Challenging Norms and Taboo Subjects

Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* was a groundbreaking work that addressed themes considered taboo in 1950s Britain, such as interracial romance, homosexuality, and the struggles of single mothers. Delaney's nuanced, empathetic portrayal of her characters offered a counterpoint to the brash, masculine anger of her male contemporaries. Her success signaled the potential for women playwrights to engage with social issues in bold and innovative ways.

ii) Intersectionality and Diverse Voices

The 1980s and 1990s saw a rise in playwrights who addressed issues of race, identity, and intersectionality. Winsome Pinnock, often referred to as the "Godmother of Black British Theatre," brought the experiences of Black British women to the stage in plays like *Leave Taking* (1987), which explores themes of migration, cultural displacement, and generational conflict. Similarly, Bola Agbaje's *Gone Too Far!* (2007) captures the struggles of multicultural Britain, focusing on the tensions between identity and belonging in a rapidly changing society.

iii) Experimental Forms and Modern Themes

In the contemporary period, women playwrights have continued to innovate, addressing complex modern issues and experimenting with dramatic form. Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *A Number* (2002) interrogate themes of colonialism, gender, and identity while challenging conventional narrative structures. Lucy Prebble's *The Effect* (2012) examines mental health and the ethics of pharmaceutical testing, blending emotional depth with intellectual rigor.

Conclusion

Post-war British drama has been defined by its engagement with societal issues, its exploration of existential dilemmas, and its stylistic innovations. The contributions of women playwrights have been pivotal in broadening the scope of

British theatre, bringing attention to previously marginalized voices and experiences. From Shelagh Delaney's groundbreaking realism to Caryl Churchill's feminist experimentation, these playwrights have challenged traditional narratives and redefined the boundaries of dramatic art, ensuring that British drama remains a dynamic and inclusive space for cultural reflection.

3.2.1 Terms to Remember

1. **Anti-hero** – An anti-hero is a central character in literature, film, or drama who lacks conventional heroic qualities such as courage, morality, idealism, or selflessness. Unlike traditional heroes, anti-heroes are flawed, morally ambiguous, or even deeply cynical, yet they often evoke audience sympathy or understanding because of their relatable struggles or compelling complexity.

The anti-hero – a type who is incompetent, unlucky, tactless, clumsy, stupid, buffoonish – is of ancient lineage and is to be found, for instance, in the Greek New Comedy. An early and outstanding example in European literature is the endearing figure of the eponymous knight of *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615). Another notable instance is Tristram Shandy - in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760-67). The anti-hero disrupts traditional notions of heroism, offering a more nuanced and human portrayal of protagonists. By blending flaws with compelling depth, anti-heroes challenge audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about morality, identity, and society. Their enduring appeal lies in their ability to reflect the complexities of real life, making them some of the most memorable characters in storytelling.

2. Existential philosophy – Existential philosophy is a school of thought that emphasizes individual freedom, choice, and responsibility in an indifferent or even absurd universe. It explores the human condition, focusing on themes like alienation, anxiety, and the search for meaning in a world devoid of inherent purpose. Rooted in the works of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, and further developed by thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Albert Camus, existentialism rejects deterministic and essentialist views, asserting that existence precedes essence – meaning individuals define their own values and identities through their actions. For example, in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, freedom is both a gift and a burden, as humans must confront the "anguish" of making choices without objective guidelines. Similarly, Camus' concept of "the absurd" in *The Myth of Sisyphus* illustrates the tension between humanity's desire for meaning and the universe's

indifference. Literature often reflects existential themes, such as in Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, where Meursault's disconnection from social norms exemplifies the absurd. Another example is Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, which portrays alienation and the loss of meaning in Gregor Samsa's surreal transformation. Existential philosophy continues to influence modern literature, film, and art, offering profound insights into the complexities of human freedom and existence.

3. **Surrealism** – Surrealism is a 20th-century avant-garde movement that seeks to unlock the unconscious mind and transcend rationality through dreamlike, illogical, and fantastical imagery. Originating in the 1920s, led by André Breton, surrealism was influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis and aimed to challenge conventional perceptions of reality by merging the conscious and unconscious realms. It is characterized by bizarre juxtapositions, unexpected combinations, and a rejection of traditional artistic norms. In visual art, Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* features melting clocks in a surreal landscape, symbolizing the fluidity of time and the unconscious. In literature, Breton's *Nadja* blurs the line between autobiography and fiction, exploring themes of chance and obsession. Similarly, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, often linked to surrealism, portrays Gregor Samsa's inexplicable transformation into a giant insect, reflecting alienation and absurdity. Surrealist cinema, such as Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou*, is known for its shocking, disjointed sequences that defy narrative logic. Surrealism has left an enduring impact on art, literature, and film by challenging audiences to embrace imagination, mystery, and the irrational.

3.2.2 Check Your Progress

1. Which play became the manifesto of "Angry Young Men" movement?
2. Who coined/ popularized the term "Theatre of the Absurd"?
3. What does the term "kitchen sink" in Kitchen Sink Realism refer to?
4. Whose works are often categorized as "In-Yer-Face" theatre?
5. Which play by Samuel Beckett is a hallmark of the Theatre of the Absurd?
6. Name a play associated with Kitchen Sink Realism.
7. What is the primary aim of Feminist Theatre?

3.3 Caryl Churchill: Life and Works:

Churchill was born on September 3, 1938, in London, England, the daughter and only child of Robert Churchill and his wife. Churchill's father was a political cartoonist; her mother worked as a model, secretary, and actress. Churchill began writing stories and doing shows for her parents as a child. After spending her early childhood in London, the family moved to Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in about 1949, where Churchill spent most of her formative years.

In 1956, Churchill returned to England to enter Oxford University. While studying literature at Lady Margaret Hall, she began writing plays for student productions. Her first play was written as a favor for a friend. One of Churchill's student plays, *Downstairs,* won first prize at the National Student Drama Festival. Churchill graduated with her B.A. in 1960, intending to become a serious writer.

Family matters stymied her plans. In 1961, Churchill married David Harter, a lawyer, and had three sons over the next decade. Still, she managed to write about thirty radio dramas, usually one act, throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, as well as some television plays in the early 1970s. Many of these early plays were related to her life experiences and were somewhat depressing, but they did garner Churchill some notice for her writing abilities.

In the early 1970s, Churchill turned to theater, initially writing for fringe theater groups. *Owners,* a tragic farce, was her first major play, produced by a fringe group in London in 1972. This production led to her position as a resident playwright at the Royal Court Theatre from 1974 to 1975. Churchill began exploring feminist ideas with her first play for the Royal Court, *Objections to Sex and Violence* (1974).

Churchill continued to explore feminism with *Vinegar Tom* (1976). She wrote the play both with the help of and for Monstrous Regiment, a feminist touring-theater company. *Vinegar Tom* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976) use historical settings to discuss repression. These plays garnered Churchill more attention and critical praise.

In 1979, Churchill's *Cloud Nine* had its first production. This was her first big hit, and had a long run on both sides of the Atlantic. The Obie Award winning play was set in the Victorian era, with the roles played by their physical opposites. For example, a man played an unhappy and unfulfilled wife. Critics enthusiastically

praised Churchill's originality. Churchill followed this success with *Top Girls* (1982), a play about feminism and the price of success for women. Though some did not regard it as highly as *Cloud Nine,* the play cemented her reputation and won her another Obie.

Churchill wrote plays on a variety of topics throughout the 1980s and 1990s. *Fen* (1983), which focused on female tenant farmers, won her the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. In 1986, she wrote *Serious Money* about the London stock exchange. Churchill used music and dialogue that rhymed in the play, which also won the Blackburn Prize and many other awards. She continued to experiment with technique in *Mad Forest* (1990) and *The Skriker* (1994), which incorporated music and dance. Though Churchill's output decreased in the late 1990s, she continues to push the limits of traditional dramatic forms using dance and music, and other unexpected constructions

3.3.1 Check Your Progress:

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Churchill's *Downstairs* won first prize at the _____ .
2. Churchill began exploring feminist ideas with her first play for the Royal Court, _____ (1974).
3. In 1979, Churchill's *Cloud Nine* was her first big hit, and it was set in _____ .
4. *Top Girls* won an Obie Award in 1983 and was the runner-up for the _____ .

3.4 Plot Summary of the play *Top Girls*:

Act One

Top Girls opens in a restaurant where Marlene is hosting a dinner party for five friends. She has recently been promoted at work. The five guests are all women that are either long-dead or are fictional characters from literature or paintings.

The first to come are Isabella Bird and Lady Nijo. Nijo and Isabella discuss their lives, including their families. Dull Gret and Pope Joan, who was elected to the papacy in the ninth century, appear. The conversation wanders between subjects, including religion and the love lives of Nijo and Isabella. Isabella goes on about her travel experiences. Joan talks about dressing and living as a male from the age of

twelve so that she could further her education. Marlene proposes a toast to her guests. They, in turn, insist on toasting Marlene and her success.

Joan relates her disturbing story. While she enjoyed being the pope, she also had a discreet affair with a chamberlain and became pregnant. In denial about her state, she gave birth to her child during a papal procession. Joan was stoned to death, and her child, she believes, was also killed. While Joan relates her story, Nijo talks about her four children being born, and only being able to see one of them after having given birth. Isabella talks about how she never had children. Marlene wonders why they are all so miserable.

The final guest arrives. She is Patient Griselda, a character in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales.* Griselda tells her story. Though she was a peasant girl, she was asked to be the wife of a local prince, but only if she obeyed him without question. Griselda agreed, though it later meant losing the two children she bore him – they were taken from her as infants. Then Griselda was sent back to her father with nothing but a slip to wear. Her husband called her back to help him prepare for his next wedding to a girl from France. The girl was her daughter – all this was a test of her loyalty. He took Griselda back, and the family was reunited.

Marlene is upset by Griselda's tale. Nijo is also perturbed because her children were never returned to her. Gret finally speaks up about her journey through hell, and how she beat the devils. The scene ends with Isabella talking about the last trip she took.

Act 2, scene i

The scene opens in the Top Girls employment agency in London. Marlene is interviewing Jeanine for possible placement. Marlene tells Jeanine that if she is to be sent on a job with prospects, she must not tell them that she is getting married or might have children. Marlene evaluates Jeanine and suggests jobs based on her perception of Jeanine's future.

Act 2, scene ii

This scene takes place at night in Joyce's backyard in Suffolk. Joyce is Marlene's elder sister. Joyce's sixteen-year-old daughter Angie and her twelve-year-old friend Kit are playing in a shelter they built in the backyard. Joyce calls for

Angie, but Angie and Kit ignore her until she goes back into the house. Angie says she wants to kill her mother.

Angie and Kit discuss going to the movies. Kit gets mad at Angie when she talks about dumb stuff. Angie desperately wants to leave home. Kit believes they should move to New Zealand in case of a war. Angie is indifferent because she has a big secret. She tells Kit she is going to London to see her aunt. Angie believes that Marlene is really her mother.

Joyce sneaks up on them. Joyce will not let them go to the movies until Angie cleans her room. Angie leaves, and Kit informs Joyce that she wants to be a nuclear physicist. When Angie returns, she is wearing a nice dress that is a little too small for her. Joyce becomes angry because Angie has not cleaned her room. It starts to rain. Joyce and Kit go inside. Angie stays outside. When Kit returns to get her, Angie threatens to kill her mother again.

Act 2, scene iii

It is Monday morning at Top Girls. Win and Nell, who work at the agency, are talking. Win tells Nell about her weekend that she spent at her married boyfriend's house while his wife was out of town. The conversation turns to office gossip. They consider changing jobs as Marlene has been promoted over them, limiting their prospects. Still, Nell and Win are glad Marlene got the job over another coworker, Howard. Marlene enters late. Win and Nell tell her that they are glad she got the promotion rather than Howard.

Win interviews Louise, a forty-six-year-old woman who has been in the same job for twenty-one years. Louise has done everything for her company, but has spent twenty years in middle management with no opportunities to go higher. Win believes there will be only limited openings for her.

In the main office, Angie walks up to Marlene. Marlene does not recognize her at first. Angie has come to London on her own to see her aunt, and she intends to stay for a while. It is not clear if Joyce knows where Angie is. Angie becomes upset when Marlene does not seem like she wants her to stay.

Their conversation is interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Kidd, Howard's wife. Mrs. Kidd is upset because Howard cannot accept that Marlene got the promotion to managing director over him. In part, he is disturbed because she is a

woman. Mrs. Kidd wants Marlene to turn down the promotion so that he can have it. Mrs. Kidd leaves in a huff when Marlene is rude to her. Angie is proud of her aunt's saucy attitude.

In another interview, Nell talks to Shona, who claims to be twenty-nine and to have worked in sales on the road. As the interview progresses, it becomes clear that Shona has been lying. She is only twenty-one and has no real work experience.

In the main office, Win sits down and talks to Angie, who was left there by Marlene while she is working. Angie tells Win that she wants to work at Top Girls. Win begins to tell Angie her life story, but Angie falls asleep. Nell comes in and informs her that Howard has had a heart attack. When Marlene returns, Win tells her about Angie wanting to work at Top Girls. Marlene does not think Angie has much of a future there.

Act 3

The scene takes place a year earlier in Joyce's kitchen. Marlene is passing out presents for Joyce and Angie. One of the gifts is the nice dress that Angie wore earlier. While Angie goes to her room to try it on, Joyce and Marlene are talking. Joyce had no idea that Marlene was coming. Marlene believed Joyce had invited her there. Angie made the arrangements, lying to both of them.

Angie returns to show off the dress. They chide her for her deception. Angie reminds her that the last time she visited was for her ninth birthday. Marlene learns that Joyce's husband left her three years ago. It is getting late, and Angie is sent to bed. Marlene will sleep on the couch.

After Angie leaves to get ready for bed, Joyce and Marlene continue their discussion about their lives. The sisters' conversation turns into an argument. Marlene believes that Joyce is jealous of her success. Joyce criticizes the decisions Marlene has made, including leaving her home and giving up her child, Angie. Marlene offers to send her money, but Joyce refuses.

Marlene is excited about a future under the new prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, while Joyce cannot stand the prime minister. They talk about the horrid life their mother led with their alcoholic father. It becomes clear the sisters have very different views of the world. As Marlene nears sleep on the couch, Angie walks in, having had a bad dream. "Frightening," is all she says.

3.4.1 Check Your Progress:

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is the primary setting of Act 1 in *Top Girls*?
2. What promotion does Marlene receive at the start of the play?
3. What is Angie's relationship to Marlene, as revealed later in *Top Girls*?
4. What is Angie's last word in the play, symbolizing her fear and uncertainty?
5. What is the central conflict between Marlene and Joyce in Act 3 (*Top Girls*)?

3.5 Major and Minor Characters:

Angie

Angie is the sixteen-year-old adopted daughter of Joyce. Angie is the biological daughter of Marlene, but was given up by her birth mother, who was only seventeen at the time and had career ambitions. In act 1 of *Top Girls,* Angie realizes that Marlene is her mother, though she has not been told directly. Both Marlene and Joyce do not think highly of Angie and believe her future is limited. She has already left high school with no qualifications. She was in remedial classes, and her best friend is Kit, who is four years younger. Angie is frustrated and wants to murder her mother. Instead, she runs away to visit her aunt in London and hopes to live with her. Previously, Angie tricked Marlene into visiting her and Joyce. Angie is Marlene's embarrassment, but she is also one of the things that links her to the women at the dinner party.

Isabella Bird

Isabella is one of Marlene's dinner party guests in act 1. She is a Scottish woman who lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and who traveled extensively later in life. In *Top Girls,* Isabella is the first to arrive at the party and dominates the conversation in a self-absorbed manner. She talks on and on about her travels; her complex relationship with her sister, Hennie; her clergyman father, and husband; her illnesses; religion; and her lack of children. While Isabella does listen and respond to the others, she mostly tries to figure out her own life and what it meant. She could never be as good as her sister, but her adventures made her happy. Isabella is one of the characters who helps Marlene define herself.

Dull Gret

Dull Gret is one of Marlene's dinner guests in act 1, and the third to arrive. Gret is the subject of a painting by Brueghel entitled "Dulle Griet." In the painting, she wears an apron and armor and leads a group of women into hell to fight with devils. Gret is generally quiet through most of the dinner, answering questions only when directly asked and making a few comments on the side. Near the end of the scene, Gret makes a speech about her trip to hell and the fight with the devils. Like all the dinner guests, Gret's story reflects something about Marlene's life.

Jeanine

Marlene interviews Jeanine for placement by Top Girls in act 1. She is engaged and is saving money to get married. Marlene is not supportive of Jeanine's ambitions to work in advertising or in a job that might have some travel, but she categorizes her according to what Marlene believes she will be able to accomplish.

Pope Joan

Pope Joan is one of Marlene's dinner party guests in act 1, and the fourth to arrive. She is a woman from the ninth century who allegedly served as the pope from 854 to 856. Pope Joan is somewhat aloof, making relevant, intelligent declarations throughout the conversation. When the topic turns to religion, she cannot help but point out heresies – herself included – though she does not attempt to convert the others to her religion. Joan reveals some of her life. She began dressing as a boy at age twelve so she could continue to study; she lived the rest of her life as a man, though she had male lovers. Joan was eventually elected pope. She became pregnant by her chamberlain lover and delivered her baby during a papal procession. For this, Joan was stoned to death. At the end of the scene, Joan recites a passage in Latin. Like all the dinner guests, Joan's life and attitude reflects something about Marlene.

Joyce

Joyce is Marlene's elder sister and mother to Angie. Unlike her younger sister, Joyce stayed in the same area and social class she grew up in. Joyce is unambitious and unhappy. She was married to Frank, but she told him to leave three years previously because he was having affairs with other women. She supports herself and Angie by cleaning houses.

Because Joyce seemed to be unable to have children, she adopted Angie as an infant when Marlene decided to give her up. But Joyce soon got pregnant and miscarried the child because of the demands of raising Angie. Joyce resents both Angie and Marlene, in part because of her miscarriage. She calls Angie a lump and useless. Marlene is too ambitious and clever for Joyce.

Yet Joyce has pride. She will not take Marlene's money, and she does not cater to her crying. Joyce maintains her working class loyalty and stands her ground when Marlene starts to sing the praises of Margaret Thatcher. Despite such differences, Marlene and Joyce are very much alike. They both believe they are right and do what they must to survive in their different worlds.

Mrs. Kidd

Mrs. Kidd is the wife of Howard, the man who got passed over in favor of Marlene for the managing director position at Top Girls. In act 2, Mrs. Kidd comes to the office and tries to get Marlene to turn down the position. Mrs. Kidd hopes Marlene will understand how much it would hurt Howard's pride and livelihood. Marlene is not impressed by her pleas, and Mrs. Kidd leaves after insulting Marlene for being a hard, working woman.

Kit

Kit is the twelve-year-old best friend of Angie. Unlike Angie, Kit is clever and plans on being a nuclear physicist. The girls have been friends for years, though Kit gets annoyed by Angie's limitations. In some ways, Kit is a younger version of Marlene.

Louise

Louise is interviewed by Win for placement by Top Girls in act 2. Louise is a forty-six-year-old woman stuck in middle management who believes she has been overlooked for promotion and underappreciated by her present firm. Win is not particularly supportive of Louise's desires to use her experience elsewhere and does not offer much hope for a better position. Like Marlene, Win categorizes Louise according to what she believes Louise will be able to accomplish.

Marlene

Marlene is the central character in *Top Girls.* She is a successful businesswoman who has recently been promoted to managing director of Top Girls, an employment

agency. To celebrate, she has a dinner party at a restaurant with five guests, all of whom are women who are either dead or fictional characters from literature and paintings. Marlene's own life shares some parallels with these women.

Marlene's adult life has been focused on her career, to the exclusion of nearly everything else. She previously worked in the United States and has done well for herself. Marlene has little to no contact with her family. Her alcoholic father is dead, and her long-suffering mother is in some sort of home. Marlene does not get along with her sister Joyce, who has remained part of the working class and lives in the same neighborhood where they grew up.

Marlene let Joyce raise her daughter, Angie. Marlene became pregnant at age seventeen, and because the then-married Joyce did not have a child, she allowed her to adopt the baby. Marlene has as little respect and interest in Angie as Joyce does. Like the women she interviews at Top Girls, Marlene believes Angie's future is limited. Yet Marlene's own life is just as circumscribed, but in different ways. Her success has come at a high price, costing her both her empathy and her relationships.

Nell

Nell is one of the employees at the Top Girls employment agency. She is happy that Marlene got the promotion over Howard, but she has her own career ambitions and might want to find a job with better prospects. In the meantime, her boyfriend, Derek, has asked her to marry him, but she does not know if she will accept. Her career seems more important to her than the marriage. During the play, Nell conducts an interview with Shona, whom Nell believes might be good for Top Girls. Nell is disappointed to learn that Shona has lied about everything on her application.

Lady Nijo

Lady Nijo is one of Marlene's dinner party guests in act 1, and the second to arrive. She is a thirteenth-century Japanese courtesan to the Emperor of Japan. She later became a Buddhist monk. Like Isabella, Nijo is somewhat self-absorbed, though not to the same degree. Nijo tells the others about her life, including information about her father, her lovers, her four children (only one of whom she ever saw), symbolic clothing, and her time as a traveling monk. But she also listens respectfully to the stories of others and acknowledges her limitations. Nijo liked her silk clothing and easy life with the Emperor. By the end of the scene, Nijo is in tears. Like all the dinner guests, Nijo's life reflects something about Marlene's.

Patient Griselda

Patient Griselda is one of Marlene's dinner guests in act 1, and the last to arrive. She is a fictional character, appearing in "The Clerk's Tale" in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* among other stories. As soon as she arrives, Marlene has Griselda tell her story. Griselda was a peasant girl who was asked to marry a local prince, but only if she would obey him without question. She agreed and bore him two children who were taken away from her while they were still infants. She did not question the decision. Her husband sent Griselda back home with nothing more than a slip to wear. She went without question. He sent for her to help him plan his second marriage to a young French girl. Griselda came back. At a pre-wedding feast, he revealed that the girl and her page/brother were their children and all these incidents were tests of her loyalty. Like all the dinner guests, Griselda's story reflects an aspect of Marlene's life.

Shona

Shona is interviewed by Nell for placement by the Top Girls agency in the second act. Shona tries to pass herself off as a twenty-nine-year-old woman with sales experience, which Nell believes at first. As the interview progresses, it becomes clear that Shona has been making up a story. She is really twenty-one and has no job experience. Shona is certain that she could handle high-profile jobs, but Nell does not believe her.

Win

Win is one of the employees at the Top Girls employment agency. Like Nell, she is glad that Marlene got the promotion over Howard, but she has her own career ambitions and might move on. She is relatively well educated and has previously lived in several different countries. Win spent the previous weekend with her married boyfriend at his house, while his wife was out of town. During the course of the play, Win interviews Louise for a job; she shares Marlene's callous attitude toward Louise.

3.5.1 Check Your Progress

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. Which dinner party guest in *Top Girls* is based on a peasant woman from a famous Bruegel painting?

2. Which historical character in *Top Girls* was a concubine and later became a Buddhist nun?
3. What is the profession of Marlene in the play, *Top Girls*?
4. Which character represents submissiveness and patience, as portrayed in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*?
5. Which character critiques Marlene's admiration for Margaret Thatcher, embodying a more collective and class-conscious perspective on feminism?

3.6 Themes and Other Aspects in *Top Girls*:

I. Themes

Choices and Consequences

Nearly every character in *Top Girls* has made or is in the process of making life-changing decisions with important consequences. The dinner party in act 1, exemplifies this. Each of the historical figures has made a hard choice. For example, Pope Joan chose to live like a boy, and then a man, in public. When she became pregnant by her secret lover, the stoning death of her and her baby were consequences of her chosen life. Joyce chose to adopt Angie, which lead to a certain life path. Joyce believes that she miscarried her own child because of the demands of raising Angie.

Marlene also made several hard choices. She became a career woman who spent some time working in the States. Marlene is estranged from her family, including her biological daughter, Angie, and does not seem to have many close friends, female or male. Her dinner party in celebration of her promotion consists of women who are dead or do not really exist, not with friends or family. She has no love relationship. Marlene is very much alone because of her life choices. While her daughter Angie has already made two life choices – dropping out of school at the age of sixteen with no qualifications, and running away to London to live with her aunt/mother – the consequences of these actions in her life are unclear.

Success and Failure

Success is an important part of Marlene's life in *Top Girls,* defining who she is and whose company she enjoys. The dinner party is meant to celebrate her promotion to managing director as well as the successes of her guests. Joan became the pope.

Isabella traveled the world. Gret fought the devils in hell. Griselda survived her husband's extraordinary tests of loyalty. Marlene sees these women as successful, though they are not in her real, everyday life. Marlene's personal life is a failure because of her success in business. She has no real friends in the play, and she has not seen her sister or biological daughter in seven years. At the dinner party, she moans at one point, "Oh God, why are we all so miserable?"

Yet, Marlene believes that Joyce is mostly a failure because she did not grow beyond her neighborhood; instead, she got married and raised a child. Joyce cleans houses for a living, and she is not impressed by Marlene's life. Joyce does not really see her world in the same terms of success or failure. She does what is necessary to survive and to rear Angie. However, both sisters agree that Angie has no chance of being a success in life. Angie has no education, no ambition, and is regarded as dumb. The best she might do is menial work and marry. While this describes Joyce's life, both Joyce and Marlene perceive that Angie might not be able to take care of herself. This would be the ultimate failure in their eyes. They agree that one should support oneself.

Class Conflict

Marlene and Joyce's differing definitions of success stem in part from a class conflict. Marlene has moved beyond her working-class roots to a middle-class life by education and persistence. She holds a management position in a demanding field, an employment agency. She even lived and worked in the United States for several years. Marlene supports the political agenda of Great Britain's female prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, even though she is perceived as anti-working class.

Joyce remains firmly working class, leading a life only slightly better than her parents. She works as a cleaning lady to support Angie. Unlike Joyce and Marlene's mother, who stayed with her alcoholic husband and had nothing, Joyce told her husband to leave when she could no longer take his controlling nature and numerous affairs. Joyce regards Thatcher as evil, comparing her to Adolf Hitler, for her attitudes towards working-class people. Joyce believes that Marlene thinks she is too good for her. Marlene says she does not like working-class people, but she does not really include her sister as one of them. The pair never come to an understanding on class.

Sex Roles and Sexism

Throughout the text of *Top Girls* is an implicit discussion on what society expects women to be. Each of the guests at the dinner party defines womanhood in a particular era, either by what they are or by what they are not. Isabella, for example, could not live up to the standards of femininity defined by her sister, Hennie. Yet Isabella was a traveler who saw more of the world than most men. Marlene also breaks out of the traditional roles for women, by virtue of her career.

While Marlene has benefited economically from her career, her disregard for sex roles has its problems. She is not married, and it does not seem like she is in a long-term relationship. Joyce does not really like her. Mrs. Kidd, the wife of the man who was passed over for the promotion that Marlene got, begs her to not take it. Mrs. Kidd believes that the upset Howard should not have to work for a woman. Further, Mrs. Kidd hopes that Marlene will give up the promotion because Howard has to support his family. Mrs. Kidd calls Marlene "unnatural" for her uncompromising stand on the promotion and her attachment to her job. Marlene does not give in, but such sexism does not make her life and choices any easier.

II. Style and Other Aspects

Setting

Top Girls is a feminist drama/fantasy set in contemporary times. The action is confined to two places in England, London and Suffolk. The realistic action takes place in two settings. One is the Top Girls employment agency, where Marlene works. There, potential clients are interviewed, and Angie shows up, hoping to stay with Marlene. The other is Joyce's home and backyard, where Marlene visits and Angie and Kit scheme. The fantasy dinner party that opens *Top Girls* also takes place in London. (In many productions, the restaurant is called La Prima Donna.) Though the dinner is clearly a fantasy because all the guests are dead or fictional, the setting is very real.

Fantasy versus Reality

In act 1, Marlene hosts a dinner party with guests both long dead (Pope Joan, Lady Nijo, and Isabella Bird) and fictional (Dull Gret and Patient Griselda). While Marlene listens to and guides the conversation – injecting only bits about herself – these five women share their stories. The party is ostensibly to celebrate Marlene's

promotion at work, but she intends it to be a celebration of all their successes. Though these women have each achieved something they are proud of, success has come at a large price in their lives. The dinner party itself shows the tensions between fantasy and reality because the guests are not "real" to the rest of the characters in *Top Girls,* only to Marlene. Yet the ideas and problems brought up by the fantasy women are very real. These issues echo in the plot and dialogue of the rest of the text, adding another dimension to the tension between fantasy and reality.

Time

Top Girls is not a linear play, but one in which time is used in an unusual fashion. The last scene of the play, is the only part that takes place at a specific time in the story, about a year earlier than the other events. This flashback ties up some of the loose ends created by the story. The rest of the scenes, even the action within act 2, scene 1, do not have to take place in the order presented, though all are set in the present. The events are linked thematically, but not by a specific sequence of time. In addition, the idea of time is toyed with at the dinner party in act 1. None of the guests can really exist at the same time, yet they share many of the same concerns.

Multiple Casting

Often when *Top Girls* is performed – including its premieres in England and the United States – several parts are played by the same actresses. Only the actress who plays Marlene, the central character in the play, has only one role. Thus guests at the dinner party are played by actresses who also play contemporary characters. Such casting decisions create visual links between seemingly disparate women. In the original production, for example, the same actress played Dull Gret and Angie, implying that these characters might have something in common. Similarly, another actress took on the roles of Pope Joan and Louise, drawing another parallel. This casting technique further emphasizes how alike the concerns of the historical characters and contemporary characters really are.

3.7 Summary

Critics praise *Top Girls* for a number of reasons. Churchill explores the price of success paid for by the central character, Marlene, while using unusual techniques including a nonlinear construction, an overlapping dialogue, and a mix of fantasy and reality. The last occurs at a dinner party celebrating Marlene's promotion, which is

attended by five women from different times in history, literature, and art. The dinner party is the first scene of the play and, to many critics, the highlight of *Top Girls*. Churchill brings up many tough questions over the course of the play, including what success is and if women's progress in the workplace has been a good or bad thing. While many critics compliment the play on its handling of such big ideas in such a singular fashion, some thought *Top Girls* was disjointed and its message muddled. As John Russell Taylor of *Plays & Players* wrote, "Like most of Churchill's work, it is about nothing simple and easily capsulated."

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* explores themes of feminism, class, ambition, and sacrifice through its innovative structure and layered characters. The play critiques the notion of "having it all" by portraying the personal and societal costs of success. Through its shifts in time, space, and tone, *Top Girls* offers a profound commentary on the complexities of women's lives, making it a landmark work in modern feminist theatre.

In this unit, you have read/ studied: the plot and characters in Caryl Churchill's play, *Top Girls*, and also various themes, style and other aspects presented in this play. All these points, no doubt, would be helpful to you to understand the play *Top Girls*. They will enhance your understanding of the play. **For better understanding of this play, it is essential to read the original text**.

3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress:

3.2.2 Answers to Check Your Progress

1. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*
2. Martin Esslin
3. Everyday domestic life
4. Sarah Kane's *Crave* (1998), *Blasted* (1995)
5. *Waiting for Godot*
6. *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney
7. To challenge patriarchal ideologies and amplify women's voices.

3.3.1 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. National Student Drama Festival
2. *Objections to Sex and Violence*

3. the Victorian era
4. Susan Smith Blackburn Prize

3.4.1 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. A dinner party hosted by Marlene.
2. Managing Director of the Top Girls Employment Agency
3. Angie is Marlene's biological daughter
4. "Frightening."
5. Their ideological differences regarding feminism, class, and family responsibilities.

3.5.1 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. Dull Gret.
2. Lady Nijo
3. Employment Agency Managing Director
4. Patient Griselda
5. Joyce

3.9 Exercises:

A) Answer the following:

1. Discuss the feminist themes in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*. How does the play critique the notion of "having it all" for women?
2. Compare and contrast Marlene and Joyce as representations of two distinct feminist ideologies.
3. Evaluate the significance of the title *Top Girls*. What does the term imply about success, power, and the position of women in a patriarchal society?
4. Explore the portrayal of motherhood in *Top Girls*.
5. How does Churchill address the intersection of class and gender in *Top Girls*?

B) **Write short notes on**:

1. The character of Marlene.
2. The character of Joyce in *Top Girls*.
3. The theme of the 'Choices and Consequences' in *Top Girls*.
4. The theme of 'Class Conflict' in *Top Girls*.
5. The character of Pope Joan in *Top Girls*.

6. Handling of 'Time' in *Top Girls*.

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Unit-4
Modern and Post-modern Poetry (Selected Poems)

Objectives:

By reading this unit …

1. Students will comprehend contemporary works of modern and postmodern English poets.
2. Students will be able to understand and to interpret the various trends in literature as well as the in the socio-political context.

Introduction:

Students, in this unit you have to study twelve separate poems which have been written by seven poets who belong to the Modern and Post-modern period in English literature. These are distinct periods in the history of British literature that differ in their style, themes, and techniques:

Modernism lasted from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. It peaked in the 1960s. Modernist poetry broke away from the Victorian traditions and explored real-life issues of the industrial age. Modernist poetry was based on idealism and reason, and aimed to find meaning in a chaotic world. Modernist poets believed in progress, rationality, and the possibility of achieving universal truths. They experimented with form, technique, and processes, and aimed for purity, simplicity, and clarity in their work.

Post-modernismfollowed Modernism in the 1960s and 1970s. Post-modernist poetry rejected the rigidity of modernism, and took a more sceptical approach to the world. Post-modernist poets rejected grand narratives and the idea of a single, objective truth. They looked at the unpredictable world around them and decided that there was no meaning. Post-modernist poets often critiqued modernism by denying the self-evident truths of modern poetry, such as the idea that a poem must be original, perfect, coherent, and autonomous.

4.1 T.S. Eliot: 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'

4.1.1 Introduction:

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 -1965) was the most influential poet -critic of 20th century. He is regarded as the most important modernist poets. Eliot was educated at Harvard and later at the Sorbonne (Paris) and Merton College, Oxford. From 1911-1914, he studied metaphysics, logic and Indian philosophy at Harvard.

Eliot's first volume of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations* was published in 1917. It consists of eleven verse poems and one prose poem. In 1922, Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* was published. The poem reveals Eliot as a master of poetic technique. Taking the French symbolists, the English metaphysical poets and Dante as his models, Eliot gave a new turn to poetry. His *Ariel Poems* and *Ash Wednesday* deal with the struggles of one striving to attain religious discipline and religious faith. *Four Quartets* is also a remarkable work by Eliot.

Eliot's experiments in dramatic verse were of great value. Eliot's plays mark an important revival of the verse drama. His plays include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939*), The Cocktail Party* (1950*), The Confidential Clerk* (1950*)* and *The Elder Statesman* (1953)*.*

Eliot founded and edited the influential journal 'The Criterion' from 1922 to 1939. As a poet and critic, Eliot channelled creative and critical thinking in new directions - to the Modernist Movement. He established a firm base for 'Textual Criticism'. The earliest volume of Eliot's critical essays, entitled *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* was published in 1920. *Selected Essays, Homage to John Dryden, Essays on Ancient and Modern, Elizabethan Essay, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* are some of the significant critical works of Eliot. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and the British Order of Merit in 1948.

4.1.2 Summary:

'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' was published in 1917. It is a dramatic monologue. It presents the thoughts, fears and resolutions of a typical modern man. It reveals his inability to love and sing in a brash urban society. The title of the poem suggests that it is a love song of Prufrock which is a sad song of failure. The name Prufrock in the title is derived from a firm of furniture dealers in St. Louis in the

early 20 th century. It appears to be an absurd name which is contrasted against the conventional notion of a romantic love song.

The poem has an epigraph which is taken from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. These words are spoken by Guido da Montefeltro. They create an impression of hell from which there is no possibility of escape. The epigraph is very apt to the theme of the poem.

The protagonist, one J. Alfred Prufrock, is leaving for an evening tea party on an October evening. There at the party he expects to meet the woman who he thinks is in love with him. The most insurmountable question, the 'overwhelming' question for Prufrock is how to gather the courage to propose to her formally. He makes the confession to him-self, '...in short, I was afraid.' He is timid. He wants a moral support from somebody. Therefore, perhaps, the monologue begins with the appeal, "Let us go then, you and I..." there is no way to know who this "you" is; maybe it is the reader, may be the protagonist's friend, his second self itself. Thus, between his action and his intention there falls a deep shadow. He cannot decide fast and act firmly, like Lord Hamlet. However, Hamlet was not timid. He had moral doubts and his character had noble but tragic heights.

Therefore, Prufrock procrastinated. He is not John the Baptist who was beheaded and whose head was brought on a platter to Salome. He is not Lazarus either, who was raised from the dead by Jesus. These divine touches, lofty characters are not in the personality of Prufrock. At the most he would realistically like to compare himself with Polonius who is given to using long-winded phrases and has turned himself into an undignified fool. The "fool" in the poem may also be Yorick, the court jester, in Hamlet.

Prufrock is middle aged, hence past the prime of youth and still would like to be particular about hairstyle and outfit. But he is really confused. He asks: "Shall I part my hair in the middle?" this was a fashionable style in those days. He also thinks of wearing rolled-bottom trousers, which was also in vogue then. All the diversions in the monologue are the expressions of his undecided, uncertain, timid mind. The last diversion is in the world of imagination, the world of the mermaids. But there, too, he has no success. The music of the mermaids is impossible to be heard. Perhaps there is no such music at all. The reality is dominated by the "human voices" in the last line of the poem in which he is getting "drowned".

The poem poses several questions; one of them is: Is Prufrock a representative of many of us who only think, dream, desire, aspire and do nothing, get nothing achieve nothing? Is the poem an expression of the modern man's angst about the choices in his life?

The poem is considered to be an authentic expression of modernity in poetry, in literature. The heap of broken images, the colloquial idiom, the ungainly person with a funny name for its protagonist, the city sensibility, the humdrum quality of the experience and the situation and similar other elements contribute to the modernity of the poem. One can identify several other ones also.

The poet has used animation technique with the London fog as a kitten as an interesting example of concrete imagery. The opening of the poem where the evening is described "as a patient etherized upon a table" or "the butt-ends of my days and ways" is very interesting.

The poem is really inexhaustible in many senses. Its highly allusive style adds to its obscurity. The title is ironic because there is neither vibrant love nor is it a song!

The famous critic, F. R. Leavis said, "The poem represents a complete break with 19th century tradition and a new start."

The title is strangely ironical. The love song has romantic echoes but Prufrock suggests absurd name. The poem is a dramatic monologue. The 'you' and the 'I' are the objective and subjective selves of Prufrock. The poem depicts his psychological turmoil, his confused mind. Eliot gave the form a modern touch. The dilemma of Prufrock becomes the dilemma of the modern man. The pre-maturely old Prufrock is culture- conscious and fashionable but tired and disillusioned. He is troubled by his own confused desires.

The poem, 'The Love Song....' is a mock -love poem. It makes fun of the conventions of the romantic love. Prufrock is a hero without having heroic qualities. In fact, he is an anti-hero. His inability to love and sing in a brash urban society is reflected throughout the poem. And yet he shows his mock-heroic behaviour through wearing "collar mounting firmly to the chin", "neck-tie rich and modest". However, he is incapable of love, physically and spiritually. He is aware of his ordinariness. He is bald-headed and wears the trousers with rolled bottoms. Prufrock is opposed to Michelangelo, St. John, Lazarus and Hamlet. He is conscious about his inability,

weakness, failures, inferiority and timidity. For him, love is a violent tempest in the self that ends in a state of deprivation.

Escape from reality is also the idea reflected in the poem. It opens with the reference that Prufrock is going towards the room where the women are talking about the art of Michelangelo. He reaches there in imagination and comes away without proposing the woman he loves. His journey is not actually taking place. It is being enacted in his imagination. At the end, he escapes into fantasy. He prefers to live into a world of unreal love with mermaids- the 'other worldly creatures'. There is symbolic 'drowning' with sea-girls. It suggests his surrender to the 'other worldly forces'

The reference of 'Hamlet' is contrasted with Prufrock. Prufrock is an anti-heroic figure. The image of 'Fool' shows wisdom in Hamlet's madness. Prufrock is 'politic',' cautious' and 'meticulous', but suffers from indecision. He plucks up the courage but suddenly arrested by the thought of 'old age'. The 'bottoms of my trousers rolled' indicates his physical decadence.

Finally, Prufrock escapes into a world of unreal love with mermaids. Prufrock has realization of the spiritual. But the spiritual can enter into only temporarily, 'Till human voices wake us and we drown'. The image of 'mermaids' and Prufrock's symbolic 'drawing' with the 'sea-girls' suggest his thirst for the 'other-world'. The image of sea-creatures symbolises total freedom and vitality. Like Prufrock, modern man lives in the world divested of mythical connection between the seen and the unseen.

4.1.3 Terms to Remember:

etherised: benumbed with anaesthesia

muzzle: mouth and nose of an animal

visions and revisions: self-cancelling doubts, uncertainties

mermaids: mythical creatures in the sea, half woman, half fish

half-deserted: no people were to be seen

restless nights: nights which make him restless

tedious: tiresome, wearying

insidious: deceptive, treacherous

Michelangelo: the renowned Italian Painter and sculptor (1475-1584)

the yellow.... a sleep - vivid image of fog seen as a cat.

vision: reviewing, correcting carefully.

bald -spot: having a few hairs on the head

my morning coat...: These images show Prufrock's mock-heroic assertiveness.

Reference to St. John, the Baptist whose head was offered on a platter by Herod to Salome, the dancer. (Oscar Wilde's play, "Salome")

4.1.4 Check your progress:

Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What do you think of the title of the poem? Is it a love song or a mock love poem?
2. Who are 'you' and 'I' mentioned in the very opening line of the poem?
3. Does Prufrock 'express' his love or does it remain 'unexpressed'?
4. Is this a 'romantic' poem or 'anti-romantic?
5. What are the 'overwhelming questions' for Profrock?
6. Comment on the fog-cat image.
7. What do the images of ‘descending stair', 'bad spot on the head', 'hair growing thin' etc. suggest?
8. Explain the reference of 'the eyes' and 'the arms'.
9. Where does Prufrock wish to go at the end of the poem?

4.1.5 Exercises:

1. Answer the following questions in 250 words:

1. In what sense is J. Alfred Prufrock 'a love song'?
2. What is the major theme of ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’?

4.1.6 Key to check your progress:

1. It is a mock - love poem.
2. ‘I’ is the speaker, Prufrock or his lower self, and 'you' may be the aspect of his own personality, his higher self.

3. Prufrock's love remains unexpressed.
4. This is an anti-romantic poem, as it makes fun of the romantic love.
5. Overwhelming questions are the question of love like 'Do I dare?' or 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe'? etc.
6. The 'fog' image refers to the blurred consciousness of Prufrock and the 'cat' image refers to his inertia i.e. his inactivity or escape.
7. These images symbolizes his old age, weakness and debility.
8. 'The eyes' and 'the arms' refer to the beauty and tenderness of woman in parties
9. Prufrock wishes to go to meet the mermaids in the sea.

4.2 Philip Larkin: "High Windows", "An Arundel Tomb"

4.2.1 Introduction:

Philip Arthur Larkin (9 August 1922 – 2 December 1985) was an English poet, novelist, and librarian. His first book of poetry, *The North Ship* was published in 1945, followed by two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947). He came to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second collection of poems, *The Less Deceived* followed by *The Whitesun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). He contributed to The Daily Telegraph as its jazz critic from 1961 to 1971, with his articles gathered in All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961–71 (1985), and edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century Verse* (1973). His many honours include the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was offered, but declined, the position of Poet Laureate in 1984.

4.2.1.1 "High Windows"

"High Windows" was written in 1967 but published in the collection of the same name in 1974. *High Windows* was Larkin's fourth and final book of poetry. The poem demonstrates the work of a poet at the height of literary powers. "High Windows" exemplifies Larkin's clarity, his sardonic and pessimistic tone and his use of traditional verse forms. The poem responds to the changing cultural views toward sex in the revolutionary 1960^{s}, using these events to make broader reflections on the nature of societal change.

The narrative of this poem juxtaposes two different worlds. The poet looks at the contemporary world of late-1960^{s} Great Britain and notices the sexual freedoms and rights that people fought to obtain in the previous decades. The pill became widely available in Great Britain for the first time in 1961. The sight of the two young lovers pleases the poet although there is a hint of jealousy and wistfulness to his words. Youngsters are "taking pills or wearing a diaphragm" that will allow them to indulge in sex without the resulting responsibility of parenthood. This paradise was always envisaged by the now middle-aged people of Larkin's generation but they are too old to enjoy it as much as the younger generation. This grumbling, slightly sour attitude is reflected in the third line of the second stanza. Larkin uses heavy, triple-syllable words to compare older people to out-of-date farm machinery. There is a rusted heaviness to the older generation that is swept aside by the sliding, cheering youngsters.

Larkin moves away from this sense of resentment and wonders whether cross-generational envy is a modern phenomenon. He speculates that a middle-aged person in the early 20th century might have looked at Larkin and those of his generation and envied the lack of religion in their lives. The poem uses italicized text to differentiate between Larkin's views and those he projects onto an imaginary older person who might have coveted an irreligious existence. This imagined point of view brings Larkin to the image of the high windows. He stares through to the empty sky beyond. The image is transcendent and suggestive of religious ideas of heaven and God but the sky is empty.

The fight to free society from the heaviness of religion is an abstract, philosophical battle. The fight for greater sexual freedoms is material and substantive. The youngsters can enjoy the results of their newfound freedoms in the moment but those of Larkin's generation will not find out whether they were right to move away from religion until after they are dead. However, by that time it will be too late. The final image of Larkin's poem focuses on the endless nothing. This vast emptiness contrasts with the frivolous, sexualized youth of the opening lines of the poem. The contrasts illustrate the differences between the generations and the battles they have fought but do not make a judgment as to which is more important. That question is left to the reader.

The main themes of this poem are generational changes and sexual freedom. The poet suggests that what one person might see as freedom is not the same as what

that person is experiencing. The speaker looks at and judges youthful relationships while comparing his interpretation of them to his experiences. But, he's also aware that the older generations may have seen his freedoms as increasingly liberal. The poem also reflects the social and cultural changes of its time. Written in the 1970s, it captures the disillusionment and scepticism that prevailed in the post-war era. It also anticipates the rise of secularism and the decline of traditional religious beliefs

4.2.1.2 Terms to Remember:

pills or wearing a diaphragm: contraceptive devices that came in market in 1960^{s}

combine harvester: out-of-date farm machinery

high windows: transcendent and suggestive of religious ideas of heaven and God

4.2.1.3 Check your progress:

Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. In which anthology was this poem published?
2. What are the people from young generation doing?
3. To whom are the people from older generation compared with?
4. What does the speaker stare out of the high windows?
5. What are the main themes of the poem?

4.2.1.4 Exercises:

A) Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. How does the poem underline the generation gaps.
2. Write in detail about the major themes in this poem.

4.2.1.5 Key to check your progress:

1. This poem was published in *High Windows.* (1974)
2. The people from young generation indulge in sexual activities.
3. The people from young generation are compared with a combine harvester.
4. The speaker stares at the deep blue sky out of the high windows.
5. The main themes of this poem are generational changes and sexual freedom.

4.2.2 “An Arundel Tomb”

4.2.2.1 Summary:

"An Arundel Tomb" was written in 1956 by the British poet Philip Larkin. It was included as the final poem in his 1964 collection *The Whitsun Weddings*, and is also one of his best-known works. In the poem, the speaker is looking at stone effigies of a medieval earl and countess. Surprised to see that they are depicted holding hands, the speaker sets off a complex meditation about the nature of time, mortality, and love. The tomb of the title refers to a real monument found in the Chichester Cathedral, which Larkin visited with his longtime lover Monica Jones before writing the poem. The poem is also an example of ekphrasis—writing that describes a work of art.

The effigies of the earl and countess lie next to each other, their stone faces faded with time. Their medieval clothes have been rendered in stone as well: the man wears armour, while the woman is depicted as dressed in stiff cloth. The two small stone dogs at the couple's feet make the scene feel a little less serious. The tomb is plain-looking, which makes sense given that it was sculpted before the 1600s before the Baroque period of art and architecture.

There really isn't much to note about the tomb until you see that the earl is holding his empty left-hand glove in his right hand. And then you see, in a striking yet lovely moment of surprise, that the earl's free hand is holding that of his wife. The earl and countess would never have imagined lying like that for such a long time. Including a detail like hand-holding in the effigy was probably just something to impress the couple's friends, something the tomb's sculptor added without too much thought, while fulfilling the broader brief to help the earl and countess's names live on (these names are inscribed in Latin on the tomb).The couple could never have guessed how soon after being sculpted—that is, set to lie in one place, going nowhere except forward through time—the air would start to subtly damage the tomb, and how soon people would stop visiting the effigies. Indeed, it would not be long before visitors would only glance at the effigies instead of actually taking the time to thoughtfully read the inscription on the tomb. Even so, the couple remained stiffened in stone for a very, very long time. Snow fell through the years and, each summer, light shone through the windows. Many birds sang sweetly from the graveyard surrounding the tomb. And over the centuries, an endless stream of

visitors walked past the tomb, as society and the people in it changed beyond recognition.

These people eroded the earl and countess's identity like waves on a shoreline. The earl and countess are powerless now, in an age so far removed from the time of knights and armour in which they actually lived. Smoke coils above their tomb, which is the couple's tiny piece of history. All that's left of the earl and countess is an idea about life. Time has changed the earl and countess, transforming them into something untrue—or not quite true. The sense of loyalty suggested by their stone effigies, an idea they never really intended in the first place, has become their final symbol for the world, and it nearly proves something that almost feels instinctual to people: that love continues even after we die.

4.2.2.2 Terms to Remember:

earl: British man of a high social position

count; the wife of a count or an earl

effigy: a statue of a person or a god

blurred: not clear

supine stationary voyage: the couple lying unmoving in the tomb

blazon: a formal description of a coat of arms

tenantry: feudal system

4.2.2.3 Check your progress:

Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What does the poem describe?
2. Where is the tomb actually situated referred in this poem?
3. Which dress does the earl and the countess wear?
4. What is there at the couple’s feet?
5. What is the most striking feature of the stone image?
6. In which language are the names of the couple inscribed on the statue?

4.2.2.4 Exercises:

A) Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. How does the poem present the themes like death, eternity and love in this poem?
2. What does the poet want to suggest through this poem?

4.2.2.5 Key to check your progress:

1. The poem describes stone effigies of a medieval earl and his countess.
2. The tomb referred in this poem is actually situated at the Chichester Cathedral.
3. The earl wears an armour, while the countess is dressed in stiff cloth.
4. There are two small stone dogs at the couple's feet.
5. The most striking feature of the stone image is that the earl is holding hand of his wife.
6. The couple's names are inscribed in Latin on the statue.

4.3 W.H. Auden: "As I Walked out One Evening"

4.3.1 Introduction:

Wysten Hugh Auden, one of the most versatile and prolific poets of 20th century England, was born in York on 21st February, 1907. While at the school he published his early work which began to make a stir among the reading public of the Thirties. They include *Paid on Both Sides and Poems* (1930), *The Orators* (1932), *The Dance of Death* (1933), *Another Time* (1940), *For the Time Being* (1944), *The Age of Anxiety* (1947) *The Sield ofAchilles* (1956), *Homage to Clio (*1960). In 1935 he collaborated with Isherwood on the play *The Dog Beneath the Skin* for the Group Theatre's first season in London.

Auden has been awarded numerous prizes and honours-Kind's Gold Medal, Guggenheim Fellowships, Pulitzer Prize, Bollingen Prize, National Book Award, Feltrinelli Prize and was elected to the American Academy, to a fellowship at Christ Church, and to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford University. Auden continued to write till the end of his days in 1973.

4.3.2 Summary:

"As I Walked Out One Evening" is a poem from the mid-1930s, Auden's early stage. It is a literary ballad with ABCB quatrains and other elements of the lyric poem. There are three speakers in the poem: the narrator, the singing lover, and all of the clocks in the city speaking as one.

The poem begins with the narrator walking out one evening along Bristol Street, likely in Birmingham, England, where Auden grew up. There are crowds on the street, but the narrator's attention is caught by a lover who is singing near the bridge. The lover begins his discourse on love. The main theme of his song is that since "Love has no ending" and will persist on absurd time scales, he will love his lover forever. Reality is not going to interfere.

"But," says every clock in the city, "You cannot conquer time." With brutal honesty, the clocks depict sickness and fatigue and similar realities of life and mortality. Death will encroach on the lovers' bliss. In beautiful metaphors and other imagery, the poem brilliantly depicts the physical and emotional erosion, this growing darkness: "Into many a green valley / Drifts the appalling snow; / Time breaks the threaded dances / And the diver's brilliant bow" is just one of many such stanzas. It would be foolish to assume love could be more powerful than Time (which Auden personifies by capitalizing the word). Nevertheless, the clocks remind the lover, "Life remains a blessing" even though we cannot overcome mortality. The fleeting loves of life still matter, tragic though life is.

Despite human imperfections, despite mortality, loving one another is what Time and the clocks tell us we will do. Finally, after the clocks are done telling the lover about Time, the speaker notices that the lovers are gone. Did they heed the advice or not? Either way, it seems that the lovers will share the night together, though they might appreciate the time more if they recognize it is limited. The poem ends by noting that "the deep river ran on," suggesting a broader timelessness or a broader history in which the lovers are just one small part. At the same time, we have learned that even the river will one day be no more. After the clocks become quiet, it is late, and the lovers are gone. The deep river runs on

4.3.3 Terms to Remember:

Bristol Street: a commercial road in Birmingham

Salmon: a boy's given name which means peace

squawking: making a loud unpleasant noise

geese: a large white bird like a duck

whirr and chime: the voice made by the clocks and the singing of lover

burrows: a hole made in ground by an animal to live

appalling: very bad, shocking

4.3.4 Check your progress:

Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What is the poem about?
2. What is rhyme scheme of the poem?
3. What does the first stanza tell us?
4. What happens at the end?
5. What does the river symbolize for?

4.3.5 Exercises:

1. Write in detail about the central theme of this poem.
2. Explain the imagery used in this poem.

4.3.6 Key to check your progress:

1. The poem is about relationship between love, time and mortality.
2. A traditional ballad form with AABB rhyme scheme.
3. Croud on the street compared to fields of wheat.
4. Speaker till wandering alone in darkness.
5. The river symbolizes life which is always flowing and never stops.

4.4 Ted Hughes: "Perfect Light", "Hawk Roosting"

4.4.1 Introduction:

Ted Hughes was born in 1930 at Mytholmroyd, a small town on the Yorkshire slopes of the Pennines near Haworth. This semi-industrialised area influenced

Hughes for the more violent and elemental human impulses. Hughes had started writing poems when he was fifteen. His first volume of poems *The Hawk in the Rain* had been made a Poetry Book Society Choice and had been much praised by the critics. In 1960, his second book of poems *Lupercal* appeared. A. Alvarez regards this volume as "the best book of poems to appear for a long time". Then came two collections of children's poems, *Meet my Folks!* (1961) and *Earth Owl and other Moon People* (1963), *Wodwo* (1967), *Crow* (1970), *Season Songs* (1974), *Gandete* (1977) and *Cave Birds* (1978) followed. Hughes's critical writings also have appeared, mainly by way of introductions to *Keith Douglas'sSelected Poems* (1964), *Emily Dickinsons's Selected Poems.*

Ted Hughes was aware of the violent forces of nature. As a child, he gained an interest in the natural world and the violence required to survive in harsh environments. His poems emphasise the scheming and savagery of animal life.

Hughes also founded 'Modern Poetry in Translation', a magazine which set the pattern for poetry translation in the 1960s. Hughes is selective in what he chooses to champion. His major critical essays have been self-critical as well. His latest interest has been the invention of a ‘language', fashionably called 'Orghast' or 'talking without words?

4.4.1.1 ‘Perfect Light’

The English poet Ted Hughes and the American author Sylvia Plath married in 1956. Sylvia suffered from manic-depressions, and although Ted had been advised not to marry her, he did it secretly. The situation worsened very soon after the marriage. Sylvia became a suspicious woman without reason to be jealous. She saw in every handsome young woman her rival. They have got two children, Frieda and Nicholas. Sylvia visited a psychiatrist but nothing could help her to overcome her mental sickness. At the end after a lot of problems – Ted fell in love with other women, Sylvia remained angry about the lack of her happiness and success. She tumbled in a deep crisis. After giving many signals by means of her poetry, she committed suicide in 1963. Thirty and five years after Sylvia’s death, Ted created eighty-eight poems in which he looks back on that very period with Sylvia, and which collection he called *Birthday Letters*.

4.4.1.2 Summary

Ted Hughes's *Birthday Letters* (1998) is an anthology that finds a tender, honest, and confessional voice. Hughes is known for his emotional detachment from the situations about which he wrote, an aloofness of voice that reveals little about his speaker's sentiment and even less about his own. His language is often harsh and explicit in describing violence, whether in the natural world of animals or in human society, and his subjects avoid personal experience, particularly any overt reference to his wife, fellow poet Sylvia Plath. But then he published an entire book written in memory of her.

Birthday Letters includes eighty-eight poems composed over a twenty-five- to thirty-year period, and traces the couple's brief but saturated life together, from the first date and marriage to separation and suicide. Some of the poems are thought to have been inspired by specific letters and photographs of Plath that Hughes rediscovered while preparing her papers for sale to Smith College.

"Perfect Light" is one such poem. Based on a 1962 photo of Plath in a field of daffodils holding their two children, "Perfect Light" describes the physical scene and ends with an ominous metaphor suggesting the mother's inescapable fate. With a typical softness and sentimentality, Hughes addresses Plath directly as the "you" in the poem, portraying her in angelic terms and comparing her innocence to that of the children, before concluding that such a blissful moment was doomed to fade into a "perfect light." *Birthday Letters* is the only collection in which this poem appears.

On a sunny day, a mother and her two children are sitting in a garden, surrounded by daffodils. Mother and daughter like daffodils too, laughing and chatting to each other in the sun. It is like a picture with the title *Innocence*. It is a picture, because we read their words are lost in the camera. Also, the knowledge of what is really going on with this family fails to reach this very picture.

As all events end, this temporary moment will be replaced by another. But it is unclear which kind of moment this will be. Will it bring prosperity? Will it bring misery? Like in a no-man’s-land, expectations are neither good nor bad. This next moment, the poet say, has been bowed under something and has never reached the object. A huge blockade of compulsive thoughts prevents it from improving and developing to another moment of happiness.

In this poem the poet remembers his wife at a moment of heartfelt happiness. He admits she is innocent, perfect and pure and, while enlightened by a perfect light, he pities mother and children who are waiting for their next(happy) moments which will never reach them.

4.4.1.3 Terms to Remember:

Innocence: lack of knowledge and experience of the world, especially of bad things

Daffodils: a tall yellow flower that grows in spring in Europe

Teddy bear: a toy for children that looks like a bear

The Holy portrait: a picture presenting infant Jesus with his parents. Symbol of ideal Christian family representing bond of love, affection and care.

Moated fort hill: the hill is not a friendly place in the landscape but a fort hill to defend the inhabitants from intruders or the hill is isolated from its surroundings by a huge ditch

Infantryman: a soldier

No-man's-land: an area at the edge of the battle-field where none of the opponent armies has any control. It is a place where the fighting has temporarily stopped or kept free of hostilities

4.4.1.4 Check Your Progress:

1.Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. Who are the three people mentioned in this poem?
2. Where are the people sitting?
3. How does the baby look like to the mother?
4. How old is the daughter mentioned in this poem?
5. What kind of mood is expressed at the end of the poem?

4.4.1.5 Exercises:

1. Answer the following question in about 250 words each.

1. Describe the picture of a happy family but a tormented and isolated mother in this poem.

4.4.1.6 Keys to Check Your Progress:

1. The three people include a mother, her son and daughter.
2. They are sitting in a garden full of daffodils.
3. The baby looks like a teddy bear to the mother.
4. The daughter mentioned is two years old.
5. At the end the poem expresses gloom or sense of utter loss.

4.4.2 'Hawk Roosting':

4.4.2.1 Summary:

"Hawk Roosting" is a poem by Ted Hughes, one of the 20th century's most prominent poets. In the poem, taken from Hughes's second collection, *Lupercal* a hawk is given the power of speech and thought, allowing the reader to imagine what it's like to inhabit the instincts, attitudes, and behaviours of such a creature. The hawk has an air of authority, looking down on the world from its high vantage point in the trees and feeling like everything belongs to it. The poem is particularly keen to stress the way that violence, in the hawk's world at least, is not some kind of moral wrong—but a part of nature. "Hawk Roosting" is one of a large number of poems in which Hughes explores the animal world.

This poem is a monologue or a soliloquy in which a hawk is expressing his thoughts. The hawk is resting comfortably in his nest on a high tree and is in a state of perfect bliss. He imagines the plight of those birds whom he had killed and eaten, and also of those whom he shall be killing in future. The hawk is very comfortably placed on the high tree, and is happy with the atmosphere around him. The air is light and the rays of the sun fall on him to warm him. From his high seat, he can inspect all around him and even the earth below him.

The hawk proceeds to describe his feet and his feathers. He proudly claims that his feet have been created after taking a lot of pains. It was not easy to give them the required shapes and similarly the creation in his paws. He can fly up to any area of the creation and kill whichever prey he wants to such is his hold on everyone. In this poems the hawk's arrogance is clearly revealed. There is no patience in the hawk and it spends its time in killing whatever it wants. Its pastime is allotting death to whomsoever it pleases.

The pattern of killing which the hawk follows is to attack the prey, pierce its body up to the bones with his sharp beak or his claws and kill it. It needs no excuse or argument for its behaviour. Whatever he does has to be accepted.

Finally, the hawk says that since he was born, he has this killer instinct and it will remain so till the end. The sun is shining behind him and just as the sunshine is eternal, in the same way his single-minded attitude to kill, eat and survive is ever-lasting. Nothing else matters. It has been like this and will remain like that in future. The Hawk claims: 'I hold Creation in my foot' and 'I kill where I please because it is all mine'.

Hughes is a master in the art of 'internalizing' the murderousness of nature. This is evident in ‘Hawk Roosting’. He does this through brilliantly objective means and with great economy. Hughes has the gift of presenting image and thought in a context of hurtling action. There is a strong narrative and dramatic element in his projections, and the pacing is of the varied, shifting kind employed by a skilled narrator impatient of any description or comment that is any way inert. The poem also demonstrates the obsession of the poet with one aspect of nature —the power and the gift of animals to make the kill. 'Man' is, not forgotten: the symbolic application to man is fairly clear. None of your day-dreaming, seeking causes or arguments for your behaviour; nothing of men live not by bread alone', for the hawk or the thrush.

Hughes has put this poem in the first-person singular as though the hawk itself were speaking, exactly for this reason. He doesn't believe that hawks really have thoughts like this. The poem could have begun: 'He sits in the top of the wood, his eyes closed...' but then the effect would have been lost. Then it would be man again, day dreaming about the bird; man asserting, man teaching the bird, and not vice versa. The lesson comes from the bird to man: it took the whole of creation to produce his foot; he 'inspects' the earth; he is the master of all that he surveys; he has no pretence about his behaviour; his flight is -direct through the bones of the living'; he has no time to waste thinking about this and that; for him life means action, living, survival. In short, in Hughes, one gets only a stripped-down version of man. The poem is marked with simplicity.

4.4.2.2 Terms to Remember:

hawk: any bird of the falcon family other than the eagle.

roosting: setting of sleeping on a roost or perch. no illusions or daydreams (as contrasted with man

convenience: usefulness

buoyancy: pressure holding you up as water holds up a swimmer.

revolve: as the hawk circles in the sky, the surface of the earth seems to revolve like a wheel as if the hawk were revolving in himself.

sophistry: deceptive reasoning; patience (apply in contrast, to man)

assert my right: the hawk needs no excuses or arguments for his behaviour (like man)

4.4.2.3 Check Your Progress:

Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. Who is the speaker in this poem?
2. Where is the hawk sitting in this poem?
3. Of whom does the hawk think of?
4. What is the hawk proud of?
5. What is common in sunshine and the killer instinct in hawk.

4.4.2.4 Exercises:

Answer the following questions in about 250 words each.

1. Comment on the physical features of the hawk highlighted in the poem and their significance.
2. How does the poem emphasise the physical prowess of the hawk?

4.4.2.5 Key to check your progress.

1. A hawk is the speaker in this poem.
2. The hawk is sitting in his nest on a tree.
3. The hawk thinks of those birds he had killed and eaten so far.
4. The hawk is proud of his feet and feathers.
5. The sunshine and the killer instinct in hawk are inborn and eternal.

4.5 Seamus Heaney: “The Singer's House", “Digging”

4.5.1 Introduction:

Seamus Heaney was born in Mossbawn in Northern Ireland on April 13, 1939. While in college, Heaney contributed his first poems to his university literary magazines, under a pseudonym. Later, during his first years of teaching at St. Thomas's Secondary School in Ballymurphy, Belfast (1962–1963) and St. Joseph's College (1963–1966), Heaney had a number of his poems published in various periodicals. His poetry attracted the attention of Faber and Faber, a British publisher. Heaney's first major volume of poetry *Death of a Naturalist* was published in 1966, and received overall good reviews. In 1969, two months after his second volume of poetry, *Door into the Dark*, was published. At that time the fighting erupted between the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The increasing strife affected Heaney's writing, and subsequent volumes, such as 1972's *Wintering Out*, began to address the situation. Heaney produced two volumes of poetry while at Glenmore *North* (1975) and *Field Work* (1979), the latter of which contained the poem, "The Singer's House." Since then, Heaney has produced several other volumes of poetry, including 1996's *The Spirit Level* and 2001's *Electric Light*.

Heaney was also involved in the translation of classic stories, including a best-selling translation of the epic poem, *Beowulf* (2000). The translation also won Heaney Britain's prestigious Whitbread Award for poetry as well as book of the year. Heaney has won numerous other awards for his poetry, including Whitbread Awards in 1987 for *The Haw Lantern* and in 1997 for *The Spirit Level*. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995.

4.5.1.1 "The Singer's House"

Seamus Heaney’s poem, "The Singer's House" was first published in his 1979 volume of poetry *Field Work*. It was published in both England and America that year. The volume marked a departure from Heaney's earlier poetry volumes, most of which had addressed the modern conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland - often referred to as the Troubles—in an indirect way.

In "The Singer's House," Heaney uses his poetic abilities to appeal to another artist—his singer friend, David Hammond. The poem was written after Hammond cancelled a recording session, following a terrorist bombing. Heaney wanted to

encourage Hammond that his voice counts, and that it was important for Hammond to inspire his fellow Irish countrymen with his songs. Heaney was hoping to inspire a revival in Irish language and literature, which had been largely replaced over the centuries by the language and culture of British colonizers.

4.5.1.2 Summary:

"The Singer's House" starts out with the reaction of the speaker, Heaney, to the reference of an outside group—the unidentified, "they." This group has spoken of Carrickfergus, a medieval city in County Antrim, on the eastern coast of Northern Ireland. Carrickfergus is known for its rich deposit of rock salt that was mined extensively from the 1850s until the early part of this century. When Heaney was writing the poem in the 1970s, many of the salt mines in Carrickfergus had already been abandoned. However, in one of his explanatory footnotes to the poem in the 1991 reprint of *Field Work*, Heaney makes no mention of this, saying only that: "There are salt-mines at the town of Carrickfergus in Co. Antrim." Instead, the reader must infer from the poem that the salt mines are mainly an item from the past.

Heaney's pleasant memory of the salt miners is abruptly terminated, as he comes back into the present, the 1970s, when he is writing the poem during his self-imposed exile from Northern Ireland. Heaney uses the idea of salt mining as a transition between the past and the present, asking: "What do we say any more / to conjure the salt of our earth?" This sentence works on two levels. Literally, the sentence laments the loss of the salt mines in Carrickfergus. However, the subtext—or hidden meaning—of the sentence offers a lament for the increasing loss of Irish language and culture as a result of England's colonization of Ireland. Up until this point, the use of Irish Gaelic had been preserved mainly by "the salt of our earth." The salt of the earth is a common phrase used to indicate the working classes that help to provide an economic and cultural foundation in a society. As Heaney notes in the next two lines, "So much comes and is gone / that should be crystal and kept." The rate of deterioration of Irish language and culture is rapid. Once again, there is a double meaning on the word, "crystal," which invokes the image of the rock salt once again, but which also implies something valuable—Irish traditions—that should be saved.

In the third stanza, Heaney builds on the theme of change. The first two lines—"and amicable weathers / that bring up the grain of things"—offer a contrast to the

"frosty echo" from the first stanza. Amicable, or friendly, weather usually implies sunny days, which in this case helps to raise grains. However, the words "bring up," an odd choice for talking about the growth of crops, serve a deeper meaning. They invoke an image of bringing up, or raising, a family—the "grain" of society. But this is not a positive connotation, as the next two lines indicate: "their tang of season and store, / are all the packing we'll get." The way these two lines are written, it produces an image of monotony. In British-controlled Northern Ireland, where Irish language and culture have been continuously suppressed, the years go by blandly, the only "tang," or spice, being the passing seasons—as marked by the crops that are continually grown and stored. These things "are all" that Heaney and others who are living in Northern Ireland have for "packing," a word that is in itself very telling. Grain and other crops are usually stored in tightly packed containers such as silos. The word's inclusion in the last line of this stanza gives it a greater meaning. Packing also denotes travel, underscoring the fact that many Irish nationalists, especially Catholics, have left Northern Ireland, like Heaney has done.

At the beginning fourth stanza, Heaney has moved, and more importantly, is resolving to move on. Since the northern city of Carrickfergus is no longer a possible home for many Irish nationalists, Heaney says to himself, "Gweebarra." In the same footnote mentioned above in the 1991 reprint edition of *Field Work*, Heaney notes that "Gweebarra is the name of a river and a bay in Co. Donegal." Once again, Heaney offers little explanation as to why he contrasts "Carrickfergus" with "Gweebarra" in the poem, but his intentions can be inferred by geographical divisions in the northern half of Ireland. County Donegal is one of three counties in the northern portion of Ireland that is not included in the official, British province of Northern Ireland. Just as Heaney is in a self-imposed physical exile in a cottage in the Republic of Ireland, many other Irish nationalists have experienced a similar physical, and cultural, exile. But if he is going to leave his home, Heaney will try to find a way to recreate the Irish culture in his new home.

Heaney notes that when he says "Gweebarra," "its music hits off the place / like water hitting off granite." Gweebarra has a beauty of its own, and in his mind, he once again reconstructs an image, like the "township built of light" from the first stanza. Instead of a salt miner’s pick hitting salt, however, the image is one more suited to Gweebarra Bay, which features a number of granite cliffs. Nevertheless, the "glittering sound" created from the sea spray hitting the cliffs in this new location,

mimics the "chambered and glinting" sound from the first stanza. In the process, Heaney shows that the Irish people can begin to reclaim their lost heritage, by letting memories of Northern Ireland fade, while accepting the lands that they have in the Republic and re-creating their heritage there.

In the fifth stanza, Heaney carries over the "glittering sound" from the last stanza, saying that he can see it "framed in your window." The "your" who Heaney refers to is his friend, David Hammond, a singer. Heaney wrote this poem for Hammond, following an incident one night. The two were setting up to record some songs and poems for a radio show, when they were interrupted by the sound of a number of explosions, followed by sirens—signs of the ongoing sectarian, or politically extreme, violence in Northern Ireland. Hammond felt that his songs were powerless against this type of violence and that it was offensive to the victims, and cancelled the recording session as a result. At this point in the poem, Heaney is drawing Hammond into his image of a healed society that hearkens back to the past. He imagines himself at Hammond's house, looking out the window. The poet describes "knives and forks set on oilcloth," a highly civilized picture that contrasts sharply with the other earthy images of salt, grain, and sea spray. This noticeable difference once again points to the loss of traditional Irish culture for the more "civilized" English culture. However, Heaney quickly draws Hammond, and his readers, outside once again, into nature, where "the seals' heads, suddenly outlined," are "scanning everything."

Heaney now begins to speak in nostalgic terms once more, as he did in the beginning, saying that: "People here used to believe / that drowned souls lived in the seals." Heaney's use of seals references the Celtic legend of the Selchies, grey Atlantic seals who could turn into humans—and vice versa. This legend was particularly popular in Gweebarra and other coastal areas of County Donegal, where people's lives were tied to the sea. However, this myth, like many Irish myths, began to die out in the twentieth century when the educational system in Ireland pressured children to speak in English. At the same time, many of the younger generations had no desire to adhere to old traditions, preferring more modern radio broadcasts. These combined circumstances helped to supplant the traditional storytelling that had been used to pass the Selchie stories from generation to generation.

The legend of the Selchies is further examined by Heaney's next line: "At spring tides they might change shape." Here, Heaney is using his ability as a poet and

storyteller to try to invoke the legend once again. The use of the word "spring" is particularly noticeable, since poets often use spring and springtime as a symbol for a rebirth. In the natural cycle, spring is the season of growth that follows the cold death of winter. In the poem, "the frosty echo" of the salt miners' picks, words that invoke an image of winter, is dead. However, in the rebirth of spring, things have the potential to change. Just as the Selchies have the ability to change shape, Hammond has the ability to take up his traditional songs once again for the cause of renewing Irish language and culture. The final line in the stanza emphasizes this, saying of the seals that "They loved music and swam in for a singer." The drowned souls of the Irish, who have been flooded by the massive assimilation of English Language and culture, can be recovered if an Irish singer—Hammond—will sing his songs to them once again.

This possibility for change is emphasized in the next line, when Heaney says the singer "might stand at the end of summer." The "might" implies that Hammond has the option to take a "stand," by singing his songs once again. Heaney also changes the season from spring in the last sentence to summer in this sentence. This is telling, since summer symbolizes the natural progression of growth that happens after the rebirth of spring. Heaney is saying that if Hammond takes a stand and raises his voice in song once again, Irish culture will one day grow strong again. The next image, Hammond standing "in the mouth of a whitewashed turfshed," invokes the image of a clean, "whitewashed," start that is based on Irish traditions. In America, turf generally refers to grass. However, Heaney's use of the word, "turf," refers to peat—a spongy energy source that is found in the many bogs in Ireland. The harvesting of peat into blocks that can be dried out and burned is an established tradition in Ireland. Heaney uses this earthy and recognizable image to contrast with the British modern convenience of "knives and forks set on oilcloth" in the fifth stanza. The poet continues the transformation of Hammond in his poem, as he places the singer with "his shoulder to the jamb, his song / a rowboat far out in evening." The image of the singer is one of support, helping to shoulder the load of reviving Irish culture. Hammond does this by sending his song out on a journey, a cultural rowboat that will presumably help to spread the influence of traditional Irish culture.

In the last stanza, Heaney sums up his appeal to Hammond by referencing how Hammond used to sing—"When I came here first you were always singing," implying that he does not sing any longer. Heaney says that Hammond's Irish songs,

sung in the harsh sounds of Gaelic, echo the "clip of the pick" from the first stanza. Heaney uses the style of Hammond's singing, "your winnowing climb and attack," as a means for telling him that he needs to fight for Irish language and culture. This will be a difficult "climb," and the use of the word "attack" suggests that it could be dangerous. Irish nationalists who were vocal during the Troubles often got threatened or killed. Heaney asks Hammond to "Raise it again, man," signifying that Hammond should use his "pick," his singing voice, again, in the old style. Heaney's last sentence, "We still believe what we hear," implies that if Hammond will sing his Irish music again, he can help to resurrect Irish beliefs, which are not dead yet. "The singer's house" referred to by the title is ultimately the one that Hammond can help provide for his Irish people, who have been physically and culturally displaced from their traditional homes by the influence of English Language and culture. Through the healing and reviving powers of poetry and song, however, Heaney and Hammond can help to revive the lost Irish traditions, a loss that has been magnified by the strife in Northern Ireland.

4.5.1.3 Check your progress:

1. Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What is Carrickfergus known for?
2. What does the speaker lament for?
3. What is Gweebarra mentioned in this poem?
4. What is the name of the Irish singer mentioned in this poem?
5. Why did David Hammond cancel his recording of songs one day?

4.5.1.4 Exercises:

1. Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. How does the speaker appeal David Hammond to revive the Irish culture and traditions in this poem?
2. Comment on the Irish culture and traditions reflected in this poem.

4.5.1.5 Key to check your progress:

1. Carrickfergus known for its rich deposit of rock salt.
2. The speaker laments for the loss of Irish culture due to English colonization.

3. Gweebarra is the name of a river and a bay in County Donegal.
4. The Irish singer David Hammond is mentioned in this poem.
5. David Hammond cancelled his recording of songs because of a terrorist attack.

4.5.2"Digging"

4.5.2.1Summary:

"Digging" was published in Seamus Heaney's first collection of poetry. The poem begins with the speaker, who looks upon himself and his pen posed upon his paper, as he listens to the noise of his father digging outside the window. The speaker looks down, both away from and at his father, and describes a slip in time. His father remains where he is, but the poem slips twenty years into the past, indicating the length of his father's career as a farmer. The speaker emphasizes the continuity of his father's movement, and the moment shifts out of the present tense and into the past.

The speaker then changes his focus to his father's tools, saying, "The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft/Against the inside knee was levered firmly." These lines, describing how his father's shovel fits against his boot and leg, echo the first lines of the poem, which describe the speaker's fingers around his pen. The speaker then describes the picking of the potatoes using the pronoun "we," indicating that other characters populate this memory; possibly this refers to Heaney's siblings or his family in general. The tone is reverential toward the potatoes and the work.

The poem then breaks back into couplet form: "By God, the old man could handle a spade/Just like his old man." This part of the poem feels less formal than the lines that come before it, more like something a person might say out loud to another. The speaker commits personally his story with an oath ("By God"), emphasizing his personal connection to rural Ireland.

In the next lines of the poem, the speaker describes his grandfather as a strong digger who dug for fuel. He recalls approaching his grandfather with a bottle of milk as a child; his grandfather downed the milk and returned to work with more vigour than ever. This moment clearly still stands out to the speaker as an example of his grandfather's hard work and skill. The language here is precise and mimics the sound of digging in its bobbing rhythm and with phrases like "nicking and slicing" and "going down and down."

The next stanza continues the evocative language and uses alliteration freely. "The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap/Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge/Through living roots awaken in my head," the speaker says, explaining the impact his rural upbringing had on him. He ends the stanza by saying he has no spade to follow men like his father and grandfather.

The final stanza, however, returns to the pen mentioned in the first, replacing the spade with the pen in the speaker's hands. "I'll dig with it," is the final line of the poem; this vow feels directed at the speaker's family, like a promise to follow in its stead, though in his own way.

The final stanza begins by repeating the first stanza exactly: "Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests." But instead of comparing the pen to a gun, this time he simply says, "I'll dig with it." One important part of this image is that he says he will use his own tools, his pen, to dig; his point is not that digging is meaningful when it is like writing, but that writing is meaningful when it is like digging. Both actions are sacred to the speaker.

4.5.2.2Terms to remember:

shovel: a tool used for picking up and moving earth, snow, sand, etc.

To lug: to pull or carry something with great efforts

squelch: to make the sound your feet make when you are walking in deep wet mud

soggy peat: deep layer of swamp vegetation that has decomposed over years

4.5.2.3 Check your progress:

1. Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What does the poet’s father do?
2. What was the profession of the poet’s grandfather?
3. Which memory the poet has of his grandfather?
4. What does the poet vow in the last line of the poem?
5. With what the pen is compared with?

4.5.2.4 Exercises:

1. Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. How does the poem reflect the speaker's feelings about his heritage and how he has spilt away from it?
2. Discuss the theme of the poem in the light of its title.

4.5.2.5 Key to check your progress:

1. The poet's father is seen digging outside the window.
2. The poet's grandfather was a strong digger who dug for fuel.
3. The poet remembers that as a child he had gone to his grandfather with a bottle of milk who drank it and returned to digging.
4. The poet vows to dig with his pen.
5. The pen is compared with a spade.

4.6 Dylan Thomas: "Fern Hill", "Do not go Gentle into That Good Night"

4.6.1 Introduction

Dylan Marlais Thomas was born on 22 Oct., 1914 in Swansea in South Wales. His father D. J. Thomas, was Senior English Master at the Swansea Grammar School. Thomas had inherited poetic ambitions from his father. Dylan Thomas was one of the greatest lyric poets of 20 thcentury. He had a very happy childhood which is reflected in many poems. His poetry reflects the concerns of the period but also have universal values. Dylan had a versatile experience as a news reporter, broadcaster and a popular author. His major poetic publication includes *18 Poems* (1934), *Twenty-five Poems* (1936), *The Map of Love* (1939), *Death and Entrances* (1946).

"Fern Hill"

4.6.1.1 Summary:

"Fern Hill" was published in 1946 in the third volume of Dylan Thomas's verse entitled *Deaths and Entrances*. After undergoing as many as 200 revisions, it had its final draft in 1945. It is one of the best lyrics of Dylan Thomas. The poem is the

celebration of a holiday in childhood spent by the poet with his aunt Ann Jones and uncle at their farm in the countryside in Thomas's native South Wales.

It was a happy holiday that the poet Dylan Thomas spent at Fern Hill in his childhood. He felt at home among the apple trees. He was so happy that the very house appeared to be singing. The grass was pleasing green. The starry night over the valley was no less beautiful than the day. Time was kind to him in that heyday of his life. He was the poet of all. With the pride of a prince, he rode high on the farm wagon between the heavily laden apple trees. He was lord and master of the apple trees. They trailed behind him with daisies and barley as he drove in the wagon. The apples blown off the trees by the wind stream on either side.

He was green and carefree on the farm, well known to all. He sang about the happy yard, as if the farm was his home. The sun looked unusually young, and Time was especially bountiful to nim. Green and golden he was both as a herdsman and a huntsman. The calves danced to his horn. Clear and cold were the barks of the foxes whose huntsman he fancied himself to be. When the holy sabbath came, the pebbles of the stream lured him with their hymns. All day long, he ran about the place merrily. Lovely scenes greeted him everywhere. The hay-stacks were high as the house, The chimneys were sending out pleasing tunes. Delightful was the play in the warm open air. The warmth of the sun was as enjoyable as the cool green grass. The happy routine extended far into the night. The very stars of the sky had a quiet simplicity about them. They were so friendly to the innocent child. As he rode back to sleep in the farm, the owls took charge of the beauties of the place. Far into the night, he lingered among the lovely horses in the stable. Then he could hear the hoots of the owl from the neighbouring skies. Out in the open they were flying with the ricks. Inside the stables, the horses were flashing in the dark.

The child woke up in the morning to greet the world in all its freshness. The farm was like a wanderer white with the dew, come home with his purchase, a cock on his shoulder. This is a beautiful picture of the farm bathed in the dew, with the cock and his clarion call prominent in the yard. Everything looked so bright and fresh in the golden light of the dawn. The sky gathered itself up for the tasks of the day. It looked as if the sun was just born on that day and grew round for the very first time. Adam and Eve must have been thrilled to see the first light of the newly created Sun. No less thrilling was the child's vision of the freshness of the world on that happy morning. It looked as if the horses walked out of the stable for the first time into an

enchanted realm. The child thought it a great honour to be acquainted with the foxes and pheasants there. The house looked especially attractive under the new clouds of the morning. Everything delighted him, for his own heart was overflowing with happiness. Day after day, he continued to be as carefree as ever. He had no other wish than to be racing along through house-high hay.

This poem has been considered as an exciting evocation of, the poet's childhood. One sees in it the Romantic ardour of Blake or Wordsworth. They see childhood as essentially holier than adulthood, its amorality as sanctified innocence. The child's vision is, seen as a reflection of the freshness of the world in the Creation. The poem is full of images of Heaven and Eden, of light and colour, and of gaiety of mood and movement. The note of joy is somewhat muted by the melancholy awareness of the brevity of childhood joys. The child however is happily unaware of its chains. This reflection somewhat shadows the movement of the poem in the last two stanzas. Death and life, according to Dylan Thomas, are closely related and this idea is frequently repeated in his poems. We start to die from the moment we are born, even from the time we are conceived. This continual process of dying links us with everything else in the world: the death of a flower comes under the same edict and force as our own death, because the powers of destruction are united.

As the child is involved in the process of time, so it is involved also in the process of death. This idea occurs in the concluding lines of the poem. The total impression of the poem, however, is one of the bounding energy, happiness and well-being of childhood days. He never knew then that Time was full of changes. He did not know that those happy mornings could not last for ever. Only to children green and golden is Time ever so gracious. But he did not bother about this in those lamb white days. Time would take him up through the years to dark and stuffy regions. The swallow and the moon alike would become dull. The spirit of the grown-up would be clogged with heaviness. There would be no more running and playing and riding home to quiet sleep. Time would no longer be merciful to him. Life and land and alike would be sadly void of childhood glow. A knowledge of from all this the child on that farm was happily spared. He was young and easy thanks to the mercy of Time. He was green and dying, but knew not he was in chains. He was therefore free and merry like the sea.

4.6.1.2 Terms to Remember:

Lilting house: a house that appears to sing because the child is looking at it happily

Dingle: a deep valley, usually with trees

Trail: hang loose or be pulled away

Sabbath: Sunday, a day of rest

Lamb white days: happy and innocent days of childhood, the Lamb of God being a symbol of Christ

4.6.1.3 Check your progress:

Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. Which farm is referred to in this poem?
2. What kind of the child is seen in this poem?
3. What is the poem about?
4. What is the central theme of the poem?
5. Which is the prominent literary device used in this poem?

4.6.1.4 Exercises:

Answer the following questions in 250 words:

1. Explain the experience of the child visiting the Fern Hill.
2. Explain the imagery used in this poem.

4.6.1.5 Key to check your progress:

1. In the country side in South Wales.
2. The child is extremely happy.
3. The poem is about speaker's happy childhood.
4. The theme is passage of time and loss of childhood with rowing age.
5. Alliteration is the prominent literary device used in this poem.

6.2 “Do not go Gentle into that Good Night”

6.2.1 Introduction:

“Do not go Gentle into that Good Night” is a poem by the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. It was initially **published in a literary journal in 1951.** It later appeared in one of Thomas’s own volumes the next year. Though the poem is dedicated to Thomas’s father, it contains a universal message. The poem encourages the dying, the sick and the elderly people to fight bravely against death. The poem also celebrates the vibrancy and energy of human life, even though life is fragile and short.

6.2.1.1 Summary:

The poem opens with a command, addressing an unknown listener, to resist dying peacefully and instead to fight hard against death. In the first stanza, the speaker uses day and night as an extended metaphor for life and death, urging people to resist death courageously rather than simply accepting it. By using this metaphor, he presents life and death as part of the endless natural cycle of time, which began long before our lives and will go on long after them, just as day and night are a part of it. This gives death an impersonal feel: if everyone and everything dies, there's little that's special or notable about one death. This generic conception of death is what Thomas's characters in the poem are fighting against, striving to give their deaths individual significance.

With the similar-sounding words “rave” and “rage,” the poem emphasizes anger and passionate intensity in the face of death. Though he acknowledges that death may be “right”—after all, everyone dies eventually as part of the natural process discussed above. At the beginning of the second stanza, he writes that “wise men” refuse to accept it, because they haven’t yet left enough of an impact on the world. They’ve “forked no lightning,” or failed to create a big burst of light—here a symbol for life—that would give them a legacy.

In the third stanza, the speaker insists that “good men” similarly see their actions as “frail” and long to stand out more, as a wave does in a calm bay. Without any great evil to fight against, these men's virtues are less noteworthy.

The fourth stanza continues the now-familiar pattern of the poem, with the speaker describing “wild men” who "caught and sang the sun in flight,” or in other

words, celebrated the world around them through bold actions and feats, and belatedly realized the brevity of life. By returning to the sky as a source of imagery, Thomas reemphasizes the central day/night metaphor of the poem.

The stanza may also allude to the Greek myth of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun, melting the wings his father had crafted for him and causing him to plummet to the ground and his death. This myth is often understood as a warning against hubris, or excessive pride. With that allusion in mind, the lines indicate that the wild men were too proud to realize that death would eventually befall them too, no matter how grand their adventures.

The speaker continues in the fifth stanza, discussing "grave men" (who are grave in the sense of being serious, but also in the sense of being near death) who see fixedly with piercing sight that they must fight death as well, choosing to go out "like meteors," imagery that again returns to the sky. Thomas's employment of the image of meteors also recalls the impersonal vastness of the cycle of life and death: meteors, too, are so immense, scalding, and fast that it's difficult to comprehend them. Like night and day as well as lightning, they're also transient, appearing to us for only moments in the night sky.

In the final stanza, the speaker reveals that he has been addressing his father, which gives the poem a personal significance it previously lacked. The speaker again underscores the poem's message, urging his father to show any sort of emotion in the face of death. Despite the anguish that this expression of grief and fear would cause him, the speaker longs for his father to cry at his impending death, because it would show that his father still has vitality and dignity. It's hard to see our parents, especially traditionally stoic fathers, cry, but it reminds us of the full range of their humanity and the vulnerability that comes with that humanity.

6.2.1.2 Terms to Remember:

to go gentle into: accept something as it is or without any complaint

close of day: symbolic - death

wise men: men who refuse to accept death thinking that they have not made their mark

wild men: who celebrated the world around them through bold actions and feats

grave men: who see fixedly with piercing sight that they must fight death

6.2.1.3 Check your progress:

1. Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What does the speaker urge the unknown listener?
2. For what purpose the poem uses metaphor of day and night?
3. Why did the wise men refuse to accept death?
4. What did the wild men do according to the poet?
5. To whom is the poem really addressed to?

6.2.1.4 Exercises:

1. Answer the following questions in about 250 words.

1. Explain the major issues dealt in this poem.
2. Write a detail note on imagery used in this poem.

6.2.1.5 Key to check your progress:

1. The speaker urges the listener not to accept death meekly but face it courageously.
2. metaphor to suggest life and death
3. because they haven't yet left enough of an impact on the world
4. according to the poet the wild men celebrated the world around them through bold actions and feats.
5. The poem is addressed to the speaker's father.

4.7 Thom Gunn:"The Hug","The Reassurance"

4.8 4.7.1 Introduction:

Thom Gunn was born on 29 th August 1929 in Kent, England. He died on April 25, 2004 in San Francisco, California, U.S. He was an English poet whose verse is notable for his language and counterculture themes.

Gunn's first volume of verse was *Fighting Terms* (1954). *The Sense of Movement* (1957) won the Somerset Maugham Award. In the late 1950s Gunn's poetry became more experimental. He published *My Sad Captains* in 1961, and *Selected Poems*, which also contains the work of his Cambridge

contemporary Ted Hughes, appeared in 1962. *Positives* (1966) is a group of poems about Londoners, with photographs by the poet's brother Ander Gunn. In the 1970s Gunn began to explore themes of homosexuality and drugs, and notable collections came to include *Moly* (1971), *Jack Straw's Castle* (1976), and *The Man with Night Sweats* (1992), which focuses on the AIDS epidemic. Among his other works are *Selected Poems 1950–1975* (1979), *The Passages of Joy* (1982), and *Boss Cupid* (2000). *The Occasion of Poetry* (1982) and *Shelf Life* (1993) are collections of autobiographical and critical essays. Gunn received numerous awards, including a Guggenheim (1971) and MacArthur (1993) fellowship.

"The Hug"

4.7.1.1 Summary:

The poem "The Hug" by Thom Gunn, a renowned English poet, and writer, is a romantic poetic piece. It was published in 1992 in his collection, *The Man with Night Sweats*. The poem shows a direction in which a mature love can find its progress and unbound happiness. It also highlights the comfort one receives being in a loyal relationship. Although the poem revolves around the speaker's personal life experience, yet it gained immense popularity on account of its universal thematic strand.

The poem 'The Hug' is a simple nostalgic love poem written by Thom Gunn. As the title suggests, the poem is about how a couple had spent their night after a birthday party. The first line of the poem suggests that it was a birthday party, the couple had drunk and one of their friends helps them to a room nearby which the speaker reaches in a single stride which signifies his urge to sleep. In the 5th line, the speaker says that he is comfortable in his bed with the wine dozed on one side, he started dozing. Then he suddenly wakes up to a warm hug from behind in which the full lengths of their bodies were pressed and the poet's heel meets his partner's instep and the poet's shoulder blades against his partner's chest.

The poet clearly explains that it was not sex, but unconditional love that he fails to put into words. The poet says that he can feel his partner's warmth on his body as if they are still twenty-two interlacing each other. The poet says that their grand passion for each other had still not made them a family. After waking up, he had understood that he had forgotten few memories and the only thing which he remembers was 'the stay of your (the partner's) secure firm dry embrace'.

Critics say that the poem was written for his wife, while few say that Thom Gunn was more into homosexuality and this poem would be for his homosexual partner whom he misses the most or who might have died after the AIDS pandemic. The poem brings out the love he had for his partner for just a hug could make his night so special. By the line, "had not yet become familial", the poet means that the society was against the homosexuality and so that he could not live with his partner forever. The poet was also upset with the AIDS pandemic in which he had lost most of his friends and beloved ones which made him reflect those ideas through his poem. The poem is quite sensual but not raw in form. The way the poet had narrated makes the poem a romantic one but not in terms of physical love.

A sense of belongingness to one's own partner is found in the poem. The poet misses his partner and tries to remember things from his young age. The nostalgic feeling puts a smile on the poet's face. The poet feels quite alone without his partner and he feels bad for not being able to become a family because during that time homosexuality was meant to be a crime. He feels lost, aloof with not being able to spend the rest of the life with his partner.

The poem evokes the feeling of love and the portrayal of love in terms of 'the physical and the sensual hug' which adds romantic elements to the poem. The poet indirectly feels sorry for himself for not being able to get his relationship any further by becoming a family because homosexuality was still a taboo during his period and that emotions are captured beautifully in the poem.

4.7.1.2 Terms to Remember:

hug: embrace

stride: to walk with long steps

drowsy: ready to fall asleep

grand passion: of love, commitment etc

4.7.1.3 Check your progress:

1. Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What is the primary focus of the poem?
2. What kind of the poem is this?

3. Which occasion is mentioned in this poem?
4. What does the speaker experienced while in sleep?
5. What did the speaker understand after waking up?

4.7.1.4 Exercises:

Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. What is the theme of the poem?
2. Explain the central image of the poem in detail.

4.7.1.5 Key to check your progress:

1. The emotional bond and comfort between a mature couple.
2. It is a simple nostalgic love poem
3. The occasion is the birthday party of a partner.
4. The speaker experienced a warm hug from behind.
5. The speaker understood that he had forgotten few memories but remembers the warm hug only.

4.7.2 "The Reassurance"

4.7.2.1 Introduction:

Thom Gunn's poem "The Reassurance" is a short poem consisting of three stanzas of four lines each. It is a touching and introspective exploration of grief, memory, and the ways in which the mind seeks comfort after the loss of a loved one. Through the narrative of a dream, Gunn delves into the enduring presence of the deceased and the psychological mechanisms that provide solace.

In the first stanza of the poem, the narrator talks about how about ten days ago, his friend died. In a dream, the narrator saw him and told him he, the one who died, was doing fine. This immediacy situates the reader in the raw, early days of mourning, when the reality of loss is still fresh and acute.

In the next stanza, the narrator mentions how the dead character embraced the narrator as well as "us" and smiled. The dream continues with a scene of warmth and affection: "You hugged us all round then, / And gave your welcoming beam." This act of hugging and the presence of a "welcoming beam" evoke a sense of reunion and

unconditional love. It's a moment of emotional relief, where the deceased's kindness and caring nature shine through, providing a momentary respite from the pain of loss.

In the final stanza, the narrator reflects on the actions of the dead character, saying that it's so "like you to be kind, seeking to reassure". The narrator also mentions that, like how the dead character was expected to be reassuring, similarly, his mind was expected to make the narrator feel secure. In the dream, the deceased appears revitalized: "I'm alright now you said. / And it was you, although / You were fleshed out again." This image of being "fleshed out" suggests a return to a healthier, more vibrant state, contrasting with the memory of the lifeless body. The simple declaration "I'm alright now" is both comforting and profound, offering reassurance from beyond the grave.

"The Reassurance" is a reflection on the intersection of memory, grief, and the subconscious. Through the dream narrative, Gunn captures the deep yearning for connection with the deceased and the ways in which the mind seeks to mitigate the pain of loss. The poem is a testament to the enduring presence of loved ones in our lives, even after death, and the comfort that can be found in the recesses of our own minds.

4.7.2.2 Terms to Remember:

fleshed out: a return to a healthier, more vibrant state

welcoming beam: a sense of reunion and unconditional love

4.7.2.3 Check your progress:

1. Read the poem carefully and answer the following questions.

1. How many days ago the speaker's fried died?
2. Where did the narrator see his dead friend again?
3. What did the dead friend do with the speaker in dream?
4. What assurance did the dead friend give to the speaker.
5. What message does this poem give?

4.7.2.4 Exercises:

1. Answer the following questions in 250 words.

1. Explain the dream narrative used in this poem.
2. How does the poem underline the enduring presence of loved ones in our lives, even after their deaths.

4.7.2.5 Key to check your progress:

1. The speaker's fried died ten days ago.
2. The narrator sees his dead friend in a dream again.
3. The dead friend embraced the narrator as well as "us" and smiled.
4. The dead friend assured, "I'm alright now".
5. The poem talks about the enduring presence of loved ones in our lives, even after their deaths.

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