



# GAUHATI UNIVERSITY Institute of Distance and Open Learning

Semester- I

## MA in English

Paper - IV (ENG-02-I-1046)  
18<sup>th</sup> Century FICTION

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ENG-02-I-1046

**GAUHATI UNIVERSITY**  
**Institute of Distance and Open Learning**

**M.A. First Semester**  
**(under CBCS)**

**ENGLISH**

**Paper: ENG-1046**  
**18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY FICTION**



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# **BLOCK- I**

## Unit 1

### General Introduction to Eighteenth Century Fiction

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#### 1.1 Objectives:

The main objective of this unit is to facilitate the reader an opportunity to have a look at Eighteenth-century English fiction. Here it is expected that the readers will

- *gain* a thorough understanding of the prominent novels
- *acquaint* themselves with the major novelists of Eighteenth-century England
- *learn* about the origin of this novel form.

## **1.2 A Brief Introduction to Novel:**

The term novel derives from the Italian word 'novella' means tale, piece of news, and now applied to a wide variety of writings. It is a long fictional narrative that describes intimate human experiences. To have a complete account of the modern novel, we must go back to the stories of the Middle Ages. The writings of that period were in general of two kinds, adapted to two types of audiences: the nobles and the people. The first class were the romances dealing with knightly adventure, mystical religious experiences, and courtly love. The 'Morte de Arthur' of Sir Thomas Malory is the most comprehensive example of this class. The narrative fiction of the common people on the other hand was more realistic. Most of them were moral tales called 'Exempla'. Besides an idea of the range of medieval fiction can also be gained from Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales' or the stories of Boccaccio in 'Decameron'.

In England, at the end of Sixteenth-century, the novel was in its infancy. During that time only two important works were published. They are Lyly's 'Euphues' (1578-80) and Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romance 'Arcadia' (1590). English fiction during that period was largely derived either from Italy or from Spanish. The Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, author of 'Don Quixote' (1605) is often considered as the first European novelist. Following the path of Cervantes, the English novel blooms primarily in the Eighteenth-century.

In Seventeenth-century there is still no more major advance in writing in the form of the novel. Fiction for English readers was chiefly supplied from France where there had ascended a school of writers who told with much sentiment and imaginative embroidery, the stories of Grand Cyrus and other historical heroes. However, during this period breaking the cultural barriers, one woman writer named Aphra Behn served as a literary role model for later generations of women writers.

**1.3 Major Novelists of Eighteenth Century:** The rise of English novel followed mainly in the Eighteenth century. However, a sealed demarcation line we cannot draw between 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century novels as the tradition of writing novel has not started all of sudden. A large number of novelists wrote beautiful novels during this period. A brief introduction of these novelists are given below:

### **1.3.1 Aphra Behn :**

Born on July 10, 1640, at Canterbury, United Kingdom, Aphra Behn was one of the most popular woman writers of the seventeenth century. Unlike the other women writers of

her time, Aphra Behn did not belong to the elite class and as a result, she had to earn her living by her writings. She spent her early years in the West Indies and is said to have been involved in a slave rebellion. In 1664 she turned back to England and got married. However, her married life was not happy as she was widowed a year later. Meanwhile, she came to the notice of Charles-II, who employed her as a spy in Antwerp. Upon her return to London and a probable brief stay in debtor's prison she took up the profession of writing.

Her first play ‘The Forced Marriage’(1670) saw the start of a successful career as a dramatist. Her most successful play ‘The Rover’ was published in two parts. (1677, 1681) and it deals with the adventures of a small party of English Cavaliers in Madrid and Naples during the reigns of Charles -II. Aphra Behn had written several plays but her trajectory as a writer is not confined to plays alone. As a composer of poetry and novel, she had earned great repute. Her reputation as a novelist rest primarily upon her novel Oroonoko (1688). The novel is about an African prince, Oroonoko, who falls in love with a young woman Imoinda. But painfully Imoinda is sold into slavery to Suriname just after her love is revealed. In the meantime, Oroonoko who is a slave owner himself is one day lured by the captain of an English ship. Later he was taken into Guiana as a slave, where he is united with his beloved. He tries to achieve freedom but is caught and badly tortured. Realizing no hope in life he kills his beloved Imoinda and kills himself. Oroonoko is Aphra Behn’s groundbreaking narrative, a romance that achieved remarkable public success as it tackles some of the most controversial of the emerging political, social, and economic issues of the late 17th century. The novel has wonderfully focussed the injustice and cruelties of the transatlantic slave trade in English colonial settlement.

**SAQ**

Consider Aphra Behn as the first professional woman writer: (50 words)

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### 1.3.2 John Bunyan :

Meanwhile, John Bunyan (1628-88) wrote his famous work 'The Pilgrims Progress (1678). Bunyan was a preacher. However, because of illegal preaching, he was imprisoned. It was during this time in prison Bunyan wrote this famous novel 'The Pilgrims Progress'. This was an allegorical novel that traced the life and journey of Christian from the City of Destruction to Salvation.

### 1.3.3 William Congreve :

In the early part of the Eighteenth-century William Congreve published 'Incognita' or 'Love and Duty Reconciled' (1713). He called it a novel and in his preface gives us his conception of what a novel is. Congreve believes that Romances give more wonder while Novels more delight.

### 1.3.4 Daniel Defoe :

Soon after this in 1719 Daniel Defoe published 'Robinson Crusoe'. Born in London in 1660, Defoe is one of the most popular English novelists of the Seventeenth-century. His most popular novel include Robinson Crusoe (1719), Captain Singleton (1720), Journal of the Plague Year (1722), Captain Jack (1722), Moll Flanders (1722), and Roxana (1724).

The novel 'Robinson Crusoe' is based on the true story of a shipwrecked seaman named Alexander Selkirk. Here, Robinson Crusoe is a young and self-sufficient Englishman after several adventures is cast away on an almost uninhabited island. Crusoe is shocked one day when he discovered the footprints of a man on the beach. The footprint belongs to one of the cannibals living in that region. One of the victims of these cannibals, waiting to be slaughtered, breaks free and runs towards Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe then saved his life and names him Friday. Soon Friday becomes Crusoe's obedient slave. At the end of the novel Crusoe along with Friday is rescued and taken back to England. Robinson Crusoe is often considered a picaresque novel.

#### SAQ

Discuss the condition of working classes as depicted in the novels of Daniel Defoe:

(200 words)

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### **1.3.5 Jonathan Swift :**

Soon after the publication of 'Robinson Crusoe' Jonathan Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels' (1726) has caught the attention of most of the readers of England. Born in 1667 in Dublin, Swift was a prominent author, clergyman, and satirist. Swift's first political pamphlet was titled 'A Discourse on the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome'. This was followed by his satirical works, 'A Tale of a Tub' and 'The Battle of the Books' (1740). His 'Gulliver's Travels' is a social and political satire. Here in this novel, Captain Lemuel Gulliver, the protagonist directly addresses the readers. The whole book is divided into four distinct journeys (i) To Lilliput, (ii) Brobdingnag, (iii) Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbudubdrib, and Japan (iv) To the country of the Houyhnhms. The Lilliputians are small but full of self-importance while Brobdingnagians are larger but they are less threatening. Swift's other satirical work 'A Modest Proposal' was published in 1729. In this work, Swift satirises the English landlords with outrageous humour.

### **1.3.6 Samuel Richardson :**

Though Defoe and Swift wrote novels they lack one major element in their novels and that is a well-knitted plot. The first great success in constructing a story having a single motive: the love of one person for another was Richardson's 'Pamela'. Samuel Richardson was born in a very poor family in 1689 in Derbyshire England. Richardson started his career as a writer through his book 'The Apprentice Made Mecum' (1733). His 'Pamela' was published in 1740. Pamela is an epistolary novel that narrates the story of the 15-year-old servant girl Pamela Andrews who defends her chastity against the attacks of her master. Master -B continually tries to seduce her, to abducts her, to woo her, and finally impressed by Pamela's fidelity he agrees to marry her. The success of 'Pamela' encouraged Richardson to write another beautiful novel, 'Clarissa' (1748) which appeared in eight volumes. His third novel 'Sir Charles Grandison' was published in 1754.

It was something like impatience with Richardson's high moral design of 'Pamela' that led to Henry Fielding to start his career as a novelist. His first writing 'Shamela' (1741)

is a parody while in 'Joseph Andrews', Joseph is portrayed as the brother of Richardson's heroine, Pamela.

Like Pamela, Joseph resists; but unlike her, he is turned out of doors and is left to make his way back to his home to have a happy ending. His next novel 'Jonathan Wild' (1743) was a loose narrative on the life of a London underworld boss named Jonathan. On the other hand, 'Tom Jones' is Fielding's masterpiece. It is also considered as a first great comic novel. The full title of this novel is 'The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling'. 'Tom Jones' narrates the story of Tom from his infancy through his marriage to a beautiful and virtuous lady named Sophia Western. Tom in the course of the novel encounters a series of adventures and at the end, he happily united with Sophia. Fielding's last novel 'Amelia' was published in 1751.

### **1.3.7 Tobias Smollett :**

Tobias Smollett (1721-71) was a Scottish novelist and poet. He was best known for three of his novels: 'Roderick Random' (1748), 'Peregrine Pickle' (1751), and 'Humphry Clinker' (1771). 'Roderick Random' his first notable fiction is a picaresque novel. Much of this novel is autobiographical, constructed on his own experiences as a naval surgeon. It presents an absurd exaggeration of the violence and brutality of life at sea.

### **1.3.8 Laurence Sterne :**

Laurence Sterne (1713-68) was an Irish-born English novelist. He wrote two novels: 'Tristram Shandy' (1760-67) and 'A Sentimental Journey' (1768). Both these novels are highly unconventional and experimental in terms of narrative technique. His 'Tristram Shandy' is widely recognised as a reflexive novel i.e. a novel that constantly draws attention to its existence as a novel. In this novel, Tristram attempts to write an autobiography but hardly makes any progress. The novel includes endless trouble of all the features of a novel. Laurence wrote this novel to draw attention to the gap between life and attempting to reproduce life in a work of art.

However, there are three more novels of the Eighteenth-century that can be ranked beside the novels that we have already discussed. These are Samuel Johnson's 'Rasselas', Oliver Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' (1766), and Henry Fielding's 'Evelina'.

### **1.3.9 Samuel Johnson :**

Johnson's 'Rasselas' is a philosophical novel. The novel is in reality several disquisitions on Rasselas, a son of the emperor of Abyssinia. The whole novel is confined to Rasselas along with the other members of the royal family in a private paradise surrounded by mountains. Tired of the joys and pleasures of the royal family the prince one day escapes to Egypt along with his sister and Imlac, the old philosopher to study the life of other people. However, he is disappointed looking at the plight of the people. In 'Rasselas' Johnson colored a melancholic milieu to spread an ecclesiastical moral: 'human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed'.

### **1.3.10 Oliver Goldsmith's :**

Oliver Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' is a flawless expression of homely English sentiment. Dr. Charles Primrose, the vicar, a kind and honest man live a contented life along with his wife Deborah and six children. However, the Vicar's life is not smooth, worse misfortune enters and he is thrown into poverty, his daughter Olivia is lured away by an unworthy lover. But through all these troubles, the Vicar's love for his family and his self-confidence in life makes the novel a happy ending.

### **1.3.11 Fanny Burney :**

Fanny Burney's 'Evelina' or 'The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World' appeared in 1778. It is the story of a young girl's introduction to a prodigious world. Her path is tormented by rival suitors and made doubtful by a mystery about her birth, but her course is guided steadily by conscience and propriety. In the course of the novel, Evelina navigates the complex layers of Eighteenth-century society.

The novels of the Eighteenth century from Defoe to Miss Fanny Burney are, on the whole, conceived on a realistic line. Most of the novelists of that time tried to deal with the things as they were, though a few of them made it more romantic.

### **1.3.12 Horace Walpole :**

The long list of Gothic romances starts with the publication of Horace Walpole's 'The Castle of Otranto' (1764). Gothic romances are devoted to stories of fear, horror, and the supernatural. The Gothic romances were written primarily to create excitement and entertainment. Horace Walpole in 'The Castle of Otranto' tries to paint the domestic life and manners of the feudal period as agitated by the action of supernatural machinery. In short

'The Castle of Otranto' is a terror novel in which one can see the walking skeletons, pictures that move out of the frames, and other terrible incidents.

#### **1.3.13 Mrs. Anne Radcliffe :**

The most successful producer of Gothic romance was Mrs. Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823). Mrs. Radcliffe wrote five elaborate romances, of which the most famous is 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' (1794) and 'The Italian' (1797). The novel 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' was the tale of a robber baron's castle on the Rhine and dark deeds that hunted it. The 'Italian' was her last published book.

#### **1.3.14 Miss Clara Reeve :**

Horace Walpole was followed by another novelist Miss Clara Reeve (1729-1807). In the course of her long life, she wrote several novels out of which 'The Old English Baron' is the most prominent. In writing this novel she made a beautiful blending of ancient romance with modern novels. However, her novels cannot be placed with the novels of Smollett and Richardson as she lacked vivid imagination and artistic craftsmanship.

#### **1.3.15 Mary Shelley :**

Mary Shelley (1797-1851) is another prominent Gothic novelist best known as the author of 'Frankenstein' or 'The Modern Prometheus' (1818). The Preface of the novel was written by the great Romantic poet P.B. Shelley. The novel begins with a series of letters sent to Margaret Saville by her explorer brother Robert Walton. It is Robert Walton who finds Victor Frankenstein near death, listens to his story, and records in the form of letters. Victor Frankenstein, the protagonist of the novel creates an intelligent but grotesque monster, from whom he recoils in horror. At the end of the novel, the monster disappears in the surfs and darkness. Mary Shelley also wrote several other novels, including Valperga (1823), 'The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck' (1830), 'Lodore' (1835), and 'Falkner' (1837).

#### **1.3.16 Mathew Gregory Lewis :**

Mathew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818) was another Gothic novelist. Influenced by Ann Radcliffe and also by contemporary German Gothic literature, Mathew Gregory Lewis wrote his most popular Gothic novel 'The Monk' which was published in 1796. The novel narrated the story of a Monk who fall away into the world of degradation. Ambrosio, the Monk of Madrid is initiated into the life of wickedness by Matilda, a woman who has disguised herself

as a man. She is an emissary of Satan sent to entangle with the Monk and destroy his body and soul. Ambrosio eventually falls under the trap of Matilda and sells his soul to avoid being tortured but the devil throws him from a cliff to his death on the rocks underneath.

In the later part of the Eighteenth-Century, several novels written by a group of English radical writers who supported the ideals of the French Revolution were labelled as Jacobin novels. The term Jacobin was coined by literary critic Gary Kelly in 'The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805' (1976). The chief objective of the Jacobin novel was to make revolutionary thought more entertaining and easier to comprehend for the lower class people. It was concerned with social and political reform. The Jacobin novel, most characteristically embodied in Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Maria' or 'The Wrongs of Woman' (1792), Holcroft's 'Anna St Ives' (1792), William Godwin's 'Caleb Williams' (1794), Mary Hay's 'The Memoirs of Emma Courtney' (1796) and Robert Bage's 'Hermsprong or Man As He Is Not'.

### **1.3.17 Mary Wollstonecraft :**

Mary Wollstonecraft, the English feminist writer was born in Spitalfields, London in 1759. Since her childhood, Mary experienced the bitterness of life. Her father was a tyrannical man who used to torture her mother. After her mother's death, she left home in search of livelihood. In 1790 she published 'Vindication of the Rights of Man', which was the first response to Edmund Burke's 'Reflection on the Revolution in France'. Here she strongly argues that both men and women should equally be treated as rational beings. Her novel 'Maria' or 'The Wrongs of Woman' was left unfinished at the time of her death in 1797 and published posthumously by her husband William Godwin in 1798. The story of the novel is based on an upper-class woman, named Maria who was imprisoned by her husband. During her imprisonment, she heard the painful stories of Jemima and Henry Darnford. In the whole novel, Mary Wollstonecraft strongly criticizes the legal system that protected marriage in the Eighteenth-century.

### **1.3.18 Thomas Holcroft :**

Thomas Holcroft was born in London in 1745. During his youth, he read the Bible and many sensational novels. After completion of his education, he first joined as a teacher. He later left the job and joined the theatre. During that period, he wrote a large number of plays. In 1792 he published his most popular novel 'Anna St Ives'. This novel presents utopian notions of social justice through two leading characters named Anna and Frank Henley. Anna, a member of the wealthy elite supports social reform and equality and Frank

Henley is her beloved. Holcroft in all his writings proposes a society based on justice and equality.

### **1.3.19 Mary Hays :**

Mary Hays was born in Southwark near London in 1759. Her first novel 'Memoirs of Emma Courtney' was published in 1796. It was purely an autobiographical novel based on the life, love, and pursuit of happiness of Mary Hays.

### **1.3.20 William Godwin :**

Of all these novelists, William Godwin was the most effective and exceptional. His plot was neatly arranged and the characters were stunningly drawn to expose a social evil or to show its remedy. Godwin's 'Caleb Williams' was published in 1794. In the preface to the novel, Godwin explained the main objective of writing this novel. Here Caleb William the protagonist is a deeply honourable man who is cast into a theatre of calamity by unexpected circumstances. The novel describes the downfall of Ferdinando Falkland, a British squire, and his attempts to destroy the life of Caleb Williams, a poor but ambitious young man whom Falkland hires as his personal secretary. William Godwin gives a powerful account of how rich people like Ferdinando Falkland can use the forces of society and law against an individual of a lower class like Caleb Williams. The novel visibly exposed the class distinctions and the misuse of power by the ruling upper classes. It is a thought-provoking example of the novel of propaganda where revolutionary ideas are perfectly disseminated.

## **1.6 Summing Up:**

In this unit attempt has been made to give the reader a brief idea on the prominent novels and novelists of Eighteenth-century England. It may help the reader in understanding these prominent Eighteenth century novelists and their outstanding contributions.

## **1.7 Suggested Reading:**

Daiches, David: *A Critical History of English Literature Vol.IV*, Allied Publishers Ltd., New Delhi, 1992

Moody, William Vaughn, Robert Morss Lovett: *A History of English Literature* Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1986

Choudhury, Bibhash: *English Social and Cultural History*, PHI Learning Private Ltd., New Delhi, 2015

Buchanan, Ian: *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010

Cuddon, J.A.: *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Penguin Books, London, 1999

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## Unit 3

### Anne Radcliffe: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

#### Background

#### Contents:

##### 3.1 Objectives

##### 3.2 Introduction

##### 3.3 Biographical Sketch

##### 3.4 Novelist's other works

##### 3.5- Placing the Text

##### 3.6- Summing Up

##### 3.7- References and Suggested Reading

#### 3.1 Objectives:

In this unit, an attempt is made to make you familiar with the author, i.e. Ann Radcliffe, and her works and position as a Gothic Fiction writer in the history of English Literature. We will also try to shed some light on the Gothic fiction genre of literature.

Hence, the unit is designed to make you

*Familiarize* with the background of the author

*Acquaint* with the Gothic genre and other works of Radcliffe

*Evaluate* some critical responses

#### 3.2 Introduction:

Ann Radcliff (1764-1823) is considered to be one of the pioneers of the Gothic Novel. Before delving into the details of the author and her life, let us first acquaint ourselves with the term 'Gothic'. Historically, the term 'Goth' and 'Gothic' depicted the Germanic groups who battled against the Roman empire and damaged the rest of Europe. According to Pramod K. Nayar, "Gothicism was a form of architecture that flourished between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries in parts of Europe. In terms of literature, Gothic writing dwelt upon the darker sides of human sensibility- uncontrollable passions, paranoia, and evil." Fred Botting, in his *Introduction to the Gothic* (2001), listed the Gothic of the eighteenth century as Modern Gothic, Victorian Gothic, Female Gothic, Postmodern Gothic, Queer Gothic, Postcolonial Gothic, and the Urban Gothic. The Gothic novel took shape in England in the late eighteenth century around the 1790s. Gothic novels basically include stories about supernatural elements, horror, mystery, and madness. These novels usually evoke terror in the minds of the readers. It began with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) and travelled through Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Charlotte Bronte, and Emily Bronte, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Brockden Brown, Bram Stoker, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, and many



others in the twentieth century. An alternative form of the Gothic novel is Gothic romance. Critics often say that Gothic novels brought about a reversal or rejection of many classical values. The Gothic landscape consists of dark forests and ruined castles. In place of the daylight world of rational debate, Gothic fiction presents a nightmare world of torture, fantasies, and irrational fear. The most successful practitioner of this genre of Gothic Novel is Ann Radcliff. She is known to have employed almost all the characteristics of the Gothic genre in her novels, starting from supernaturalism, old and mysterious castles with winding stairs, a Byronic hero, to a plot twist at the end.

The Gothic Novels can be divided into two broad categories-

- i) The Novel of Terror
- ii) The Novel of Horror

Practitioners of The Novel of Terror are Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe. They were interested in using the Gothic form as a means of exploring the psychology of fears. The most appropriate example of Radcliffe would be her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In this novel, she has portrayed the gloomy atmosphere with great care which is often presented concerning Emily's (the protagonist) mental states. The terror scenes tend to have a disturbing effect on Emily's mind where she often feels out of control of the menacing atmosphere. This combination of landscape/atmosphere and the mindscape is a classic example of Gothic fiction. Unlike some other Gothic writers, Radcliffe has perfect control over her plots and she offers psychologically convincing explanations for the mysterious events.

A good example of The Novel of Horror is Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk* (1796). In this work, Lewis has exploited the images of horror. Another Gothic writer, namely, William Beckford is also a practitioner of The Novel of Horror. His famous work is *Vathek* which is loosely based on Arabian sources.

Some critics are of the view that a serious sight of the Gothic fiction written by the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth-century writers exploring themes of horror and terror represented the dark side of the enlightenment thought.

#### **Stop to Consider**

We have to remember here that there were other variants of the Gothic genre. They are called 'Black Novel'. Black novels gained popularity in France. The other variant is called 'Shudder Novel'. It was famous in Germany. However, both these genres were more gory and gruesome than the original Gothic genre.

Since we now know about the Gothic genre, let us go through its characteristic features. According to Lilia Melani, major characteristics of the Gothic novel are:

- i) It has a castle where the main action takes place. It may be ruined or intact, haunted or not.

- ii) It has typically ruined buildings that are sinister by nature or which evoke a pleasing melancholy.
- iii) The setting includes dungeons, underground passages, labyrinths, dark corridors, winding stairs. There are also extreme landscapes like rugged mountains, thick forests, or icy wastes, and extreme weather.
- iv) The plot involves omens and ancestral curses.
- v) There are elements of magic, supernatural manifestations, or the suggestion of the supernatural.
- vi) The Gothic novel has a passion-driven, willful villain-hero, whose true identity is revealed by the end of the novel.
- vii) It has a curious heroine with a tendency to faint and a need to be rescued.

**1. SAQ**

What is the difference between Gothic Romance and Gothic Fiction? (60 words)

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**3.3 Biographical Sketch:**

Ann Radcliffe belongs to the interim period, i.e. between the Augustans and the Romantics. Her works show leanings towards both periods. She was born as Ann Ward in Holborn, London, England in 1764. Her father's name is William Ward and her mother is Ann Ward. She did her schooling in a school run by Harriet and Sophia Lee. She was married to a journalist, namely, William Radcliffe at the age of twenty- two. William Radcliffe was the owner and editor of the *English Chronicle*, in Bath, in 1788. He was also a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

Radcliffe published her first two novels anonymously. The names of those two novels are *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790). However, these two novels received great reviews despite being published anonymously. She received 500 pounds for her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. She also wrote *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) which is a tale of seventeenth -century France. Her other novel *Gaston de Blondville* was published posthumously in 1826.

It is important to know at this point that Ann Radcliffe’s stay with two of her uncles has helped her become a writer for the social circles they occupied. Her uncle, Thomas Bentley, had a great interest in Gothic architecture. His principal subjects were the ruins, the most remarkable buildings, parks, gardens and other natural curiosities. Dr. John Jebb, her other uncle, was a radical activist advocating academic reforms.

Along with her novels, she also wrote a travelogue, namely, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany* in 1795 where she has given an account of her trip through parts of Northern Europe. Radcliffe was quite popular among the upper class and the growing middle class. Young women loved and admired her works. She was the only female novelist of the period whose work is still read. The name of the last book that she published during her lifetime was *The Italian: Or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797).

It is noteworthy that despite gaining fame and success, Radcliffe led a private and solitary life. She spent the last twenty years of her life writing poetry. She died on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1823 suffering from asthma. She was buried in Saint George's Church, Hanover Square in London.

### 3.4 Novelist's Other Works:

In this section, we will discuss some other notable works of Ann Radcliffe to make you familiar with her writing style.

*The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* is the first attempt at fiction by Radcliffe which was published by Thomas Hookham in the year 1789. It is noteworthy that this novel was first published anonymously. The subtitle of this work is "A Highland Tale". The subtitle itself suggests that the tale is based on Scotland and the two titular castles are Athlin and Dunbayne during the Middle Ages. This work by Radcliffe is shorter than *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. This novel is basically about the feud between two clans who belong to the castles of Athlin and Dunbayne.

Her next novel is *A Sicilian Romance* which was also first published anonymously in 1790. The novel is set in Sicily and the narrator is a tourist. He narrates a tale about the fallen nobility of the house of Mazzini. This work is a "unique mixture of the psychology of terror and poetic description".

*The Romance of the Forest* is another Gothic novel by Ann Radcliffe. It was published in the year 1791. The Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge praised this work by saying, "the attention is uninterruptedly fixed until the veil is designedly withdrawn". The novel is set in France where the protagonist Adeline and her guardians take refuge in an abbey that is ruined in the south-eastern part of France. In the abbey, they discover a skeleton, a manuscript, and a rusty dagger—which essentially combine the Gothic elements.

*The Italian: Or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents* was written by Ann Radcliff in 1797. With the French Revolution in the background, this novel questions some issues such as religion, aristocracy, and nationality. This novel can be regarded as the second -best book by Radcliffe after *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. This novel has provided a position for Radcliffe as one of the best Gothic writers of the century. Set in Italy, the novel is about Vincentio di Vivaldi who falls in love with a young woman Ellena and wishes to marry her. But her scheming mother is against the marriage and plans to kidnap and imprison Vivaldi. After a series of interesting events, Vivaldi and Ellena get married happily in the end.

*A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany* is a travelogue written by Radcliffe in 1795. In this work, she has described her trips through parts of Northern Europe.

Her other novel *Gaston de Blondville* was published posthumously in the year 1826. The full title of this work is *Gaston de Blondville: Or, the Court of Henry III. Keeping Festival in Ardenne, A Romance*. It is a historical romance that centres around the wedding of King Henry III. The happy mood of the wedding is interrupted when a merchant named Hugh Woodreeve comes demanding justice. This novel is said to be the only novel by Radcliffe to feature a real ghost.

### 3.5 Placing the text:

In this section, we are going to discuss the novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and its importance and relevance in the history of English Literature. Ann Radcliffe belonged to a new age and a new sensibility of literary history. The period 1780-1830 can be categorized as the Romantic period, but this complex definition of 'Romanticism' is challenged by a number of writers including Radcliffe. The late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century can be viewed as a period of British cultural changes. Radcliffe belonged to one of the most turbulent periods in European history, with considerable social unrest as one of its features. According to Heiland, it was a revolutionary era, "an era which has been identified with the great instabilities in the British socio-political structure." There were important and widespread changes taking place in the social and political scenes of Europe at that time. The French Revolution had greatly influenced British politics and philosophy at that time. The revolution was followed by the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power and the subsequent Napoleonic wars bringing tremendous political and economic developments in England. Along with these political and economic developments, there came deeper social changes. In this manner, her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* can be considered as a cornerstone text in the evolution and the development of the Gothic novel. Sir Walter Scott later acknowledged that Radcliffe was the true 'founder of a class or school' which led the way 'in a peculiar style of composition affecting powerfully the mind of the reader'. Her work essentially distinguishes between 'terror' and 'horror'. According to Radcliffe, terror "expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life"; and the horror "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them".

#### Stop to consider

Despite the fact that the Gothic genre was a subject to satire, the Gothic romances died because of their extravaganza regarding the plot. But it is interesting to note that the Gothic machinery continued to be reflected in the works of Bronte Sisters, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Charles Dickens.

It is noteworthy that *The Mystery of Udolpho* has been parodied by Jane Austen in her work *Northanger Abbey* emphasizing the ridiculousness of confusing fantasy with reality. The protagonist of the novel, Catherine Morland gets obsessed with the plot of the novel, i.e *The*

*Mysteries of Udolpho* and discusses it with her friend Isabella Thorpe. Catherine often compares the fantastic world of Udolpho with the real world.

The novel is set during the time of the French Revolution. Hence, the progression of the past, present, and future is shown with the concept of temporality. It allows the readers to connect with the past. The reference to grand castles and gardens in the novel is used to show the atmosphere of the 1550s. Even though the novel is set during the sixteenth century, the characters most likely belong to the late eighteenth century in terms of their world views. The novel portrays a world that is changing where the old and new paradigms are in perpetual clash. Radcliffe appears to shift between the conventional and the radical. In her novels, she censures the aristocratic class but, at the same time, when her heroines accumulate properties, they tend to enjoy the aristocratic privileges. This ambivalence is central to Radcliffe's works.

The novels of Radcliffe portray the stories of power struggles that explore the issues of identity. However, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* has been hardly taken as a work demonstrating the social, cultural, and historical aura of its time. Other than paving its path as one of the best Gothic fiction, the novel also describes some social problems that are vital to society. Some of the problems are the fall of aristocracy, the property rights of women and the problem of usurpation, and the emerging bourgeois ideology with its material aspect of life.

Initially, the novel was received with mixed reactions but later it turned out to be one of the best-selling Gothic fictions and "remained on the top shelf in the canon of literature for three generations." (Norton, 1998). Thomas De Quincey praised Radcliffe by calling her "the great enchantress of this generation". However, the novel was criticized for including numerous interludes of poetry. Some critics considered it unnecessary and exaggerated. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was also criticized for its extended landscape descriptions. Since Radcliffe never visited those places, it can be assumed that the landscape descriptions were not true or real. Despite all the criticisms being thrown at the novel and the author, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* can be considered as a novel that identified Radcliffe's style as "surpassing all of her contemporaries in its fertility of invention, power of suggestion and descriptive brilliance."

The nineteenth century was the beginning of the development of the famous monster character called 'Frankenstein'. This character was created by Mary Shelley in her novel entitled *Frankenstein*

### 3.6 Summing Up:

In this introductory section of the unit, the idea was to acquaint you with the author, i.e. Ann Radcliffe. This section has also tried to shed light on the Gothic genre of literature and Radcliffe's position as a Gothic writer. Despite being popularly read writers of the eighteenth century, Radcliffe's biography has remained a contested area in literary history. I have also tried to make you familiar with her other works in this unit, in order to get an idea of Radcliffe's choice of themes and topics. This unit has also tried to place the text, i.e., *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in regard to the history of England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Hence, to sum up, I would suggest you read the prescribed text along with some other works of Radcliffe in order to get a better understanding of the prescribed text.

### 3.7 Suggested Reading-

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## Unit 4

### Anne Radcliffe: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

#### Introducing the Novel

#### Contents:

#### 4.1 Objective

#### 4.2 Introduction

#### 4.3 What happens in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

#### 4.4 List of Characters

#### 4.5 Summing up

#### 4.6 References and Suggested Reading

#### 4.1 Objective:

This unit attempts to introduce you to the novel under discussion, i.e. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. This unit is thus designed to help you

to read *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

to appreciate the novel in its totality of characters and events

to analyze the characters in so far as their actions are crucial to the development of the story

#### 4.2 Introduction:

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe was published in the year 1794. It is a unitary story that revolves around the experiences of the protagonist, Emily. It opens in the year 1584 in France on the estates of St. Auberts, La Vallee. The novel portrays Emily's transition from being a prisoner to one of the strongest characters, who, by the end of the novel, has both financial and social powers. The domestic space in the novel is being destabilized by the removal of a titular patriarch. Radcliffe destabilizes this domestic space in order to portray her heroine assuming command over both domestic as well as public spaces. The Gothic genre helped Radcliffe find a path for reworking ideas about love, desire, marriage and family identity. Furthermore, it contributed to the debates around political freedom that dominated European thinking in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

### Stop to Consider:

Read the background of the text in order to know how the novel was influenced by the French Revolution. The Gothic served as a metaphor as the first revolutionary emblem was the castle prison, the Bastille and its destruction by an angry mob. This emblem could be seen in many works by Gothic writers including Radcliffe.

#### 4.3 What happens in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*?:

In this section, we will summarize the story of *The Mystery of Udolpho* and get ourselves more acquainted with the story and how it comes under the ambit of the Gothic novel genre. The story opens with the family of the protagonist Emily and her parents Monsieur St. Aubert and Madame St. Aubert. They live in a chateau called La Vallee on the banks of the river Garonne. One day they decide to go on a fishing trip. They go to their favourite fishing house near the chateau. Everything goes well until Emily forgets her lute and when she goes to bring it back she hears eerie music playing somewhere in the forest. That is the first instance of Gothic aura that we get in the novel. Meanwhile, Madame St. Aubert also loses one of her bracelets in the forest which has a picture of Emily in it.

In the meantime, the Quesnels have arrived at La Vallee. The Quesnels are the brother of Madame St. Aubert and his rather frivolous wife. They are the ones who bought the St. Aubert estate to keep the family afloat. Now, they want to make it fashionable which might include cutting down a large number of trees and taking down some parts of the chateau, and St. Aubert is not happy about this decision. St. Aubert has another reason to be sad because his wife has just died out of fever and the doctor has prescribed him to travel around the countryside in order to cure his broken heart. So St. Aubert and his daughter Emily decide to go travelling. On their journey, they meet a stranger named Valancourt who offers them to show the way since he is heading that way to Rousillon. After getting themselves acquainted with Valancourt, St. Aubert and Emily start liking his companionship. They begin to spend some time together before Valancourt heads off for another direction.

Soon after St. Aubert and Emily hear a voice from the woods and thinking it to be a bandit, St. Aubert shoots the person in the arm. But unfortunately, that person turns out to be Valancourt. He has been mistaken for a bandit by the Auberts. In order to redeem themselves from their mistake, they take Valancourt to get his treatment to Beaujeau. In Beaujeau, Valancourt is treated by a kind doctor who says that the wound is not severe but a flesh wound that will heal in a few days. So, he asks Valancourt to rest for a while before he starts to travel again. Together Valancourt and the Auberts spend some good time and get to know each other. Finally, Valancourt moves in another direction and the Auberts reach Perpignan.

Meanwhile, St. Aubert receives some bad news in the form of a letter from the Quesnels where it is mentioned that their property is ruined. With heavy hearts, they resume their journey to Languedoc. But they had to stop during the nighttime as St. Aubert gets sick and he feels that he cannot go any further. So, they spend the night at a chateau in the woods which belongs to an elderly peasant named La Voisin. La Voisin takes good care of them but all of a sudden they hear a mysterious voice singing at a distance. They find the voice quite



beautiful but haunting at the same time. La Voisin tells them that he is not quite sure about the source of the voice but he is being told by a monk once that the voice appears when someone is about to die. Soon after Emily's father St. Aubert dies but before his death, he asks Emily to go to La Vallee and burn some papers which are kept hidden underneath a sliding floorboard without looking at them.

Before heading back to La Vallee, Emily spends a couple of days mourning her father's death at a nearby convent. When she went back home, she burns all the papers that her father has asked her to. But she could not help looking at a photograph of a beautiful lady just before it went up in flames. Emily happens to spend some alone time in their fishing house remembering her father and just about then she encounters Valancourt. He confesses his love for her and she finally got someone to talk to about her grief.

Just as they were talking, Emily's aunt and her new guardian Madame Cheron appears before them. She invites Emily to visit her estates in Tholouse. In order to get her away from Valancourt, Madame Cheron decides to take Emily with her to Tholouse the very next day. There she introduces Emily to some Italian noblemen namely, Signor Montoni and Signor Cavigni. Meanwhile, Valancourt reaches Thoulouse in order to prove his worth to Madame Cheron for Emily. As soon as Madame Cheron learns from a source that Valancourt is quite well enough for her niece Emily, she gives her permission to reacquaint Emily and Valancourt.

In an interesting turn of events, we get to know that Madame Cheron is now Madame Montoni since she has married Signor Montoni. And now they have all decided to go on a trip to Italy, i.e. to Montoni's mansion but without Valancourt. There Emily is being pursued by another Italian named Count Morano. Morano declares his love for Emily and wishes to marry her. Fortunately, her engagement to Count Morano has abruptly ended when the group decides to leave to another castle of Montoni in the Appenines. This intimidating-looking castle is the Castle of Udolpho and according to Emily's maid Annette, the castle could be haunted. Annette shows Emily her bed chamber and to everyone's horror and surprise it has a door that leads to a secret passage and the door cannot be locked or bolted.

Meanwhile, Count Morano comes to Udolpho seeking Emily. He even has laid a plan to kidnap her in her sleep by coming to her room through the secret door. But Emily is being saved by Signor Montoni in the nick of time and they (Morano and Montoni) end up fighting a duel. Count Morano is injured badly in the duel, forcing him to retreat without taking Emily with him. In order to get Emily distracted from all these dramas, Annette brings up the topic of a beautiful lady who used to live in the castle and disappeared suspiciously prior to their arrival. Emily also gets distracted by another thing that is present in the castle, i.e. a black-veiled statue/picture. She wants to know what is behind the black veil which is locked in a secret apartment in Udolpho. As an interesting turn of events, we get to know that Madame Montoni is fed up with her husband Signor Montoni who has just married her for her property. He wants Madame Montoni to sign all the papers of her estates, relinquishing all her properties to him. But she has denied doing so.

The mystery in the castle elevates when Montoni hears a voice repeating what he is saying in one of his conversations with his friends. He reveals an interesting fact to his friends that he has been rejected long ago by the former owner of the castle of Udolpho whose name is Lady Laurentini and since then nobody knows where she got disappeared. Some believe that she has committed suicide. The readers, by now, get to know that this is the same lady about whom Annette has told to Emily.

Meanwhile, Valancourt goes to Paris to mend his broken heart over his separation from Emily. Emily is also worried about Valancourt but she is more worried about Montoni as she thinks him to be a murderer. He fights with Madame Montoni over her property as she has refused to sign them and ends up locking her in the east turret of the castle. But Madame Montoni shares a secret with Emily telling her that if she dies, the estates that Montoni so desperately wants will go directly to Emily. On the other hand, Annette fills in with Emily about an ongoing fight that has taken place in the castle. The reason behind the outbreak of the fight is that during dinner someone has spiked Montoni's drink with poison. We are also informed that Madame Montoni has been gravely ill lately. Emily somehow persuades Montoni to see her aunt once. She finally succeeds in bringing her aunt out of the turret and takes care of her dying aunt. However, Madame Montoni could not be saved. She died passing her properties to Emily.

Now that Montoni knows Emily legally owns her aunt's properties, he tries to convince her to sign the papers. He tells her that if she signs the papers, he might allow her to leave the castle of Udolpho. In the meantime, the castle gets attacked by some robbers. In order to keep Emily safe, Montoni sends her off to Tuscany. There she stays at a local peasant's house. After the siege has ended Emily is brought back to Udolpho. Once again Montoni asks Emily to sign the papers and if she refuses to do so, Montoni says he will hand her over to his friends Verezzi and Bertolini who might do her some harm. Since her hands are tied now, Emily signs off the papers with a heavy heart, as a result of which she loses her rights to the estates of her aunt Madame Montoni.

When the castle was under siege, Montoni ordered any suspicious-looking person to be locked up in the cells. Emily suspects that Valancourt is one of the prisoners who has ended up languishing in one of the cells of Montoni. She wants to get it confirmed by sending the prisoner some notes through Ludovico. But the mysterious prisoner gives Emily a bracelet that belongs to her mother. If we remember correctly, Emily's mother, i. e. Madame St. Auberthad lost one of her bracelets, which has a picture of Emily in it, while they went to one of their fishing houses. His name is Du Pont, he is actually in love with Emily and has been following her for a very long time. Du Pont helps Emily escape from the castle along with her loyal servants Annette and Ludovico on stolen horses.

At this juncture of the story, we are introduced to a set of new characters, namely, Count de Villeforte, Countess de Villeforte, and their two children Henri and Blanche. They have inherited the estate of Marquis de Villeroi. It is the same estate that was passed by Emily and her father during their journey in the first part of the novel. Du Pont and Count de Villeforte are friends and so the whole crew gets invited to stay in the chateau for a while. Emily and

Blanche become good friends and they try to convince Dorothee, the old maid, to tell them stories about the previous owner of the chateau. Dorothee cannot help mentioning that Emily is the spitting image of the late Marchioness. One day, while on a walk in the woods, Emily hears a familiar voice. It turns out to be Valancourt's, who is now a ruined man. He has spent all his money in Paris.

Back at the castle of Udolpho, things are not looking good. Montoni and Orsino are taken prisoners while the castle is taken partially over by a young officer. But Emily does not know about it. She is distracted by the late Marchioness's tale which is being told to her by Dorothee. It is believed that the Marchioness died under suspicious circumstances. When Dorothee takes Emily to the Marchioness's room, they feel a shadowy figure passing by. Out of fear, nobody dared to enter the room except Ludovico. He volunteers to spend the night in the haunted room. It is interesting to find that Ludovico has vanished in the thin air that very night.

Meanwhile, Emily receives a letter mentioning the death of Signor Montoni. In order to distract herself from all the drama, Emily goes to a convent to see her nun friends. While she was narrating the haunted story of the late Marchioness to her nun friends, she could not help noticing a weird nun named Agnes, who is acting in a very different manner. Sister Frances promises Emily to tell Sister Agnes's story to her. Later that night, Emily secretly goes to the convent again in order to know about Agnes from Frances. According to Frances, long ago, Agnes was in love with a poor man and wanted to marry him. But her father did not accept the proposal and instead married her off to a rich person. But Agnes could not survive the marriage and cheated on her husband with her lover. In order to save her from her husband's revenge, Agnes's father sent her off to the convent without her husband's knowledge. And since then, Agnes has been more and more prone to madness.

Emily heads on over to Tholouse to see her new estate. As she was still thinking about Valancourt, she sees a familiar figure on the terrace who looks like Valancourt. Just at that moment, her maid Annette fills her with the information about the other night when a supposed robber was shot by the gardener. However, Annette is not quite sure whether he is dead or alive. Emily takes the supposed robber to be Valancourt and thinks that he is dead. She is heartbroken to hear this. So, to take her mind off from all these, she goes to her home, i.e. La Vallee. In La Vallee, while she was talking about Valancourt to her old maid Theresa, Valancourt comes out of nowhere. He was shot but not dead. He only had his arms injured. Theresa also tells Emily how Valancourt has helped her restore her position in La Vallee.

Meanwhile, coming back from their journey, Count de Villeforte and his family decide to spend the night in a fortress in the middle of the woods. Unfortunately, some suspicious-looking residents were dwelling in the fortress and Blanche hears about a scheme where the robbers/smugglers are plotting to murder them. Hearing this, she faints immediately only to wake up after the fight between the Villefortes and the smugglers. It is important to note here that the Villefortes have been saved by Ludovico who is back after being disappeared. When Emily came back to the chateau of the Villefortes, she asks Ludovico about his disappearance. Ludovico says that he actually has been ambushed by some smugglers who

have made a secret passage through the Marchioness's room. They have been using the room to keep all their stolen goods.

In another part of the story, Sister Agnes is apparently on her deathbed and she wants to tell an interesting secret to Emily. Agnes tells Emily that her real name is Signora Laurentini and that she was the former owner of Udolpho. She also confesses to Emily that she poisoned the late Marchioness because she was in love with her husband, the Marquis de Villerois. She further states that Emily is actually the niece of the late Marchioness since the Marchioness was the sister of her father late St. Aubert, which makes Emily the sole survivor and heir to the chateau of the Marchioness. Unfortunately, Agnes dies after her big confession to Emily but not before passing on her property, i.e. the castle of Udolpho to her. Along with all these revelations, it is also revealed to the readers that the black veil in the castle of Udolpho actually covers a partially decayed wax figure which looks like a corpse.

The novel finally ends with the double wedding of Emily and Valancourt, and Blanche and St. Foix, with Emily taking control of the property.

**SAQ:**

1. How is Signora Laurentini connected to Emily and how does she recognize Emily as a relative of the Marchioness de Villeroi? (50 words)  
.....
2. List three seemingly supernatural occurrences and provide rational reasons for those occurrences. (100 words)  
.....

**4.4 List of Characters:**

**Emily St. Aubert-** Emily is the protagonist of the novel. Most of the action in the novel takes place from her point of view. She is a very kind and pleasant girl who deeply appreciates the sublimity of nature. She is the perfect example of a Gothic heroine in the sense that often the element of fear or terror in the novel springs from her imagination. She experiences everything with extreme sensibility. She is very fond of books, nature, poetry, and music (the writer, on multiple occasions, portrays her in awe of the scenic beauty of the countryside that they visit). She is often described as virtuous, obedient, brave, sensitive, smart, resourceful, and self-reliant. Unfortunately, as the story progresses, she faces a lot of misfortunes and dangerous adventures after her parent's demise. But by using her intelligence and patience, she manages to go from being practically penniless to one of the wealthiest persons in the novel.

**Valancourt**-Valancourt is a dashing, kind, and young nobleman who meets Emily and her father St. Aubert during their journey to the mountains. He falls in love with Emily and prepares to marry her until her aunt and uncle interfere. He has helped Emily on multiple occasions. He is also the one to help and restore Theresa, the old maid of La Vallee. Although he lacks wealth and rumours have him a wild young man, he eventually proves that he is worthy of Emily and finally marries her by the end of the novel.

**Signor Montoni**-Signor Montoni is a villainous Italian nobleman who marries Emily's aunt, Madame Cheron, in the hope of getting her wealth. He schemes and hides his true intentions to gain Madame Cheron's hand in marriage, then imprisons her and Emily in the castle of Udolpho while trying to wrest their property from them. He is partly successful but in the end, he is captured and killed before enjoying the wealth.

**Sister Agnes**-Agnes is a nun who lives in one of the convents where Emily goes to visit her friends. On her deathbed, she reveals her secrets to Emily. She was actually Signora Laurentini, the owner of the castle of Udolpho. She drives a wedge between her first love, the Marquis de Villeroi, and his wife, the Marchioness, after which she returns to the monastery to live in guilt. Before her death, she divides her fortune between Emily, and M. Bonnac.

**Annette**- Annette is Madame Cheron/Montoni's maid who accompanied her from France. She is loyal and faithful, who, after the death of her mistress, becomes one of the closest companions of Emily. She manages to run away from the castle of Udolpho along with Emily with the aid of her lover Ludovico, in which they were imprisoned by Signor Montoni. For her good service and companionship, Emily helps her to marry the one she loves and also makes her a housekeeper in one of the mansions owned by Emily.

**Blanche de Villeforte**- Blanche is the daughter of Count de Villeforte and sister of Henri de Villeforte. She becomes a good friend to Emily who comes to their house as a refugee. She and Emily share some similar traits in their personalities as both of them love nature and are sensitive towards others. Towards the end of the novel, Blanche marries St. Foix.

**Count de Villeforte**- Count de Villeforte is the inheritor of the estate once owned by his friend, the Marquis de Villeroi. He is a very kind man who provides shelter to Emily and her crew after they had managed to escape the castle of Udolpho. He happens to be a friend of Du Pont. He has a wife, a daughter, and a son.

**Count Morano**- Count Morano is a friend of Signor Montoni. He falls in love with Emily and desperately wishes to marry her. She, however, never accepted the proposal, although her uncle supported and commanded the union. Later, Montoni discovers that Count Morano is not as rich as he has hoped and hence he abruptly withdraws his consent and support from the suit. But that leaves Morano bitter and he tries to abduct Emily but fails. He even tries to poison Montoni but is caught and put behind the bars.

**Countess de Villeforte**- She is the wife of Count de Villeforte and mother of Blanche and Henri de Villeforte. She served as a good host to Emily and her crew during their stay in their chateau.

**Du Pont-** Du Pont is a friend of Count de Villeforte who helps Emily and others escape the castle of Udolpho. He is actually the one who finds the lost bracelet of Emily's mother, which has a picture of Emily in it, and since then he has been following Emily because he is in love with Emily.

**Henri de Villeforte-** He is the son of Count de Villeforte and the brother of Blanche de Villeforte.

**Ludovico-** Ludovico is one of Montoni's servants. He falls in love with Annette. Annette is the maid who accompanied Madame Cheron and later became very loyal to Emily. He assists and helps Emily and Annette to escape the castle of Udolpho when their lives become difficult locked in the castle towers by Signor Montoni. He is also the one who volunteers to spend the night in the late Marchioness's room in Count de Villeforte's chateau which is rumoured to be haunted. Later in the novel, it is found that he was actually kidnapped by pirates.

**Madame Cheron/Montoni-** Madame Montoni is St. Aubert's sister and Emily's aunt. She is a vain wealthy widow who becomes Emily's guardian after her father's death. Later she marries Signor Montoni. Soon she leaves with him and Emily for Italy. Her husband forces her to sign over her property to him and when she denies doing that, he locks her up in the castle tower. She eventually dies of mental and physical torture and abuse by her husband. But just before her death, she makes her niece Emily the sole heir to her property.

**Madame St. Aubert-** Madame St. Aubert is the mother of the protagonist Emily and the wife of St. Aubert. She is introduced to us at the beginning of the novel. She dies soon after they come back from their fishing trip.

**Quesnels-**The Quesnels are a rather haughty couple and the relatives of the Auberts who happen to buy the estate from St. Aubert to keep the family afloat during their troubled times.

**St. Aubert-** Monsieur St. Aubert is a French aristocrat, widower, and Emily's father. His deteriorating health leads him to take a trip along with his daughter. While on the trip he falls ill and dies, leaving his daughter with some mysterious letters and barely any money. With the letters that he asked his daughter to destroy, there is also a portrait of a lady, which is one of the mysteries of the novel. He is also the one who asks his daughter not to be sensible towards everything.

**The Marchioness de Villeroi-** She is the wife of the Marquis de Villeroi, who was being killed by Signora Laurentini. Laurentini was in love with her husband. She is also the one whose portrait was there among the papers that were supposed to be burnt by Emily on the advice of her father. Later it was revealed that the Marchioness was actually the sister of Emily's father and hence Emily was her niece. It has been hinted on many occasions by the narrator that Emily looks very familiar to her aunt, i.e. the Marchioness.

**La Voisin-** La Voisin is one of the persons who helps Emily and her father on their trip. He provides them shelter and food when St. Aubert's health deteriorates. It is in his chateau

where St. Aubert breathes his last. He also helped and comforted Emily after her father's death.

**The Marquis de Villeroy-** He is the husband of the Marchioness de Villeforte. He was in love with Signora Laurentini, the owner of the castle of Udolpho. He leaves his house Chateau le Blanc after his wife was killed by Laurentini.

**Signor Orsino-** Signor Orsino is one of the friends of Signor Montoni. By nature, he is quite vindictive, cunning, and dexterous. He is actually a criminal who hides in the castle of Udolpho with the help of Montoni.

**Theresa-** Theresa is an old maid to Emily. She used to take care of Emily when they were in La Vallee. She is the one who is being saved and helped by Valancourt who also helped her restore her place in La Vallee.

**SAQ:**

Who, according to you, is the hero in the novel-Emily or Valancourt? Give reasons for your answer. (70 words)

.....

**4.5 Summing Up:**

In this unit, I tried to acquaint you with the prescribed text by discussing the story at length as well as give you an outline of the plot of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Here, it is important to note that one must not confuse a 'story' with a 'plot'. E.M. Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel* differentiates the two in this manner: "A *story* is a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. A *plot* is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality."

At the end of this unit, I have given you a list of characters who play a major part in the narrative.

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## Unit 5

Anne Radcliffe: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

### Themes and Technique

#### Contents:

#### 5.1- Objectives

#### 5.2- Introduction

#### 5.3- The Themes of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

#### 5.4- Narrative Techniques

#### 5.5- Form and Other Relevant Aspects

#### 5.6- Characterization

#### 5.7- Summing up

#### 5.1 Objectives:

The objectives of this unit are to enable you-

- *to analyze* the novel in terms of its themes
- *to identify* the techniques employed by Ann Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and
- *to assess* how these techniques contribute to the overall effect of the novel

#### 5.2 Introduction:

To assess the subject matter of any piece of work, you first need to look closely at the themes of the novel and the techniques used by the author. Like any other gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* too deals with the gothic and supernatural elements in order to evoke fear and mystery in the minds of the readers. Radcliffe has used the unreliable third-person narrator to narrate the plot and events of the novel. Her characters in the novel have shed light on some important moral questions as well as have paved the way for more such strong characters in gothic fiction.

In the next few sections, we shall discuss in detail the themes, narrative techniques, and characterisation that pervades the novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

### **5.3 The Themes of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:**

**Family-** Family plays a crucial role in the novel. Family is presented in the novel in three distinct versions. The first is that of St. Aubert and Emily. Then there is the nightmarish family of Madame Cheron/Montoni and Signor Montoni, and Emily. The third being the surrogate family of the Villefortes and Emily. It is a recurring theme that runs till the end of the novel. The plot runs around the protagonist Emily who does most of the things as a part of the family to St. Aubert or Madame Cheron/Montoni. But being a wise and sensible character, Emily, at some point in the novel also learns how one's family can turn against one. She has learned it the hard way when the Quesnals have refused to answer to her letter; or when her aunt Madame Cheron /Montoni refuses to give her permission to marry her love Valancourt; or when her uncle Signor Montoni has kept her as a prisoner in the castle of Udolpho. However, she does not deny the values she has learned from her father which has helped her survive in the real world.

**Manipulation-**The story of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is mostly about the manipulations of Signor Montoni. He is the one who plays most of the wicked games in the novel. He is the one who manipulated Madame Cheron into marrying him in the hope of getting her property. He also manipulated Emily into signing the papers relinquishing her property to him and when she fails to do so, he even threatens her. He knows how to find the weakest spot in one's personality to use it for his own benefit.

**Fear or terror-** It is noteworthy that the element of fear or terror springs from the characters' minds in the novel, rather than any external factors causing terror. Ironically, it is the protagonist's imagination that causes more terror in the novel. According to a critic, N. Smith, it is "Emily's sensitive imagination that makes her susceptible to superstition, and increases her sense of self-delusion." Her father knew about this heightened sensibility of Emily and hence warns her, "Do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling...those, who really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality." (Radcliffe 79) This heightened sensibility of her makes her think that there is some shadow lurking behind her or some banditti is hiding behind every tree. All these imaginations of Emily evoke fear or terror in the novel, which adds to the Gothic element.

**Gender-** As it is shown in the novel, the new and old ideas of masculinity were colliding during this particular period. The warlike virility of Montoni is being contrasted with the sensibility of Valancourt and St. Aubert. According to Montoni, any feminine virtue like sensitivity and emotionality is weak. It is through the character of Montoni, Radcliffe tries to critique the old style of masculinity. Montoni is being portrayed as a misogynist who likes to have complete control over the female characters.

In the 1790s, femininity was linked to the strict sense of decorum which often conflicted with the female desire. This could be seen in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* where the protagonist's only way to conciliate female passion and desire is to assume a state of unconscious. This is a kind of morality that is being conditioned in the minds of the females where they think, if they go astray from their female decorum and embrace their passion, it might lead to some disaster. The story of Signora Laurentini is portrayed in order to rationalize the patriarchal discipline of women. She had to be saved by a male, i.e. her father when she did the undoable out of unrestrained desire. One similar kind of morality can also be seen in the protagonist Emily. Emily, in one of the parting scenes between her and Valancourt, seems to have shown more control over her passions and emotions than her lover. However, this subversion of the traditional power dynamics by the author questions the patriarchal authority of the eighteenth century.

On the other hand, Emily, in order to, get away from the tyrannies of the patriarchal order of the society, often hides under her imaginings. It is like an escape that gives her a sense of control of her own sexuality. Thus, in Gothic fiction like *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the issue of the gender divide is portrayed with utmost care and detail.

**The Supernatural-**Supernaturalism or supernatural elements abound in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. There are certain incidents in the novel that have no possible explanations. The recurring voices and singing are the most common supernatural elements in the novel. In the first part of the novel, the readers are given an instance of a singing voice that Emily hears when she goes out fishing with her family. We also hear voices in the novel when Signor Montoni talks about Signora Laurentini or what has happened to her. The voice keeps on repeating everything he says. In another incident, when St. Aubert was about to die, we hear a mysterious voice singing at a distance. These are some of the instances where we learn about some eerie and mysterious voices and music, but nowhere in the novel, any logical explanation is given about the source of these voices. It is also worth mentioning that Emily had seen some shadowy figures gliding or passing nearby in some of the chapters. However, she conveniently faints before giving the readers any description of the figures. In another incident, we find that Emily wanted to know what is behind a black veil that looks like a corpse. This has kept the readers by the edge of their seats. By the end of the novel, however, we are being told that it is a dismantled wax figure. Another example of supernaturalism could be found in the room of the late Marchioness. It is the same room where Ludovico gets vanished for months, creating an air of mystery and suspicion in the novel. But we are being told towards the end of the novel that Ludovico was just kidnapped by a bunch of pirates.

**Justice and Judgment-** There is no denying the fact that every character gets justice by the end of the book. In the case of the protagonist, Emily, in spite of going through a number of hardships, she comes out victorious at the end. Signor Montoni, on the other hand, tries to get his hands on the property of Madame Cheron by marrying her and even though he managed to get some from Emily, he had to lose it all away before enjoying it as he was killed at the end of the novel. Valancourt too, after much tribulations and contemplation, got what he wanted, i.e. the love of Emily and his wedding with Emily with respect. In the case of

Signora Laurentini, justice is served for the murder of the Marchioness as she had to live a life of a recluse in a monastery by changing her name to Sister Agnes.

**Power and Identity-** In Gothic fiction, power plays a major role where the Gothic villains gain and maintain their power by disempowering their victims and the victim's loss of identity creates an atmosphere of horror or terror in the novels. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the protagonist Emily is the victim of the loss of identity. But in her case, those who tried to threaten her identity is not only limited to males but also females. In fact, the very first character to threaten Emily was her own aunt, Madame Cheron, who took her power away to love and be with the man she loves, i.e. Valancourt. Later in the novel, Emily is being victimized by her uncle and Madame Cheron's husband, Montoni. He even gives her rape threats when he says he will send her off to his friends if she refuses to sign the property papers. If we dig into the eighteenth and nineteenth-century women's virtue, such threats were real and meaningful. During those periods, if Emily were to be raped, her chances of getting a secured marriage would be jeopardized since she won't be considered a virtuous lady for marriage. However, such threats are often preceded by mental and emotional torture where they are locked in eerie castles and dungeons. So, when Emily refused to sign the papers initially, she was being held a prisoner by her uncle Signor Montoni in the castle of Udolpho. Thus by showering mental and physical torture upon their victims, these Gothic villains overpower them by stripping their power which contributes to their individual sense or an individual identity which are essential to function normally in society.

It is important to note here that despite all the tortures that Emily went through, she emerged victorious in the end.

#### **5.4- Narrative Techniques:**

In the novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the story is narrated from the point of view of a third-person narrator. This point of view tends to be omniscient and unreliable as the narrator presents limited information regarding certain points in the plot. The point of view is omniscient as the narrator knows the characters' thoughts and feelings which are integral parts of the novel. However, the narration tends to be very subjective as the narrator gives the readers a clear picture of the good characters and the bad characters from the beginning of the novel. As such, the protagonist, Emily is shown to have no flaws of her own and that she has always been the victim in some way or the other. But Signor Montoni is portrayed as a prototypical villainous character who is greedy and scheming. The narrator uses the landscape and the natural setting as the background for the trials and tribulations of the protagonist of the novel. Hence, the dark and tall trees serve the purpose of a despondent atmosphere and add to the fear and apprehension of the travellers. The description of the landscape is narrated in such a way in the novel so as to evoke a sense of terror and have a psychological bearing on the minds of the readers. It is noteworthy that the setting sun is used for specific desired effects. The very first image of the castle of Udolpho is portrayed as splendidly illuminating as the yellow sun rays fall on it. While the castle is illuminated, its surroundings are in shadows, so as to point out the importance of the duality of light and shadow. It is also used to evoke the mysteries oozing out of the castle. However, the

moonlight has a more mysterious quality than the sunlight and therefore it is being used extensively by the narrator in order to narrate the striking gloom of the castle. As it has already been mentioned the landscape is being used not only for scenic effects but also as a reflection of the thought and action of the main characters.

**SAQ:**

1. How does *the novel The Mysteries of Udolpho* do justice to the Gothic genre in regard to its form?

(100 words)

.....

2. Justify the title of the novel. (100 words)

**5.5 Form and other relevant aspects:**

Ann Radcliffe, in her novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, has combined the elements of the Gothic novel, the sentimental novel, and the picturesque landscape. Through her protagonist, Emily, she has paved the way for the future Gothic genre in which the innocent protagonist (usually a lady) is captured and held prisoner in a grand edifice by a malevolent Gothic villain (usually a male). She sets what for the next two centuries will be the dominant image of Gothic literature. Radcliffe also changes the thematic uses of sentiment and sensibility of the eighteenth century in the novel. Emily was instructed by her father, on his deathbed, not to give too much importance to her sensibilities. This struggle between reason and imagination serves as an interesting concept in the entire plot of the novel.

Radcliffe, in this novel, has rewarded the virtue, explained the supernatural, and made good triumph over evil. She provided a literary form that is respectable enough to channel the demands of the age. The protagonist is always proper in her behaviour and clothing. Even when Emily was almost kidnapped by Count Morano from her room in the middle of the night, she was fully dressed. Through Emily's characterization, Radcliffe has created a work of sustaining interest in the eighteenth century.

**5.5.1 Source of the Novel:**

Ann Radcliffe is believed to be influenced by Lady Mary Walker. Walker wrote a feminist Utopian novel entitled *Munster Village* in the year 1778. There are a number of similarities between the two novels in respect to the names of the characters, plot, character types, and themes. The name of the character 'Marquis de Villeroi' is believed to have been taken from *Munster Village*. Moreover, in both the novels, there is the depiction of a young unprotected woman who gets imprisoned by an unscrupulous man. It is worth mentioning that such a plot was narrated by their precedent Samuel Richardson in his novel *Clarrisa*.

The two novels also share a similar theme of the importance of checking one's emotions and sensibility. In *Munster Village*, Lord Munster examines the dangers of falling prey to one's excessive sensibility. Similarly, in *Mysteries of Udolpho* too, Emily's father warns her on his deathbed not to become a victim of one's sensibilities. He tells her, "Those, who really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance" (Radcliffe, 79-80). Radcliffe further portrays the dangers of excessive sensibility through the character Signora Laurentini, who had to live a dual life because of her unchecked passions.

Hence, it can be assumed now that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is an extended version of Walker's *Munster Village*.

### **5.5.2 Poetry in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:**

In the novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, there are nineteen poems inculcated by the author through the protagonist Emily. These poems are vital in order to understand the story. These poems tend to unlock multiple layers of meanings within the plot. It is noteworthy that the very first versions of the book consist of the subtitle 'Interspersed with some pieces of Poetry'. But the subtitle was removed from the later versions of the book. Other writers of the period such as Charlotte Smith, Matthew Lewis, and Thomas Holcroft also included poetry in their works. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe included the poems to provide vital companionship and support within the prevailing gothic atmosphere.

### **5.6 Characterization:**

One of the most striking things about Ann Radcliffe's art of characterization is the fact that the characters in Radcliffe's novel play a dominant role in the shaping of the plot. There are several models available for the analysis of a novelist's art of characterization. One such model is provided by E.M. Foster in his *Aspects of the Novel*. Foster provides the terms 'flat character' and 'round character' as tools for the analysis of fictional characters, using them to describe two different kinds of literary characters and two methods of characterization. A flat character is one that does not change in the course of the development of the story. On the other hand, a round character is one that changes and develops as the story progresses. This classification is useful as a guide to the analysis of characters in novels. In this regard, we may point out that Emily, the protagonist, is a round character as she changes and grows throughout the novel.

In the novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Ann Radcliffe has written her characters not as per the conventional structure. If we analyze the character of Montoni, we find that he is not the epitome of a proper Gothic villain. He is malevolent and scheming but at the same time, he is also not vile like other villains of Radcliffe's. He tends to have a sensible side since he is the one who has saved Emily from being abducted by Count Morano in the middle of the night. Moreover, when the castle was under siege, he is the one to send Emily and others away from

the castle for their safety. But there is no denying the fact that when greed gets the better of him, he turns out to be the most ruthless of all characters in the novel.

The protagonist, Emily, on the other hand, is portrayed as an innocent, beautiful, and wise Gothic heroine in the novel. Even though initially she is shown as weaker than most of the villainous characters in the novel, by the end of the novel she supersedes all to become one of the most loved and successful characters. Her character development is remarkable in the sense that despite going through a series of troubles and tribulations, she has been able to emerge as one of the strongest characters with all the virtues intact. At the beginning of the novel, she is shown to us as a character who is frail enough to go fainting on multiple occasions or someone who does not have control over her sensibilities. But as the story progresses she comes out as someone who uses her intelligence and wisdom to get out of the most sticky situations.

Madame Cheron/Montoni's characterization is important from the point that at the beginning of the novel, she served as a perfect example of a Gothic villain. Starting from taking Emily away from her love, Valancourt, to trying to get her married to some other Italian nobles without Emily's consent, Madame Cheron has proved to be one of the ruthless family members as portrayed in most Gothic fictions. However, it is only after her realization that she has married the wrong person, she goes through a change of heart. On her deathbed, she redeems her ruthlessness towards Emily by making her the heir to her estates.

Sister Agnes or Signora Laurentini is depicted as someone who has suffered for having no control over her passions and sensibilities. Through her character, Radcliffe tries to make her point justified that one should have a better hold over one's sensibilities. Although being a female character, Laurentini is shown as someone who could also commit a horrifying crime like murder.

It is interesting to note here that Valancourt is not portrayed as a Gothic hero in the novel. This is a way of subverting the ideals that one has to be a male in order to be the titular character in a piece of work. On many occasions, he is being shown as someone who helps the protagonist but at the same time, he is not free from vices.

**SAQ:**

How far do you think the art of characterisation has done justice with the plot of the novel? Give reasons. (100 words)

.....

## 5.7 Summing Up:

To sum up, in this unit, I have tried to discuss the areas like themes and characterization which are essential to the understanding of the text. In order to get a proper understanding of the novel, it is imperative to know about the constituting units of the novel. As has been mentioned in the introduction, the intention was to properly orient your approach in reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It is hoped that the objective of the unit has been fulfilled in helping you to understand the novel better and to place Radcliffe in the critical canon.

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## Unit 6

### *Aphra Ben: Oroonoko*

#### BACKGROUND

##### Contents:

##### 6.1 Objectives

##### 6.2 Introduction to novelist

##### 6.3 Biographical Sketch

##### 6.4 Novelist's Other works

##### 6.5 Placing the text

##### 6.6 Summing Up

##### 6.1 Objectives:

After the discussion of this unit, you shall be able to-

- *discuss* the life and works of Aphra Behn
- *identify* the primary areas of her works
- *investigate* some critical responses
- *assess* Aphra Behn as one of the most important literary figures of the seventeenth century

##### 6.2 Introduction to novelist:

The ascension of Charles II as the monarch reversed the prevailing Puritan notions and thoughts about morality and purity. A fashionable way of living took over the population, and the kingdom witnessed a drastic change. New and liberating ideas were welcomed easily, the public felt free to express themselves. The establishment of clubs and coffee houses paved the way for political and intellectual discussions. Moreover, the formation of the Royal Society of London opened up the vistas for scientific and rational thinking. Experiencing such social transformation in early adulthood was bound to ignite the flame of young minds and Aphra Behn was no exception to that. In fact, she went on to become one of the first female writers to make a mark in the erstwhile male-dominated English literary society.

Before moving towards the author and her works, let us familiarize ourselves with the literary environment of the Restoration Period. Its literature, with its emphasis on rationality and objectivity, was a celebration of the reestablishment of monarchy and the social changes it brought on one hand, and a strong and critical reaction towards the newly established court of Charles II on the other. This period witnessed the arrival of new models of drama and poetry from the French as the Court exiled in France prior to its restoration. "The kings' friends came back from France with a more secular, skeptical and civilized tone, and neo-classical ideas." As Michael Alexander puts it, the Restoration period in literature was "a period of novelty, change and re-foundation rather than of great writing." As you are already acquainted with the terms Restoration Comedy or Comedy of Manners and Restoration Tragedy, you should also be aware of the fact that drama was the most popular form of literature at that period, needless to mention the heights Restoration poetry had scaled with its use

of wit, irony and satire. Also referred to as the 'Age of Dryden', John Dryden was the most important literary practitioner of this period.

By the time Aphra Ben took up writing, novel as a form was still evolving. People preferred poetry and drama to fictional prose. Moreover, the opening up of theatres after the restoration of both the monarchy as well as the Church of England were instrumental in attracting the masses towards drama.

### **6.3 Biographical Sketch:**

Before drawing her biographical sketch, it is important to inform you that the biography of Aphra Behn is quite uncertain as there are diverse accounts put forward by many scholars. Aphra's life-story is basically constructed from various sources whose validity is questionable. Since there is no concrete evidence about her life, historians and scholars have relied on the few available sources like letters, prefaces, and some biographical accounts. Hence, we shall only concentrate on the events of her life that appear the same in multiple sources.

Born on December 1640, Aphra Behn is considered the first female writer to earn her living by writing. In a period where social, political and literary transitions were sweeping the established way of life, Aphra Behn stands out as one of the most important literary figures. Though there is no substantial evidence regarding her birth, it is believed that she was the daughter of one Bartholomew Johnson, a barber of Canterbury, and his wife Elizabeth Denham, who worked as a wet-nurse. According to one Colonel Thomas Colepeper, who claimed to be the sole witness of Aphra's childhood, Aphra had an elder sister named Frances, two brothers- one named as George and the other unnamed. Though devoid of formal education, she was quick witted and fond of learning. Nothing much is known about her life other than a few vague and unverifiable accounts of her upbringing. She was also cautious enough to cloud her past albeit providing some facets of her life in her many works.

A few sources suggest that she was an accomplished and experienced spy, and her espionages made her travel to various areas. One of them is supposed to be Surinam, an exotic British colony in South America that she travelled in the early 1660s, and which serves as the base for the novel *Oroonoko*. "The Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn. Written by One of the Fair Sex", whose validity is questionable, mentions that Aphra's father was dispatched to Surinam as the Lieutenant Governor of thirty-six islands and that he did not survive the journey. The sketch provided by Charles Gildon also indicates that she went to Surinam with her parents and siblings. Also, there were some letters which refer to a person named William Scot who was with Behn when she was in her spying mission at Surinam. Those letters allude to Aphra as a mistress to Scot.

After returning from Surinam she allegedly got married to one Mr. Behn and took up his surname. Mr. Behn was supposedly a merchant settled at London. Though there are no supporting documents regarding her marriage, the identity of Mr. Behn remained a myth. Many considerations have been made about him, the most notable one is that he was John or Johan Behn, the captain of a ship named 'King David'. By late 1665, Mr. Behn died of plague. In the same year, with the outbreak of the second Anglo-Dutch war, Aphra joined a spying mission of the English government. This mission is one of her few to be documented. She sets sail with 'Memorialls for Mrs. Affora', a list prepared by the office of the Secretary of State, which carried specific instructions regarding her objectives. However, the documents and letters reveal that she did not receive any financial support as the spy-handlers failed to provide any assistance. She requested the officials to help her but to no avail. Distressed by her failure in fulfilling the objectives and left with no financial means to survive,

she had to return to London by borrowing money. Documents in the Public Record Office of that time also suggest that she was to be taken to Debtor's Prison, but no concrete evidence exist about her incarceration. The London to which she returned could not negate her existing circumstances as the fire and the plague collectively had charred the city to blackness and stripped off thousands of population.

Before her entry into the literary world as an author, Behn worked as a scribe. It helped her to overcome her monetary difficulties to some extent. Apart from working as a legal copyist, she is believed to be associated with the scribbling underworld in publishing various leaflets and political manuscripts that the government did not allow. With the theatres reopening and the increasing appetite for good plays and best stage machinery, theatrical production houses were in search of best possible candidates for stage works and the like. A few documented scribal copies suggest that she might have initially worked with Dryden in Killigrew's theatre company named King's Company. Her aptness in spelling coupled with her beautiful handwriting made it easier for her to copy and adapt plays for the company. Evidences suggest she worked in some other theatre companies too. Her experiences in the companies gave her the hint that it was a perfect time for theatrical debut as a full-time professional. With the companies' demands for new contents skyrocketing and their need for twenty to twenty-five new plays per year, intense competition was budding in the theatre scenario of England. In 1670, she embarks upon her literary journey with the play *The Forc'd Marriage*, which was soon followed by the *The Amorous Prince* (1671). These plays served her well and she wrote another play named *The Dutch Lover* in 1673. However, this was not successful as the previous two. Distressed and disoriented she takes a break and disappears from the theatrical scene for almost three years.

Many speculations have been made about this period. Some sources suggest that she might have taken up travelling as a spy for the King, while other say that she might have found a lover named John Hoyle. In July 1676, she announces her return with *Abdelazer*, her only tragedy and "a brilliant revision of the early seventeenth-century play *Lust's Dominion*, perhaps by Dekker and others." *The Town-Fopp* came shortly thereafter in September 1676, and the audience saw her best work in the following year with *The Rover*. Behn's reputation as a successful playwright has been secured by this time. *The Rover*, however drew attention of the public on the count of plagiarism. Since the play was strikingly similar to *Thomaso*, an unproduced play from her earlier spymaster Thomas Killigrew, Behn had to defend herself by attaching a post-script. With the marriage of James, Duke of York with the catholic Mary of Modena, political turmoil started booming around the country. This affected the drama industry, and Aphra Behn too resorted to satire and political criticism in her plays. *Sir Patient Fancy*, *The Roundheads*, *The City-Heiress*, *The Second Part of The Rover* are some of the plays that emerged from the pen of Behn showing her intense hatred for anti-royalist tendencies. Her attack was so scathing that for the Epilogue of *Romulus and Herisilia* she as well as the female actor who delivered the said Epilogue were issued a warrant.

After being dormant for another couple of years, Aphra Behn announces her arrival into the world of fiction by publishing the first part of *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister*. She went on to publish *The Fair Jilt* and *Oroonoko* after that. You should be informed here that in the later part of her literary career Aphra mainly dealt with fiction, poetry and translation, whereas she produced only four plays. "According to the documentary record the last four years of her life were marked by poverty and illness." However, it was during this period that she produced the best of her works. She was so bankrupt that she had pledged her earnings from her works to clear off her debts. On April 1689, she breathed her last. She is buried in Westminster Abbey.

**Self-Asking Questions:**

1. Why did the restoration of monarchy change the social and moral codes of England? How did it assert its influence on literature?
2. Write a short note on Restoration comedy showing how it differs from its predecessors.

**6.4 Novelist's Other Works:**

As you are now acquainted with the life and works of Aphra Behn, I shall discuss some of her major works in brief. This section should help you to understand her literary oeuvre as a whole - the themes that she dealt with, the narrative technique that she employed, the approaches she took on the changing political environment of her times, and how her works demonstrate her views on the existing way of life. The idea behind this is to make you aware of the importance of her works in the literary world. Further, it shall enable you to understand the context in which the current work *Oroonoko* is based.

You should be aware that earlier only man acted on the stage, they even played the part of their female counterparts. The Restoration period provided massive scope for female identity and individuality as women actors were allowed to appear and act on the public stage for the first time. This provided opportunities for women to participate and display their talents. While majority of the talented woman were trying to make a mark in the public sphere by acting, Aphra Behn was an exception. After having worked in many theatrical companies as a scribe, she decided to choose the yet untrodden path of a creative writer, thereby becoming the first female individual to take up writing professionally in the history of England. In addition, she became one of the only three dramatists to establish herself after the opening of theatres, the two predecessors being John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell. As stated earlier her first work in the literary arena was a play named *The Forc'd Marriage*. Produced by the Duke's Company and staged in September 1670, it was a romantic tragicomedy dealing with the issues of sex and politics. It is a rejection of the parental power in marriage, emphasizing on the steps taken by the characters to get married to someone they want to spend their life. Alcippus represents the violent male force who cannot tolerate anything against his wishes. He strangles Erminia leaving her for dead when she refuses to marry him. The impact of Shakespeare's *Othello* can be seen here. However, witted Erminia feigns as a ghost and intends to make Alcippus repent for his actions. She convinces him to marry Galatea, a princess who was in love with him. The play makes use of disguise and costumes to drive home the content. It offers a happy-ending as the old king, who was initially hesitant to let his son Philander marry Erminia, gives up against the headstrong resolution expressed by the young characters. The theme of forced marriage is thus contented and the couples unite accordingly. The dilemma of a nobleman is represented by the character of Philander who is torn between his love and his loyalty to the throne. The female characters, though strong-willed, represent female subjectivity. Instances in the play suggest that there is a strong sense of competition between them in regards to beauty and admiration. *The Forc'd Marriage* also slightly deals with sexuality and sex, the areas which Behn would go on to explore more in her future works.

In *The Amorous Prince, Or The Curious Husband*, Aphra Behn takes up the issue of royal sexuality more explicitly. As the title suggests, the play is an exposure of sexual predatory levied by those in power. You should note that power and sex would be the recurrent themes in many of her works. Adhering to the bawdiness and sexual tendencies of the period, Behn justifiably exposes the

societal concerns of that time. Prince Frederick misuses his political power to satisfy his sexual urges. In the process, he initially seduces his friend Curtius's sister named Cloris, and finally stoops even lower to seduce the fiancée of that friend. Not interested in the administration and military motives, the man in power displays his political and masculine prowess against women. This play, like its predecessor *The Forc'd Marriage*, also relies on costume designing and disguise. Women in the play do not come outside of their chambers; the only character who ventures also does so in the guise of a man. Doors represent an important symbol here; the women do not cross it whereas the men can even kick the doors down if it comes before their path. The limits of space is highlighted, its access being privileged to masculine gender only. In the final scene, Behn uses the strong symbol of prostitutes that would remain recurrent in her other works too. She employs it to symbolise the oppression and abuse bestowed upon women. Speaking of the political aspect, this play is a direct attack on the rulers of that period. It shows how the important and powerful persons were engaged in sexual lecherousness instead of participating in enhanced military and governmental tactics. Their neglect of political and military duties and manipulation of power was becoming a danger for the public, which seriously concerned the thoughtful minds like Aphra Behn.

*The Dutch Lover*, a play of intrigues unlike her first two plays, follows the issues of mistaken identity in a Spanish setting. Set amidst the propagandist tendencies of the Third Anglo-Dutch war, it employs intrigue. Many veiled characters' identities are mistaken and armed soldiers enter the wrong place at the wrong time. It centres on the theme of marriage where several marriages are portrayed. The eponymous character of Haunce Van Ezel is that of a foolish man, who is due to marry Euphemia, the female hero of the play, at Madrid. On the other hand, Alonzo had landed on Spain to marry Hippolyta. However, none of them seems to be much interested. There is a certain kind of contrast regarding love- the male characters distinguish love and marriage as separate entities, they do love but do not wish to marry, whereas the female characters wish to love and marry. As evident from the play, the male characters do not appreciate of marriage because they see it as a constraint, a curtailment of freedom, as shedding away their libertine views. Though finally the play ends with the marriage of the couples, it suggests that marriage is not the means to an end, nor it is permanent. I have mentioned earlier that this was not successful, one of the reasons being that of its female authorship. When the play was first staged, she was in the audience. Even before the start of the play, she could hear people laughing and mocking at the fact that the writer was a woman. She was hugely disheartened at this misogynist and conservative mind-set. Another reason for its failure was that the instant success of Thomas Shadwell's new style of gentle take on sex comedy was a repose for the public because of its deviance from the prevalent approaches.

#### **Stop to Consider:**

'Libertinism' places sensual pleasures above all. The origin of the term traces back to John Calvin who used the term to describe the ones that rejected his prohibitions against drinking, foul language, and sexual adventures.

It shows strong disregard of convention or authority in sexual or religious matters. The sexual frankness of the seventeenth century and its lack of restraint relate to these libertine attitudes. Generally, it is a pattern of behaviour that rejects any moral authority, and self-indulges in personal desires without any heed to social codes or ethics. The literature of the seventeenth century highlights its effects on the general population after the restoration of monarchy in England.

*Abdelazer* is the only tragedy written by Aphra Behn. This story is about the moor named Abdelazer, who is a slave in Spain. He is able to gain royal favours and enjoys an honourable military position, and has married a Spanish noblewoman. In order to take revenge for the ousting of his father by the king of Spain, he plots to destroy the royal family. He apparently falls in love with the ageing Queen and uses her as a tool to accomplish his motive. She kills her husband, assist Abdelazer in killing her eldest son, and declares her younger son bastard, thereby conniving with him in destroying her own family. In this play, Behn gives importance to individual psychology rather than politics. By highlighting the inefficacy of the Queen to satisfy Abdelazer, Behn hints that human desire is fleeting and is impossible to be fulfilled. The inherent desire of men to manipulate and control women as objects shows the prevalent thought process, and she does not fall back in asserting her objection against such misogynist ideas. Almost all of her works subscribe to this rejection in one way or the other.

Her most successful and acclaimed play, *The Rover*, also her first sex comedy, deals with the struggle of women to contest the highly common libertine ideas by taking into account the sexual adventures of a group of men and women. Wilmore is the rover in the title, a naval captain who falls in love with Hellena, one of the two Spanish noble sisters who is about to be sent to a convent to become a nun. His love is recruited, however the entry of another woman named Angellica Bianca tends to spoil the newly bonded pair. On the other hand, Hellena's older sister Florinda attempts to evade her already fixed marriage to their brother's friend and hopes to marry her lover Colonel Belville. This exposes the theme of forced marriage and confinement and the characters' fight against it. The two sisters represent a force against the aristocratic dominance employed by the men to control and command their lives. Their determination to escape those familial dominions and follow their desires mark them out as Behn's protests against patriarchal social structure. Male violence prevails in the play, against both women and men. It reaches its peak in the character of an English countryman named Blunt. Blunt likes a girl and think that she is in love with him. He cannot contain his humiliation when he discovers that she is indeed a thief and a prostitute, and attempts to rape Florinda as his revenge to all women on earth. Blunt's attempt in achieving closure through attacking the dignity of a woman is a strong statement about the woman condition in Restoration England.

Aphra Behn overtly portrays her political thoughts through her play *Sir Patient Fancy*. In this play she addresses to the readers that she is "forced to write for Bread, and not ashamed to owne it." Staged in 1678, it is the story of an anxious old man who is excessively worried about his health. A man of good fortune, he marries Lucia as his second wife. However, he is blind to the fact that Lucia had married him only for his money. She is in love with the rakish Wittmore, and feigns her affection for the old man. As state politics was entering drama, the playwrights were left with no choice but to take sides. She was a Tory supporter and advocated the supremacy of the hereditary males. However, not being a full practitioner of propagandist drama, she assigned herself in creating sexually intrigued and politically implicated plays, and goes on to criticize the strict Puritan approaches that initiate chaos among the people. Further, Erotic feelings are in abundance where both mothers and daughters struggle for lovers, and the female characters are seen entering the libertine space for the first time in her plays.

She uses the setting of Italy to portray the patriarchal prison in *The Feign'd Curtizans*. She exposes how the choice of remaining a spinster was not available for the ladies, not marrying meant either a life in convent as a nun or as a prostitute in a brothel. Similar to *The Rover* it also plays with a group of youths who are looking for partners to engage in love. The plot revolves around two sisters named Marcella and Cornelia who flee to Rome in order to escape the fate decided by their familial patriarchal authority. By posing as the courtesans Euphemia and Silvanetta, they seek to enjoy the

independency and adventurousness of a life devoid of any familial and social obligations. Sympathy for English Protestantism also find expression through the experiences of the two sisters. You should note that Behn does not utilize any real prostitutes and avoids consummated sex in the play, which suggest her retreat from the genre of sex comedy. As the English audience's taste was changing, Behn was quick to adapt to new trends. However, being a comedy staged during tough political times, it was not as successful as Behn desired it to be.

With *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister*, Behn enters the area of romantic prose fiction. Published in three parts during 1683-87, it is one of the foremost works in English language to explore the genre of epistolary novel. Set against the famous scandal of Lord Grey of Werke and his wife's sister Lady Henrietta whose traces reflect in the characters of Philander and Silvia, it provided the scope for Aphra Behn to describe effectively and in details the sexual tension of the period. Sexual and domestic intrigues along with gambling, spying and courtship carry forward the plot. Further, her intended play with politics also take shape much earlier in the novel when she distinguishes her characters' affiliation to political ideologies.

By now, you have been given a comprehensive view of her range of works, and you should have a fair idea about the themes and contents she employed. Her inclination to hereditary monarchy is reflected in many of her works, and the sexual element that was so prevalent and desired by the audience of that time is highly justified by her texts. As you have seen that Behn's more matured and literarily significant works appeared towards the later part of her life, the text which we have in consideration, that is *Oroonoko*, stands out as her most appealing and enduring work of literature. In the following units, you shall be able to get an idea about the reasons for the significance and popularity of *Oroonoko*.

#### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Write a note about the prevailing literary traditions of seventeenth century England.
2. Discuss in brief the issues that Aphra Behn touches in her works. Give appropriate examples.

#### **6.5 Placing the Text:**

The theatre provided Aphra Behn the surface to expose her views of life, the life that she had experienced as a woman, a spy and as the one who tried to climb up the social ladder despite many difficulties. She used its scope to show the themes of forced marriage, puritanical hypocrisy, women's right to freedom, patriarchal dictatorship among others. However, she extends her range with her prose fiction. This time she blatantly exposes political operations of the British Empire, the impact of colonialism, the negative influences of the slave trade to name a few.

Marking a departure from her usual treatment of female body and love intrigues, *Oroonoko*, published in 1688, centres on the politics of colonialization and slavery. It garnered widespread attention since its publication and continues to attract scholars and critics even today. You should be informed that it is the primary text of Aphra Behn that has found entrance into the syllabus of various university departments, mainly because of its relevance in understanding the social, political and literary atmosphere of the time. Therefore, in order to broaden your understanding let me introduce you to a few responses put forward by various literary critics.



Janet Todd argues about *Oroonoko* that “if Behn lacks the modern concept of slavery, she does anticipate the modern sense that human beings should not be commodities, seen solely in terms of money. She made her anti-mercantile point in plays throughout her professional life; the slave trade is the most extreme version of commodification.” Though a passive participant in the guise of the narrator, she does not fall back in expressing her concerns about slavery.

Susan Z. Andrade by focusing “on the contradictory desires of the white female narrator of this novella, member of a group both marginal to and dominant in the colonial order” says that her reading involves “the ideological contradictions and political struggles” of the oppressed people. That the narrator herself is marginalised makes the readers aware of the racial relations between the black protagonist and the white narrator.

Banani Biswas examines the contradictions that *Oroonoko* facilitates and opines that it should not be limited to one “privileged interpretation”. She argues that this novel is made up of ‘multiple codes’ that offer variety of meanings.

Andrew Hiscock talks about the biographical positioning of Aphra Behn through the narrator and discusses the authenticity of her claims of it being a true story of an African prince.

Apart from these, there are many responses that we cannot discuss here because of our limited scope. It is advisable for you to go through some of the criticisms in order to enhance your understanding of the text. I shall try to incorporate some of the suggestions in the ‘Suggested Readings’ section.

## 6.7 Summing Up:

The background and life of the author enables you to acquaint yourselves with the literary and social traditions of the period. I have added some critical responses so that you might get a fair idea about interpreting a text. You should read the text by giving adherence to the fact that it is more like a part of experiment of a new form, the form that would dominate literature in the coming times.

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## Unit 7

### *Aphra Ben: Oroonoko*

#### INTRODUCING THE NOVEL

#### CONTENTS:

##### 7.1 Objectives

##### 7.2 Introduction

##### 7.3 What Happens in the Novel (The Plot)

##### 7.4 List of Characters

##### 7.5 Summing Up

##### 7.6 References and Suggested Readings

#### 7.1 Objectives:

After completing this unit, you shall be able to

- *understand* the plot of the novel
- *analyze* the characters
- *investigate* the elements of seventeenth-century social structure

#### 7.2 Introduction:

A general observation of her works mentioned in Unit 1 might lead you to speculate that she writes only about the feminine experience, the condition of women and that her works are limited only to expose the patriarchal manipulation of women. You should note that though female centric viewpoints prevail in most of her works, such a close-ended appreciation negates the other literary significances of her works. In order to justify ourselves as students of literature, we should read by expanding our scope of interpretation, allowing multiple points of view to develop. Having said that, I would advise you to read at least some of her major works, if not all, so that you may develop a comprehensive understanding of the texts, their contexts and historical implications.

Placing a work in a specific context allows us to understand the situation and events of the text. A conventional reading does the same. However, many modern advanced approaches suggest that a text is best read in isolation, without giving importance to the life

and works of the author. Theorists like Barthes, Derrida and others opine for a textual reading implicating that there is everything inside the text and that meanings are arbitrary. Therefore, to begin with, it is advisable for you to read and analyze the novel by yourself first so that that you may form your own ideas about *Oroonoko* and help in expanding, like I mentioned earlier, the scope of interpretation of the text. This unit is designed to provide you some general discussion in order to facilitate your general understanding and develop your own critical approach.

As you are already aware, the Eighteenth century was an era of change. It witnessed changes in politics, in familial spheres, in individualities and manners, and generally in all the social aspects of life. These changes contributed newer approach in literature as writers were quick to adapt to the changes going around them. The present novel is an example of this adaptation.

### **Stop to Consider:**

Novel as form had not been fully discovered then. Writers like Aphra Behn experimented with newer techniques like using a linear plot or a biographical account and explored the area of prose fiction. You should note that the form of the novel will be fully developed only in the eighteenth century. Prior to this, Behn explored the genre of what would be later called 'epistolary novel' with her *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*. Set in a narrative time frame, *Oroonoko* uses the background of colonial expansion and its impact on the people. It provides the scope that Behn had been looking for, the space to put forward her observations on the society in detail.

### **7.3 What Happens in *Oroonoko* (The plot in brief):**

*Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave* opens up with a dedicatory to Lord Maitland in the form of an epistle. In order to drive her point home Aphra Behn, in the voice of first-person, addresses the existing issues pertaining to 'Dedication' in literary works. The passage maintains the ways of the world where even a single vice in someone might disallow for the praise of his/her virtues. Forming an argumentative opinion about the flattery induced in many dedicatory passages, she goes on to praise the addressee by commenting on his immeasurable knowledge and virtues. She then introduces the character of a royal slave who would go on to become the protagonist of her text and praises his greatness. She asks the addressee to give sympathetic considerations to the protagonist. For he was a man of indomitable courage and valour, his greatness is ought to be recognized. In the section, we are told that the story is based on her own experiences. Behn argues that it is a true story of a royal person who lived in the 'other world', and whose fate would not have been so inglorious had he been fortunate. She was so amazed at the slave's personality that if she were a person of power she would have protected him from the unfortunate events that would follow later in his life.

Aphra Behn then mentions about the uniqueness of the culture of the protagonist's world, and argues that it appears different from her own because of its newness and strangeness. She asks the addressee to give way for any romantic elements that might appear in the text, for they are so by virtue of their diversity. Behn welcomes the judgement of the critical readers and seeks forgiveness for any discrepancies that might appear in her narration of her first-hand experiences.

She opens up her story by mentioning that she was a witness to most of the events that would follow; and for the historical part of which she was not a part, she has presented the events in accordance to the narration put forward to her by the hero (the royal slave) himself. She lets the readers know that since she was highly charmed by the slave's character, she wanted to know every bits and pieces of his adventurous life. However, considering the fact that all of it might appear tedious and heavy to the general readers because of its unique qualities, she omits many instances of the "whole transactions of his youth" that he had provided her. This is where she also mentions that the story is based on a British colony named Surinam (South America) and that it primarily accounts for the last part of his adventures.

Before going on with the adventures of the protagonist, she reminds the readers about the things that the colonialists traded with the natives of Surinam, exotic and things and animals and birds. The diversity of these living and cultural entities enthralls the narrator as she describes their appearances with great enthusiasm. Also, the people there are adorned with various ornaments that are unique to them, and these give them an exotic appearance. Their finely shaped features coupled with their distinctive ornaments make them "wonderful figure(s) to behold." The only thing the narrator does not quite favour of is their colour, they are reddish yellow in colour, and as they use oiling quite frequently, their body colour appears like that of a new brick, quite contrasting to the colonials who are white in appearance. However, she agrees that despite their colour, they are "smooth, soft and slick. They are extremely modest, bashful and very shy of being touched." Their appearance and behaviour gives her an idea of "the first state of innocence", humanity untainted with dirty politics, cunningness, manipulation and sin. Except for the vices taught by white men, they know of no other offenses.

Their matrimonial system follows polygamy, and the younger wives served the older ones with respect and dignity. This place had no kings and the population followed and obeyed the oldest war captain with great admiration. They had great battle and hunting skills in both land and water. The narrator says that the colonialists lived with great harmony with the inhabitants of Surinam. They judiciously used the natives to their advantages inflicting no harm or disrespect to them; this was primarily because of the absolute necessity to maintain cordial relations and good understanding as the natives easily outnumbered them in population.

The people that the colonialists used in their plantations in Surinam were "black negroes", who were transported from other areas of the continent. Coramantien, a country of black people, was one such place that was quite advantageous for trading slaves. Being constantly engaged in battle with the neighbouring areas, they held a great number of

captives. These captives were later sold as slaves to the white traders. The king of Coramantien was old, exceeding hundred years of age, and all thirteen of his sons had already died in battles. He was left with only one grandson, the only living son of one of his dead warrior sons. As soon as the child was able to hold bow and arrow, he was sent to training under one of the oldest generals of war. The general was able to mould him into one of the bravest soldiers that had ever fought, and by the age of seventeen, he was transformed into a beauty, both in appearance and in conduct. It is against this background that Aphra Behn introduces us with prince Oroonoko, the grandson of the old king. By now, you might have clued that the story of this prince Oroonoko, the eponymous hero, would make the story of this novel.

When his tutor and guide, the older general, takes an arrow meant for Oroonoko and sacrifices himself during a battle, the army was left without a leader. Since there was no one fitter than Oroonoko for the job, the army proclaimed him as the new general. It is after this battle that Oroonoko returns to his home Coramantien, which he had been able to visit scarcely since he went away for training at the age of five. When he comes and greets the narrator for the first time, she is awestruck by his personality. His refined manners and great wisdom, so rare of his age and profession during that time, coupled with his extraordinary physical beauty and prowess, made him look like out of this world.

Oroonoko visits the house of his foster-father, the dead general, to meet his daughter Imoinda in order to seek excuses for his death. He also seeks to present the captives in war as trophies to honour her father's victories. As soon as his eyes meet Imoinda he falls in love with her, for her beauty and personality exceeded everything that he had ever encountered. Their courtship begins and both of them are mesmerized by each other. They make vows not to lay their eyes on any other person, to live by completely dedicating themselves to their love until death do them apart. After their condescension to marry, they decide to share their plans with Oroonoko's grandfather, as it was customary to inform the monarch first, who held absolute value with public life. And what is more, he is also a parent to Oroonoko, hence his blessings were necessary for both public and private reasons.

However, on the other hand, his grandfather's, the old King, had other plans in mind. The beauty of Imoinda was such that it was able to ignite a new spark in his almost burnt out desires, and he becomes impatient to take her in his arms. Though he had had many experiences with his many wives and numerous mistresses throughout his long life, this feeling was new, the senses heightened whenever he thought of beholding her. His curiosity further heightens when the intelligence informs him that Imoinda is a mistress to Oroonoko. He feels disappointed and decides to test the state of her feelings. When Oroonoko was away for a hunt, he sends one of his men to visit her and bring information; and when he becomes sure that her feelings and desires all attribute to Oroonoko, he is distressed. He consoles himself by acknowledging that if not love, duty would compel her to come to him.

He sends the royal veil to Imoinda. The royal veil in their culture is a sort of invitation by the king. According to their customs, if one receives it she has to honour the king's bed. Not accepting the royal veil means disobeying the king, for which the punishment was death penalty. Imoinda is shell-shocked and disgusted for she was aware that delaying and pleading

against it is dangerous and would mean high treason. Unwillingly she accepts the offer and covers herself with the veil. When the guards lead her into the king's room, him waiting for her in his bath, to receive and caress her, she falls on the floor and begs the king to hear her. She cries and says that it would be glorious to oblige her king if were she not another man's wife. Therefore, the king would be committing a great sin if she did not reveal him this, for taking another man's woman was dishonourable and sinful. He demands the name of the man who had dared to marry a woman of her status without the king's knowledge and approval. Imoinda, sensing that she had revealed too much, now that the safety of Oroonoko was compromised, tries to calm him down before revealing his name but to no avail. The king, however, turns deaf to her words and orders her to deny her marriage. Imoinda knew resisting it would be in vain, so she agrees to be led into the bath.

As soon as he returns, Oroonoko goes to visit her and finds her gone. He gets the word that Imoinda had received the royal veil. Enraged and hurt, he goes crazy. His companions try to reason him to calmness by saying that because of his feeble health, the king cannot ravish her. But his sorrow gets the better of Oroonoko. He mourns that he has lost her and could not do anything about it. He expresses his desires that if it were not for the laws of the land, he would have turned everything upside down to retrieve her. Since it was not customary to marry the parent's wives or mistresses, he was out of options. However, Oroonoko senses a faint ray of hope when his companions assure him that it would not be unlawful to retrieve her. Since she was already pledged to Oroonoko, the breaching of law would fall on his grandfather. And if he wanted to bring her out of the *otan* (palace of the king's women), it was justifiable and lawful enough to do so.

The king was not devoid of repentance. He was constantly troubled for having been compelled by his desire to snatch away his grandson's happiness, for he knew that he had taken away his dear's most valuable and loved treasure. He enquires about his grandson's situation, but Oroonoko's friends, who blindly followed and respected the man who was their General and Prince, assure the king about the well-being of Oroonoko. That he has let go of his emotions and has willingly accepted her submission to the king, and keeps himself occupied with mathematicians, battle plans and hunting. The king, however, was not aware of the friends' plan to feign the disinterestedness of Oroonoko for Imoinda. They thought it would serve Oroonoko's purpose in retrieving Imoinda later on. Therefore, Oroonoko too acts as if nothing has ever happened whenever he confronts the king. This pleases the king and he happily relays the information to Imoinda thinking that she will also forget about Oroonoko and fully devote herself to the king. Imoinda also pretends to welcome the news with content and appears to be happy only to weep and sob while alone.

The king, now entirely convinced of Oroonoko's feigned emotions and faked appearances, takes him to the *otan*. Inside the palace, Oroonoko comes across Imoinda. Oroonoko's countenance changes and his feelings were about to be discovered had his friend Aboan not controlled the situation. They stare at each other and speak a thousand words through their eyes. Both could feel the strong feelings they had for each other. However, when Oroonoko sees the bed made ready for the king his heart breaks down. He sighs and cries in a corner. When one of the king's wives named Onahal enquires about his condition,

Oroonoko speaks about his undying love for Imoinda. Onahal assures him that the king had not stripped her of her modesty. Together with Aboan, she is able to convince him there is nothing to be jealous. They persuade him to gather courage, with Onahal accepting to help in his endeavour by letting the truth about Oroonoko's sufferings and faithfulness.

Oroonoko conspires with Aboan to make use of Onahal. Aboan feigns love and desires for Onahal and she gladly receives it. The second instance they get the invitation to the women's palace, Oroonoko knows that this could be his last chance. He accompanies the king, and while the mistresses were dancing, Imoinda trips over and is about to fall. Oroonoko responds quickly and holds her only to realise that his actions have raised doubts. She improvises by springing out of his hands and resumes her dance. The king, furious in jealousy, commands Imoinda to her room and orders Oroonoko to dispatch, never to appear before the court again, confirming that disobeying it would mean his death.

For Onahal the departure of Oroonoko meant the departure of her new love Aboan. She could not bear to do so, hence she invites both of them to the orange groves near the palace. The plan was to receive them at midnight so that both the couples could consummate their love. On the other hand, the king was not a fool. He orders his men to spy Oroonoko and report him the results. When Aboan and the prince leave their camp to arrive at the grove at the intended time, the spies follow them. They trace them to the gate of the *Otan* and report the tidings to the king. On the other hand, Oroonoko meets Imoinda at the palace and they make love. Engrossed in each other they fail to acknowledge the time. The clamouring of men outside her room breaks the reverie. Oroonoko quickly draws his battle-axe and dares anyone to enter the room. The guards, not unknown to Oroonoko's fighting abilities, respond that they were sent by the king and would report him back. They leave Oroonoko advising him to find his safety before anything untoward happens.

Oroonoko bade farewell to Imoinda advising her to convince the king that he surprisingly broke into her apartment, and that Imoinda had nothing to do with it. The king visits the palace after a while; Imoinda follows the advice of Oroonoko and tries to persuade the king about her non-allegiance. The furious king, realizing that it was a crime to touch her now as his grandson had already laid his hands on her, and nor can he send her to Oroonoko because she had received the royal veil, removes her from the *Otan*. The king orders that both Imoinda and Onahal be sold as slaves.

The king realises that Oroonoko is the only heir to his throne, and gradually calms down his anger against him. He judges the news of her sale would infuriate Oroonoko beyond limit and might lead to unfortunate incidences. In order to prevent any mishappenings, he does the sale in secret. He also sends a messenger to Oroonoko's camp with the false news of Imoinda's death. Oroonoko grieves day in and day out. As he was in the midst of a battle when the news was delivered, he leaves fighting and confines himself in his tent. However, soon realizing the plight of his fellow soldiers, who were about to be defeated in the battle, he grabs his equipment and plunges in the battlefield. He fight with indomitable courage and spirit leading his army to victory.



No sooner had he returned from the battle he gets the news that an English ship had landed on their port. The captain was well-known to him and Oroonoko provides him a warm welcome. Their acquaintance was old and Oroonoko had great respect for this captain. In order to return the favours of Oroonoko, the captain invites him into his vessel so that he could host him. On the appointed day, Oroonoko and his companions visit the captain's ship and are captured. The Captain feeds them with variety of wine, when they are intoxicated enough he tricks them into captivity. Oroonoko is betrayed and hurt. When the ship reaches Surinam, a colony of the English monarchy, Oroonoko and his companions are sold as slaves. The man who buys Oroonoko is a young Cornish man named Trefry, a man of great wit and learning. For his knowledge and ability to speak French and English, Oroonoko receives special treatment. Since the colonialists faced difficulty in pronouncing the native names of the slaves, Oroonoko is christened as Caesar.

Oroonoko and Trefry frequently engage themselves in many discussions; it is during one of the discussions that Trefry mentions about a beautiful slave girl whom they had named Clemene. He says the girl is too beautiful and witty, and resisting pursuing her is one of the greatest difficulties in he had had in a while. So, when he takes Oroonoko to show this girl, we discover that the slave girl is none other than Imoinda. They unite and live as husband and wife happily thereafter. They read, hunt and travel to places along with the narrator. Soon Imoinda conceives a child, and that ignites Oroonoko the desire to return to his homeland. He expresses his desires to do so and the officials assure him of it. However, as time flies he receives no confirmation. Everytime he brings forth the issue they tell him that they have been waiting for the arrival of Lord Governor. As soon as he lands, Oroonoko and Imoinda shall be granted the freedom to return to their homeland.

Their wait bears no fruit other than false assurances. Desperate to leave the place Oroonoko organizes a slave revolt. He uses his oratory skills to unite the other slaves for the cause of their freedom. They revolt and flee towards the woods. When the words go out, the English soldiers chase and fight them. Oroonoko, Imoinda and all fight valiantly against them. However, the deputy governor Byam lures the other slaves to surrender by promising them amnesty. As they surrender, Oroonoko and his sidekick Tuscan are whipped and punished at the command of Byam. Oroonoko promises revenge and, as soon as he is strong enough to walk he flees and hides in the woods. Oroonoko raises concern about the safety of Imoinda, because his actions against Byam would put her life in danger. Therefore, the couple mutually decide that it would be best to kill Imoinda first. After that, he would kill Byam and eventually finish himself.

However, things do not go as planned. The murder of Imoinda crushes him, he spends time mourning for two days. This makes him weak and unable to go forward with his resolution. The guards discover him and as they approach, Oroonoko cuts off his throat and disembowels himself exposing his fearlessness. As one of the guards advance, he stabs him. However, they finally capture him. He is provided medical care and he miraculously survives. The narrator and Trefry are alien to the secret plan devised by the governor to finish Oroonoko. When both of them go out to carry on with their respective businesses, an Irishman named Banister takes Oroonoko and ties him at the same stake where he had been

whipped earlier. Lighting a big fire before him, the executioner cuts off his ears and other body parts and threw them into the fire. Oroonoko smokes his pipe and endures everything until both of his hands are cut off. Finally his head sinks as he draws his last breath.

#### **Self Asking Questions:**

1. Is the novel sympathetic to slavery?
2. Do the female characters occupy the same position as the males?

#### **7.4 List of Characters:**

##### **Oroonoko/Caesar-**

Oroonoko is the true epitome of physical prowess, beauty and manners. A man of many qualities, he is almost next to a supernatural being. His refined manners, touch of humility, absolute generosity, notion of honour, quick wit, good judgment and indomitable bravery along with his mighty knowledge about the world make him stand out in the text. It is not for nothing that the narrator is so fond of this character. Reading of the text reveals that he is also a passionate lover and has great oratory and conversation skills. Untainted by the dirty aspects of human life like corruption and lies, he represents the highest level of heroism and greatness.

An innocent soul, he becomes the victim of lust and betrayal. His grandfather's lust comes as the first setback of his otherwise happy and glorious life. Secondly, the betrayal by his long-term trade associate turns his life upside down. These two events are the turning points that drive his life towards doom. The character of Oroonoko serves as Aphra Behn's mouthpiece in representing how the manipulative and greedy minds of the western world could destroy a pure soul. That such a man falls prey and meets his end to betrayal and slavery exposes the evils of the English society.

The character of Oroonoko is important for the fact he is different from other people of his country. His intellectual and high level of thinking is likened with the learned European world, so are his physical attributes like his body colour and the shape of his nose. The narrative describes him more as a European aristocrat than a tribal warrior. In fact, he is the ultimate hybrid of these two cultures whose leadership skills and greatness invite nothing but wonder and amazement.

##### **Imoinda/Clemene-**

Imoinda is Aphra Behn's female version of Oroonoko. Bestowed with extraordinary physical and mental qualities, she is the most sought-after woman. No male eyes fail to acknowledge her beauty and desire her. Her charms and modesty are the talks of the town. Her beauty exceeded the normal yardsticks so much so that it is able to light up the desires of even a man

who is more than hundred years of age. The narrator calls her 'Queen of Night' and opines that she had never seen such a beautiful woman.

Her dedication to Oroonoko, even after so many untoward incidences, is totally out of the world. Even when trapped at the arms of an old man, or being seduced by various men of power throughout her life, she can think of nothing but her love and obligation to Oroonoko. Such was her love that she does not even hesitate to give up her life to serve her husband's cause. Rather, she is delighted to be of service to him.

Though the royal veil was a blow to her pride and dignity, she stays calm and composed, and never lets it stain her relationship with Oroonoko. Aphra Behn represents the feminine grace, devotion and modesty in the highest level through her character. The grit with which she rejects and looks away from the male gaze is truly commendable. Aphra, being a solo female professional writer at that time, does not shy away in representing the strength of a woman in the erstwhile male dominated society.

### **The King-**

The King is the grandfather of Oroonoko. A man of hundred plus years, he represents the patriarchy that was prevalent during the Restoration period. A man of ultimate authorial power, he does not spare even his grandson's love interest. Through his character, Aphra Behn uses the opportunity to expose the plight of women.

His unrepressed desires to be physical with Imoinda is an example of the male ego. Armed with the realization that his actions shall have direct consequences in the parental relationship, he does not fall back in quenching his physical desires. What is more, the narrator tells us about the physical feebleness of the old man. Though aware of the sexual limitations of his old age, he forces Imoinda to come to him. This act of coercion might be AphraBehn's attempt to disclose that men could not take no for an answer.

The King cannot use his physical abilities to woo Imoinda; instead, he uses the royal power for his personal motives. His royal veil represents the highest level of patriarchy let alone polygamy. Though concerned about the well-being of Oroonoko and repentant of his own actions, he does not try to rectify his mistakes. Instead, he devises a plan to keep Oroonoko in dark, and secretly sells Imoinda off as slave.

### **Onahal-**

She is one of the King's wives. She is like the managing head of the *otan* and is responsible for organizing the King's entertainment in the palace. Onahal feels the fire of her lost youth when she meets Aboan. She conspires with him in helping Oroonoko enter the *otan* secretly. Her character throws light on the state of a woman who has lost her youth and beauty, her only importance now lies in her ability to manage the ongoings of the *otan*. Besides this, she holds no powerful position of authority due to a king's wife.

### **The Narrator-**

The narrator is a continuous presence; most of the events related to Oroonoko are addressed by the narrator in the first person. She serves as the direct voice of Aphra Behn. From her statements, we can perceive that she is not indifferent to the cultures of the African people. She presents unbiased views and leaves the judgment to the readers. She appears sympathetic to the plight of the African people; however, she does not directly speak against slavery. She admires the food and customs of the African natives.

### **Trefry-**

Trefry is a young Cornish gentleman working at Surinam. He manages the affairs at the colony and works under deputy governor Byam. He is a learned man, skilled in mathematics and linguistics. He is sympathetic to the plight of Oroonoko and assures to help him with whatever is within his power. They become great friends, and he is the one who introduces Oroonoko to Clemene, who later turns out to be Imoinda. He aspires the best for Oroonoko and decides to write his biography after he was murdered. However, he died before completion.

#### **Check Your Progress:**

1. *Oroonoko* can be regarded as the first anti-slavery novel. Give your views from your understanding of the text.
2. Does Oroonoko's greatness in some way contribute to his fall? If yes, justify your answer.

### **7.5 Summing Up:**

I have described the story in brief in order to make you understand its plot. You should look at the character's involvement in the plot and explore how Behn uses them. The story is simple, however, reading it in the context of the socio-political situations brings out its prominence. The purpose was to facilitate you with the important events and character so that you can develop a comprehensive understanding of the upcoming unit.

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## Unit 8

### Aphra Ben: *Oroonoko*

#### THEMES AND TECHNIQUES

#### Contents:

#### 8.1 Objectives

#### 8.2 Introduction

#### 8.3 Major Themes

#### 8.4 Narrative Techniques

#### 8.5 Form of the Text

#### 8.6 Characterization

#### 8.7 Summing Up

#### 8.8 Suggested Readings

#### 8.1 Objectives:

After the completion of this unit you shall be able to-

- *identify* the major themes of the novel
- *understand* the form of the text
- *analyse* the narrative structure
- *assess* the characters' contribution to the form of the novel

#### 8.2 Introduction:

As you read the text, you realize that there are certain issues or subject matters that catch your attention. These stand out and help in the forward movement of the plot. These are generally regarded as themes; themes are the basis of the text. They enable us to know the writer's purpose of the text. However, you should also note that there are certain recurrent themes that occur in most of the works of a particular author. Sometimes they are explicit, while sometimes they remain under the radar of other themes.

In order to make a comprehensive evaluation of the themes of a certain text, it becomes necessary to read the body of works of that author. Comprehensive reading enables

you to pinpoint the issues and perceive how the author handles it in his/her various texts. Further, the narrative techniques employed by the author in a particular text are very important; the author uses these techniques to deal with the themes in order to produce a lasting effect on the readers. Therefore, we shall discuss the themes of Oronooko first, and then move towards the narrative strategy used by the author in the text.

### **8.3 Major Themes:**

#### **8.3.1 Honour-**

The God-like heroism of Oronooko mainly depends on his approaches to honour. It would not be wrong to say that his life depends and revolves around it. His noble birth, coupled with his intense military training and love for knowledge, mould his personality in such a way that he becomes a rare find. The plot of the text examines Oronooko's approach to honour in both good and bad circumstances. He does not compromise honour no matter the situation. For this, he finds himself in tough situations where he cannot single out a good alternative. Being tribal natives, those around Oronooko also regard honour very highly. For example, the character of Aboan displays honour in terms of necessity. He is highly honourable at times, while, on the other hand, he may do something half-heartedly. Like he rises to the occasion when he leads the troops in battle, but accepts to fake love for Onahal in order to help his friend Oronooko.

Unlike others, Oronooko is totally committed to be honourable in all his actions. His never-compromise attitude towards words and promises often lead to unamendable errors. His strict moral ethics makes him vulnerable to the ills and lies of people. A man of words, he believes in people's promises like he himself practices, and gets deceived. His grandfather lies him, the captain of the vessel betrays and enslaves him, and lastly deputy governor Byam manipulates him into surrender and eventually leads him to his death.

When Imoinda gets pregnant, his sense of honour gets the better of him. In spite of being treated like a gentleman more and less a slave, he cultivates desires to be free and is depressed by living under the white people. This leads him to organize a revolt, the revolt that would become the main cause of his doom. To be under another person is dishonourable for him and he does not want his child to grow up like that. Therefore, death was more favourable than a life of slavery; killing of his wife is more honourable than leaving her at the mercy off the colonialists.

#### **8.3.2 Slavery-**

The concept of slavery was not as understandable to Aphra Behn's audiences as it is now. There was the idea that some people were destined to be enslaved because of their race and colour; it was so because there was a general Western conception that everything that is not white and alien is inferior. During the publication of the text, freedom was not an inseparable human right. The superior race could oppress and rule whomsoever they deemed inferior to

themselves. Having said this, I would like you to note that the whites are not the only ones to practice slavery in the text; the men of colour are also equally engaged in the slave trade. Oronooko trades the captives of war with the white captains and colonialists. We can say that though race and colour were the main concerns regarding slavery, people also practiced slavery within people of same colour. To put it in brief, slavery was mostly associated with power. The captured and the defeated Africans were most likely to end up as slaves for another powerful African tribe.

You might have discovered from your reading that Aphra Behn does not advocate her viewpoint against slavery. She offers little commentary regarding the slave holding traditions of Surinam and Coramantein and leaves it for the readers to decide whether it is morally right or wrong to practice. Though *Oronooko* is often regarded as the first anti-slavery novel, it does not in any instance opposes slavery. What it does is represents how the practitioners execute slavery. It shows the manipulation, politics and profit involved in the business. It efforts in highlighting the trials and tribulations of the slave trade.

### **8.3.3 Freedom-**

The capture of Oronooko make him realize how important freedom is. Initially, he uses diplomatic tactics with the Captain to negotiate his freedom from chains. We see him encouraging his companions to accept their fate bravely and not to lose their honour. However, during his stay with Imoinda in the slave hut, the realization and craving of freedom hit him hard. When he thinks about the fate of his yet unborn child in the hands of the colonial masters, he aspires to return to his homeland as a free man. In spite of his repetitive persuasions to the overseer, his requests for release are procrastinated. He determines that the only way out would be violence. The aspiration to be free was so intense that Oronooko and Imoinda mutually decide death was the only option, and while doing so they do not even hesitate to finish off the life of the unborn along with them.

I have separated the themes of slavery and freedom into two parts for some reasons. First, Aphra Behn, in her effort to detail out the slave experiences, make her God-like hero fall into slavery. Before his own captivity, Oronooko happily traded the men he had captured at wars as slaves to various European merchants. Enjoying his position and authority, he was blind to the plight of the slaves. It is only when he experiences it first-hand, the realization of freedom dawns upon him. This realization carries forward the plot as Oronooko now becomes determined to be free no matter the consequences. Secondly, he was treated above other slaves and was not made to toil day in and day out in the plantations like other captives. In fact, he enjoys a gentleman's life in the colony. However, the plight of his unborn child's future coerces him to realize how dishonourable it would be for him to bring an innocent baby directly in the grasp of slavery. The contrasting experiences of freedom and slavery makes the readers aware of the unalienable right of freedom one is entitled to.



### **8.3.4 Racism:**

The issues of freedom and slavery directly relate to racism. The white colonists in Behn's text support racism. The subjugation of the non-white African cultures either by oppression or by lure is clearly evident. People like Byam and Banister openly dictate their superiority and torture the slaves. On the other hand, Trefry and even the narrator silently support racism without any dissent. No apparent statements against racism can be discerned from the text, this implies the narrator's indifference to the issue. We are not sure that whether it represents Aphra Behn's own ideas, or is an attempt to show the public opinion about racism and slavery through her narrator.

Whatever might be the reason, racism is a defining factor in the plot's movement. In the hierarchy of social status, the colonists occupy the highest place. The attitude was that the people of colour are best suited for hard labour. Behn represents the prevailing attitude of colonist Europeans who think that Africans have no important place in society other than serving them. Further, the intent to capture and enslave them seems natural for the whites; they exempt Surinam because its population far outnumbered theirs.

### **8.3.5 Colonialism:**

With the rampant expansion of the British Empire, the trade of raw materials reached newer heights. The colonists thought domination by the empire was a requisite for trade. In order to do so, they asserted their superiority over the natives. The present text too does not directly speak against the domination strategy.

According to the narrator, before the advent of the colonialists, the natives led an innocent life. Aphra Behn likens their innocence to that of Adam and Eve. Vice, cunningness, sin and betrayal were unknown to them. The colonists, with their corrupt practices, introduced law and religion in order to preserve order. However, the text implies that the natives were better off without that. The introduction of western principles only taught the natives to lie, manipulate and use dishonest means.

That power brings out the evil nature of a human being is exemplified by the character of Byam. He uses fear and intimidation to govern his slaves. The fact that he sends off the pieces of Oronoko's body to other colonies reveal the vicious attitudes of the slave owners. The idea is to display them as a warning to whoever might attempt to act like Oronoko in the future. The impact of colonialism on the natives as well as on the colonists can be traced throughout the text. Behn does not fail to mention that there are some exceptions; characters like Trefry and Martin are not as vicious as their colleagues. However, their inability to resort to violence keeps them off power and allows persons like Byam to practise whatever amuses him.

### 8.3.6 Betrayal-

Betrayal is one of the most consistent aspects *Oronooko* deals with. The protagonist's whole life is driven by betrayal. Initially, his grandfather deceives him. This forces him to forget Imoinda and leave the court. Then his long time trade ally tricks him on the pretext of an invitation and sells him off as a slave. These turn of events make Oronooko aware of the inherent injustice of colonial practices. While deciding to quit his life of slavery, he requests the authority for his freedom. After a series of false assurances, he realizes that it was time of action rather than persuasion. Further, the army of slaves he had gathered to revolt also betray him when Byam promises them amnesty. As all of them surrender Oronooko too yield. Byam tricks him into surrender, and as soon as he gets the chance, he captures Oronooko and whips him at the stake to make an example of him. All these events of betrayal ultimately coerce Oronooko to meet his end.

Oronooko held promises as divine and never stepped down in fulfilling them. He decides through his experiences that he shall never trust Christians and their words. That no other people assured so much and performed so little. Though Oronooko is powerful enough to subdue his enemy, his code of honour provides them the window of opportunity to deceive him. Throughout the text, the colonists use his honour code against him and get the upper hand by lying to him.

### 8.3.7 Gender-

A product of the seventeenth century when gender roles were strictly pronounced, *Oronooko*'s female characters reveal the condition of women of that period. Other than the narrator herself, no other female characters occupy dominant position in the novel. Rather, they are seen as objects of desires whose only purpose is to satisfy the lust of men.

The female protagonist Imoinda, other than her physical and mental beauty, can not go against the dominant patriarchal structure. Her love for *Oroonokowas* pure and genuine, but it was not powerful enough to make her reject the royal veil. Dominated by the strict set of rules against disobedience, she reluctantly gives her away to the King. For it was not customary to reject a man's order, not even thinkable when it comes directly from the patriarchal monarch. The system was designed in a way that man could use woman as they wished.

The *Otanis* the perfect example of gender discrimination. A place built for the sexual exploits of the king, it symbolizes that youth and physical beauty was the only things that mattered. The plight of Onahal, one of the King's own wives, who had to arrange for the dances, entertainment and all such things in the palace, is a testimony to female subjugation. Coupled with it is the law of the royal veil. Whoever receives it has to warm the King's bed. Negotiations and rejection were out of the question.

Another issue is polygamy. By allowing men to marry as many woman as they wish for, the system negates the importance of woman in social status. Even the wives of the king had no power or status, let alone the common woman. The portrayal of the female characters

in the text correspond to the plight of women in the seventeenth century. Even the educated and advanced European colonists did not hold woman in high esteem. Though belonging to the elite class of the colonists, the narrator can do nothing about the plight of the slaves. Devoid of any power, she can only become a spectator of the happenings.

**Self-Asking Questions:**

1. Do the themes of *Oronoko* provide you a general overview of the seventeenth-century literary traditions?
2. Is the character of Oronoko designed to instil fear among those who might dare to revolt against the colonial powers?

#### **8.4 Narrative Technique-**

Narrative technique, in the simplest of terms, means the methods used by the authors to drive their point home. It also encompasses the elements that the author uses to develop his/her story. The characters' viewpoints, their participation in the plot, their descriptions, their actions, the setting, the narratorial voice, all contribute to narrative techniques.

Aphra Behn develops a female narrative voice that invites the readers to participate directly with the plot. It appears as if she is directly relating us the ground reports of the text's settings. To make her story more agreeable and approachable, Behn makes her narrator participate in the events of the plot. She also uses follow up conversations during important events of which she was not directly a part. Her technique of a participant narrator allows her to intrude and give personal asides, which makes the narrative more interesting.

Another scope that Behn's technique provides is that of travel writing. Since she says that she had written the text based on her stay at Surinam while waiting to be transported back to England, her descriptions of the customs and traditions make her story more believable. She presents detailed descriptive versions of the local environment, food, animals, cultural practices, battle strategies, plantations, slave trade- everything that one finds in a travelogue. This speciality allows the readers to differentiate the customs of the Europeans and that of the natives, and paint their own pictures using imagination.

By making the narrator female, she uses the scope of fiction to reflect on the social role of women in seventeenth century England. In addition to this, the female narrative voice also presents the readers with Behn's personal views about contemporary issues. The first-person truth claims of the participant narrator mix the ideas of Aphra Behn and her narrator. In fact, she takes up distinct styles for the sections relating to Coramantein and Surinam. She shifts swiftly from first-person to third-person as the situation demands.

Despite being witness to the injustices of slavery and misuses of power, the narrator's inability to change the fate of Oronoko might also hint at the state of women writers; they were supposed to be silent and passive. She is sympathetic to the plight of the slaves, but she does not make strong statement against slavery. Further, though belonging to the elite section of the colonists, she does nothing major to convince or persuade for Oronoko's mercy. This

might be primarily because of her inexperience to racial discrimination, or her powerlessness to fight the existing male dominated social structure.

The term 'royal slave' in the title is as ambiguous as Aphra Behn's approaches to slavery and colonial practices. She is one with the view that monarchy should be the highest institution, that successful trade needed domination, and that only the powerful should lead. However, she does not hesitate to represent the abuse of power practised by them. Oronoko is a royal slave, his extraordinary abilities lift him above his companions, and he is looked at like a king. Even the slave owners respect him and do not engage him in physical labour in the plantation. However, the fact that he is still a slave reminds us to question the notion of freedom. Did the colonists not free him because he possessed superior qualities? Or did they fear, that if let free, he was strong and capable enough to quench their dominion? These are the issues you must consider while looking at Behn's strategies. If she had let Oronoko free, would not it appear as defeat for the intended white audience? Behn's political inclinations were pro-monarchy. It might be the reason why she could not show Oronoko defeating the colonialists.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Does the style of the narrative adheres to seventeenth-century literary traditions? Discuss in brief.

### **8.5 Form-**

During the seventeenth century, the 'novel' as a form was yet to find a prominent place in literary practices. Drama and poetry were the popular forms of literature. Towards the later part of the seventeenth century, writers were experimenting with fiction as it intended to provide more scope for detailed descriptions of events and characters. It is during this period of transition that Aphra Behn published *Oroonoko*. It is sometimes considered to be one of the foremost English novels, hence its form slightly differs the ones that you would normally associate with a novel. It is an example of the development of prose fiction into a higher state, "an extended piece of prose fiction" as we may call it in general terms. The text in concern is shorter to be called a full novel. Indeed, it is closer to what we call 'novella' in modern literature.

You shall find that it differs largely from contemporary novels; this is because novel as a form had not been established until the eighteenth century. It begins in the epistolary model, with a direct address to the then Lord Governor, where the narrator praises his knowledge and greatness initially, and asserts that she is presenting the true history of a royal slave whom she had the honour to know during her stay at Surinam. The novel shifts between different modes of narration as deemed suitable by the author. Broadly divided into two settings- Coramantien and Surinam, the representation of the events slightly differ in these. The events dealing with the former setting are told by Oronoko to the narrator. The narrator, for the limits of literature, omits the events that she thought might be less important to be narrated and might bore the readers. On the other hand, the section dealing with Surinam consists of first hand experiences of the narrator, as she is also a participant.

The narrator tells some parts of the story in long passages as if she is just narrating what she had heard about, and at other times, she speaks as if she is recounting her own experiences rather than the main characters'. Digressing between events allow her to make a strong background for the end; for the readers, armed with historical and cultural knowledge of the tribes and colonists, become one with the events and happenings described in the text. Giving importance to the context of the form, we can say that Aphra Behn was quite successful in representing the existing issue like colonialism, slavery, love and betrayal through her extended form of prose fiction. This form allowed her the space to represent everything in detail unlike drama, where she had limited time frame for the plot.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Identify the major themes of the novel.
2. Discuss the character's contribution to the plot development.

### **8.6 Characterization-**

As you are already aware of the major characters of the text from your reading of the previous unit, this section attempts to help you analyse the art of Behn's characterization.

Characters in literary works refer to the individuals within the text whose emotions, psychology and actions help in the development of the plot. In this text, in order to highlight the effects of slave trade, Aphra Behn imbues her protagonist with god-like qualities. Her Oronoko resembles nothing like the African natives; he is more European than African except for his colour. His knowledge is unmatched, nor are his fighting and oratory skills. The only character that comes in competition in terms of beauty is his love Imoinda. Behn calls them Mars and Venus. By making their fate turn at the hands of colonialism and slavery, Behn proposes the harms done by the Europeans upon the natives.

Such great and mighty persons fall not because of their weaknesses but for their virtues. Oronoko's strict code of honour accentuates his fall to the vices and sins of the white people. The virtues of the natives could not withstand the vices of the colonists. The plot moves with this contrast, two conflicting personalities concur at one time or other throughout the text. Behn uses this contrast frequently in her narrative- Oronoko's loyalty to his king results in betrayal, his unquestioned trust with the Captain results in his captivity, his belief in the words of Byam leads him to his end.

Throughout the text, Behn makes use of contrasting characters. If we take the white population, the character of Trefry is opposite to that of Byam; the former is sympathetic and respects Oronoko, while the latter is hateful and treats the slaves as animals. These contrasts enable the readers to realize their significance in the plot. If we account the female characters, we find no significant developments. The narrator herself, Imoinda, and Onahal all represent flat characters.

**Stop to Consider:**

E.M. Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) speaks of flat and round characters. Flat characters refer to one-dimensional characters. They do not undergo any significant change throughout the narrative. They are predictable, uncomplicated, under developed and may not be described in detail. On the other hand, round characters are multi-dimensional. They refer to the complex characters with many significant attributes. They develop with the narrative and serve important roles in the development of the plot.

The characters of *Oroonoko* may appear simple if compared to their post-modern literary counterparts. However, you should note Behn's ability to use their simplicity to her advantage. The simplicity and innocence represented by the tribes make them vulnerable to colonial exploits. These exploitations go on to make the basis for action in the text. The African tribes' uncomplicated and simple approaches to life serve as the anti-thesis to the seventeenth-century English newness.

**8.7 Summing Up:**

This unit is the main part of the entire block. Its purpose was to develop your approaches and understanding of fiction. The intention was to give you a general view about the issues *Oroonoko* touched throughout its narrative. Also, it is an attempt to ignite your interest in Aphra Behn and place her works in the critical canon. After consulting all the three units, I hope that you shall now be able to broaden your imaginative faculty and put forward your own critical approaches to the works of Aphra Behn.

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## **BLOCK- II**



## Unit 1

### Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

## Background

### Contents:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Development of novel till the time of Defoe and his *Robinson Crusoe*
- 1.4 Biographical sketch of Daniel Defoe
- 1.5 Defoe's other works
- 1.6 Placing *Robinson Crusoe*
- 1.7 Summing Up

### 1.1 Introduction

Daniel Defoe, one of the pioneers of English prose writing, is best known for his novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). But Defoe's works are not limited to novel writing; he was a successful journalist, essayist, pamphleteer, trader as well as a politically active person. His literary works contain a variety of subjects, including different socio-political issues and psychological topics. Though he started his literary career with writing on political and social subjects, it brought him plight only because of his strong believe in religious and political freedom. His fictional works came out much later, beginning with the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* that gave him fame and popularity as an author, followed by *Captain Singleton*, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a 'castaway novel', and it introduced the literary genre of 'Robinsonade'. The story of Crusoe was perhaps inspired by the experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who spent more than four years in an uninhabited island in South Pacific Ocean, or by the misadventure of Henry Pitman, the English surgeon who got stranded in a remote Caribbean island. The protagonist of the novel Robinson, too, wrote about shipwreck, getting stuck in a solitary island and his adventures there before being rescued. His account talks about the struggle of the protagonist to survive in the desolate island, all by himself. But *Robinson Crusoe* is not a simple tale of travel and adventure, rather, it is the account of physical and spiritual journey to emerge a more matured human being. It deals with the tension between social expectation and individual desire. The book also touches upon an important issue of much contemporary relevance — the centre-periphery debate. The strange life in the island and Robinson's native servant Friday bring forth the interaction of two different cultures and nature of their relationship.

Protagonists of Defoe's novels reflect the author's own vision of individual's right to be a free and practical being. They go through personal struggle, adverse situations and hostile conditions to finally emerge victorious. Using the first-person narrative form Defoe showed

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their lives more closely giving the detailed accounts of the experiences they gained during the incidents. *Robinson Crusoe* is no exception to this pattern where every single thing or event experienced by the protagonist remains exclusively his own projection of mind. It reflects his individual belief, apprehension, prejudice and intellect which make the novel quite unique and realistic. Within its less-unified episodic structure, the novel encompasses the range of events authentically, as in reality, life around us is always loosely organised.

## 1.2 Objectives

Here, in Unit 1, you will be given a brief idea about the rise of the novel as a literary genre during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. You will also come to know about the author Daniel Defoe, his works, and the critical reception of *Robinson Crusoe*. Thus, by the end of this unit you will be able to:

- make a quick survey of the early stages of novel writing
- relate the life and career of Defoe with the text prescribed
- locate this novel in the context of Defoe's career and literary history

## 1.3 Development of novel till the time of Defoe and his *Robinson Crusoe*

As the present unit is going to offer a the primary idea regarding Daniel Defoe and the prescribed novel *Robinson Crusoe*, a brief study of evolution of novel as a genre becomes necessary. Needless to say that centuries of experimentation contributed to give novel its present shape and status. The literary genre of novel can be defined in the following way:

- **Novel**, an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting. (Britannica)
- an invented prose narrative that is usually long and complex and deals especially with human experience through a usually connected sequence of events (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
- The term 'novel' is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of *fiction* written in prose. (*A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams)

## The Precursors

Today, novel is considered to be one of the most popular genres of literature. But unlike some other genres, neither it has a classical background nor has it enjoyed any royal patronage. Yet, it has flourished and enriched English literature, and became an integral part of its literary history. There are several reasons behind its acceptability. First, novel provides a wide space to its writer to elaborate its plot and incorporate diverse human experiences. Second, there is enough scope to show the work of imagination and movements of life. Third, it uses the day-to-day language of common people rather than highly rhetorical one. Fourth, its message can be deciphered comparatively easily because the characters and their actions depicted and language used in it seem quite familiar to the readers.

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As novel evolved over the years, different forms of it came into being. Starting from romance, adventure stories, historical tales, burlesque, epistolary, picaresque etc. novel moved forward to invent forms such as gothic, novel of manners, stream-of-consciousness and science-fiction among others. Actually, novel adjusted itself with the time, place and actions in order to reflect a true picture of the society. So its growth has been steady and it has been able to experiment with its form as well as content. Its development has always been natural and spontaneous as there was no need to care for or to appease any authoritarian patron or benefactor.

Novel began to emerge as a genre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, much later than other literary forms. But the seeds of novel were obvious in the works of the previous centuries. Novel took inspiration from other genres like epic, romance, allegory, verse writing, stories, and other non-fictional prose works. Both native and foreign inspirations were accepted and tested. The art of storytelling, character sketching, dramatic play of emotions, thrill and suspense as well as the psychological and spiritual transformations present in earlier works contributed somehow or the other to the rise of novel. Early epics like *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Aenied* or *Bewoulf* and *Paradise Lost* of later period were instances of narratives written in verse. Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio's *novella storia* (new short tale) was written in prose published in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. His book of stories *The Decameron* was the first of its kind that even influenced Geoffrey Chaucer in the creation of his masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales* (1400). Most of the tales told by the pilgrims in it are in verse form, except two stories that are written in prose. Detail portrayal of characters from all strata of society, bearing the highest and the lowest of the classes, in *The Canterbury Tales* obviously inspired the novelists of later ages to follow such model. Again, Thomas Malory's reworking of the Arthurian legends in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) was an arrangement of episodic tales in prose following the similar format. It is a blending of different forms within its scope — history, fantasy, romance, legend, adventure — which foretold the potentiality of prose writing.

A different style of prose narrative that had a great impact on early English novel writing was the satirical picaresque novel. The trend was first seen in the Spanish novel *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) by an anonymous writer. It has a *pícaro*, a 'rogue' or a 'rascal' as the hero who goes through various adventures that only expose the vanity and hypocrisy of society, especially those of the aristocracy and church. It used simple language instead of highly poetic and elegant one in order to make the work seem realistic and authentic. Another book in Spanish, a founding work of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, was *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605, 1615) by Miguel de Cervantes that ridiculed the tradition of medieval chivalric romance. It is an episodic novel written using the technique and style of romance itself only to expose the uselessness of the extravaganza of such narratives. Often hailed to be the first modern novel, *Don Quixote* projected the view that coming age would prefer practicality and realism rejecting the nobility and idealism of the pre-chivalric world.

### **Stop to Consider:**

Following are some important information about significant works and famous authors. Try to note how they played a key role in development of novel:

***The Decameron*:** It is a classical Italian prose work of the 14<sup>th</sup> century written by Giovanni Boccaccio. It includes a series of tales united under a main story. This narrative is different from

the Romances as it depicts different human values with a realistic attitude. It encompasses both the tragic and humorous aspects of human life.

**The Canterbury Tales:** This verse narrative of Geoffrey Chaucer is quite similar with *The Decameron* in structure. Written in Middle English, this book is a collection of short tales told by the pilgrims during their journey to the Canterbury Cathedral. Stories are inspired by legends, allegories, fables, religious and social events and mixtures of such genres. Chaucer's fine skill of different character portrayal can be found in this book.

**Thomas Malory:** Malory was an English writer of medieval period. He is famous for his book of Arthurian legends which he collected from various sources. The book, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, is an account of the life of King Arthur, of the adventures of his Knights and their quest for the Holy Grail. Malory's book contains the typical themes of Romance, like chivalry, brotherhood, courtly love, loyalty and betrayal etc.

**Miguel de Cervantes:** He is a Spanish author who wrote novels, plays as well as short stories. He is chiefly famous for his masterpiece *Don Quixote*. It is an account of elderly knight Don Quixote and his assistant Sancho Panza's misadventures that satirises the medieval romances. Cervantes' work influenced the 18<sup>th</sup> century novelist, particularly Henry Fielding, who modelled his novels on Cervantes' style.

**SAQ:**

What were the earliest inspirations of novel? What kind of prose writings were these? (You can try to explain in 60 words)

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In what way did the Spanish novels influence the English novels? (You can try to write in 70 words)

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Various prose works were published in England in the meantime. William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1561), considered by many as the first English novel, was a sophisticated and complex prose work. It satirises the superstitions of Catholicism in a unique and entertaining way. John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578), and *Euphues and his England* (1580) are romances that introduced the use of highly rhetorical prose style called 'euphuism'. Though the style seems unsuitable for prose narratives by modern yardstick, Lyly's works can be remembered for introducing a new mannerism and deliberately elaborate fashion of writing in prose narrative. Another work of prose fiction was Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1593), a pastoral romance in prose that influenced many writers to borrow its storyline and

characters in their works. But a noticeable trend of realism in prose was seen in the works of Thomas Deloney, George Gascoigne and Thomas Nashe. None of them was exclusive prose writer. Yet, it is mention-worthy that Gascoigne's incorporation of autobiographical elements in his prose work *Adventures of Master F.J.* (1573), Deloney's flexibility and depiction of ordinary life in *Jack of Newbury* (1597), *The Gentle Craft* (1597–98), and *Thomas of Reading* (1600) and Nashe's use of wit and colloquial speech in his prose satires like *Piers Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* (1592) and *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) bore early traits of English novels.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century novels display variety in both content and treatment. There were several women writers who tried their hand in writing novel. Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666) was satiric in nature and a utopian prose as well as an early example of science fiction. Aphra Behn's *Oroonko* (1688) is an instance of heroic romance with historical essence of early colonial period. Written using both first and third person narratives the book addresses the crucial issues like slavery and female sexuality in a sympathetic way. As a work of early woman novelist, *Oroonko* is an important text in the collection of English novels. But the most prominent text of this time is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) which is a religious allegory. It is the journey of Christian (an everyman figure) from the City of Destruction (the world) to the Celestial City (heaven). This theological fiction impresses us with its plot, setting, characterisation, dialogue, and dramatic conflict. So, in a way, the initial traits of novel were already germinated in the works of the forerunners that had flourished and established on strong ground by the 18<sup>th</sup> century masters of prose writing.

**SAQ**

Do you think the Elizabethan prose writers could frame a standard model for their successors? (You can justify your answer in 70 words)

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**Rise of novel and its causes**

The eighteenth century was the century of Enlightenment and Reason. There was a transformation not only in the world of art and literature in England, but also in politics, economic field, socio-cultural world, philosophy, science and technology. So, the norms, beliefs and practices of earlier age had to undergo a change. There was the spirit of rationality and zeal to experiment with the existing practices in order to create something new. This desire for newness is evident in the world of literature also that resulted in the rise of novel as a new literary genre. Factors that contributed to the rise of novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are the following:

- **Decline of romance and drama:** The popular literary form romance was in decline in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Romance dealt with the life of royals, unrealistic adventures, and medieval chivalry that had no space in the age of rationality. Likewise, drama as a performing art was chiefly limited to the courtiers and other elites. Moreover, there was no dramatist to match the genius of the Elizabethan playwrights to attract the

audience to theatre. The standard of drama was failing to match the need and standard of the age.

- **Glorious Revolution:** The Glorious revolution of 1688 noted the fall of King James II in favour of Queen Mary II and King William III in an environment of democracy. Though this bloodless revolution was prompted by political and religious interests, it was a partial relief from the overpowering monarchy and strengthening of the power of common people. The right to freedom of speech, and free election to choose a regular parliament put emphasis on the common citizens of the country. So, there was a need of their representation in literature too. Their life stories began to be illustrated in the new literary form of novel.
- **Industrial Revolution:** Development in science and technology led to rapid industrialisation. Industrial Revolution of this age changed the economic condition of the middleclass people and they began to lead a comfortable and secured life. It also provided them ample time to spend in reading. Most of the novels were published in periodicals which were quite popular among the new class of readers.
- **Rise of middle class:** The 18<sup>th</sup> century society was more liberal than previous centuries, where common people were given more importance. Development in trade and commerce changed their economic condition. The status of women was improving. The middle class, so far considered to be low, became an influential section of society. This encouraged the writers to cater to the taste of common people in their works. As novel was a popular genre among middle class the quantity and quality of novel rose.
- **Spread of literacy:** Earlier education was affordable only to a privileged section of the society. Rise of middle class in society saw the spread of education among them. Increase in literacy rate during this time indicates the growth in number of the readers. It also suggests that the ability of people to think and form their ideas and opinions has increased. So, the new learned generation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century preferred to read more for professional as well as private reasons. This encouraged the writers to produce more good works, especially the novels and essays, which were immensely popular among the readers.
- **Increasing number of printing press:** The increasing number of printing press made the books, newspapers and periodicals more affordable and easily available. In a way, it helped increase the number of readers. All these events in turn helped develop the habit of novel reading in this period.

#### **Stop to consider:**

Check these important events of history that affected indirectly in the rise of novel:

**Glorious revolution:** The Glorious Revolution of 1688 resulted in the overthrowing of King James II of England and succession of King William III and Queen Mary II. King James's pro-Catholic activities and conflict with the Parliament enraged of its citizens, and the King was replaced in a bloodless coup. The revolution brought an environment of democracy and the Parliament announced the Bill of Rights.

**Industrial Revolution:** The Industrial Revolution of England took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that changed the nature of the existing agro-based society. Machine and industry began to control the economy of the country as well as the socio-political power-structure. The industrialists and the

merchant class people became the new elites. The Revolution also created the new working class people who began to overcrowd the cities. The industrialists and merchant class became the new elites. The condition of ordinary men, women and children in this new urban social system served as the subjects of many novels, especially of the Victorian ones.

**SAQ:**

How did the rise of middle class in the eighteenth century England become one of the causes for the rise of the novel? (You can try to write a short paragraph in about 70 words)

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**18<sup>th</sup> century novel: Features and Pioneers**

The field was thus set for novel to become the most popular literary genre. The process that had started centuries before took its right path in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As David Daiches clearly points out, “It was in large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behavior from agreed public attitudes” (700). Moreover, as Daiches adds further, as a “product of the urban imagination, the novel tended to realism and contemporaneity in the sense that it dealt with people living in the social world known to the writer” (700). So, we find the characters and the events in the 18<sup>th</sup> century novels familiar to the readers, quite unlike the characters of romance who moved in the realm of imagination and chivalry. In novels with satirical, philosophical or allegorical undertone, the actions and journeys of men and women are set in a probable world where such acts have moral and societal approval of their contemporary society.

The late 17<sup>th</sup> century was chiefly famous for its non-fiction writings popularised by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in their daily *The Spectator* (1711). They illustrated the realistic characters and views on contemporary social issues that undoubtedly impressed the 18<sup>th</sup> century novelists. Authors like Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift produced journalistic writings besides social, religious and political pamphlets. Defoe and Swift were more focused on their ideology rather than on character sketching and realistic depiction of events. Though they wrote some famous novels, none of the two can be called exclusively as ‘novelists’. Yet Defoe’s works like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack* and *Roxana* were successful novels that portray in a convincing way the social reality and struggle of common people. Swift, on the other hand, was brilliant in his satiric prose works as seen in his *A Tale of a Tub* (1704). His *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) is a tale of the adventures of Gulliver in four different islands inhabited by four strange races. Though loosely structured, the book is considered as a classic and it bears the marks of episodic novel. It must be noted that Swift’s

intention was to create a satire on man and his civilisation than to make it a novel in the proper sense of the term.

Writers who took forward the practice of early novelists successfully and established the genre on a firm platform were Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), Henry Fielding (1707-54), Lawrence Sterne (1713-68) and Tobias Smollett (1721-71). Together they are called the Four Wheels of the English Novel.

Richardson started writing novel quite late. His work of compiling letters to help common people with an idea of writing letters gave him the framework to plan narrative following the exchange of letters between characters. Thus, the English epistolary novel evolved and gained popularity. Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1749) were sentimental works and elevated the idea of virtue. His language was colloquial hence realistic and convincing. The novels captured readers' attention and interest as there was no omniscient narrator but only the characters whose letters framed the plot and movement of the novels.

Fielding's tone was more humorous and his model was *Don Quixote*. He mocked the idea of virtue and sentimentality of Richardson's novels. He started novel writing with *Shamela* (1741) which is a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. Fielding's story of the titular heroes, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones follow the picaresque tradition. They move from places to places interacting with people of different classes. His character sketching is more authentic, closer to reality and scope of the narrative is wider. He did not confine his ideas to the world of strong moralities rather presented them as they were. So, his *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) are rightly called the 'comic epic in prose'.

Smollett followed the tradition of writing picaresque novel in his works like *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). His novels are episodic in nature, where he tried to bring unity of adventures with a certain purpose to show to his readers. He delineates his protagonists in such a way that they go through ups and downs only to have a respectable life. His style was satiric and vigorous. The innumerable incidents in which he put his heroes were often gross and violent. He described the society and people to expose their oddities and peculiarities. Finally, Smollett, like Fielding, tries to establish the view that goodness and common sense together can bring one success in life.

Lawrence Stern's works were altogether different from his contemporaries in style, content and treatment. In his *Tristram Shandy* (1759), the world and characters he portrayed were far removed from the worlds of Richardson, Fielding and Smollett. This world of *Tristram Shandy* revolves round the people of Shandy Hall and its neighbourhood. The characters are somehow eccentric and equally odd and irregular is the course of the narrative. Pages of the book are sometimes blank, or black, or contain designs, or have very brief single paragraph making the text incoherent to some extent. His impressionistic style arouses both humour and pathos. In a way, Stern's impressionism was the source of inspiration for the modern novelists like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

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In this way, the evolution of novel has gone through a lengthy process to receive its recognition as a well-established literary genre. If the novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century could popularise and experiment with form, content and technique it was because of the precursors who handed down to them the primary shape of it. According to Daiches, “Certain *Spectator* papers, the writings of Defoe, and Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* provide the more immediate and obvious background for the emergence of the English novel, and the story of the novel in the modern sense of the term properly begins here” (701).

**SAQ:**

How did Defoe and his contemporaries influence the major novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?  
(You can write a short note in 60 words)

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.....

How did ordinary man’s life become important in the novels of the 18<sup>th</sup> century? (You can try to explain in 150 words)

.....  
.....

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Find out the dissimilarities between the native and foreign sources of English novel.
2. Which traits of Spanish novels did inspire the novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?
3. Trace the causes that changed the idea of the protagonists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century fictional writings.
4. Why did realism become a part of the prose narratives in the 18<sup>th</sup> century?
5. What can be the cause of the popularity of picaresque novels in the 18<sup>th</sup> century?
6. How did *Robinson Crusoe* become a representative work of its time?

**1.4 Biographical sketch of Daniel Defoe:**

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), the prolific author of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century England, wrote over five hundred journals, pamphlets and books to present a wide range of topics including the life of common people and the issues they had to deal with. Both his fictional and non-fictional works contain the events and experiences he witnessed and learned in his life. Following is the brief biographical sketch of Defoe:

Daniel Defoe was born in 1660 in the parish of St. Giles Cripplegate, London. He came from a family where his father had a prosperous business of tallow and perhaps he was a butcher. His family was a Nonconformist or Dissenter who differed with the Church of England. Such social and religious status made a great impact on Defoe’s life and career in later. Defoe’s original surname was Foe, but later he added ‘De’ before it to make it sound aristocratic.

As Defoe hailed from a Presbyterian Dissenter family, he did not have the opportunity to study in renowned traditional institutes like the University of Oxford or Cambridge. Instead,

he had to attend Rev. Charles Morton's dissenting academy at Newington Green. But the quality of education he received at Newington Green was no way less effective than he would have received in those prestigious institutions. Morton had a great influence on Defoe to shape his attitude and literary skills. Initially, Defoe was preparing to be a Presbyterian minister but changed his mind later perhaps because life of being confined within a parish seemed unthinkable for him. His love for getting exposed to the world outside prompted him to pursue the career of a tradesman, where he would have ample opportunity to travel and mingle with people. He gained a thorough knowledge of economics from his work that he later used in several of his essays.

Defoe's life moved smoothly, and he married Mary Tuffley in 1684. He also tried his hand in political writings where he openly criticised the then King James Stuart's anti-Protestant stance. He supported the Glorious Revolution, in which King James II was deposed and replaced by King William III and Queen Mary II. Defoe received his due reward when he became one of the close allies of the king, and a chief pamphleteer. In his satirical poem, *The True Born Englishman* (1701), he exposed the racial biasness of English people who opposed the rule of a 'foreign' king.

Defoe lost his fortune during the Anglo-French War when foreign trade and business declined. His business collapsed and he was bankrupt. He faced another setback when King William III died in 1702 and Queen Anne ascended to the throne. She was against the Nonconformists, and Defoe had to face trouble as he was not ready to give up his position as a Dissenter. And when in 1702, his sharp satirical pamphlet *The Shortest Way to the Dissenters* was published anonymously it infuriated both the high church Tories and the section of hypocrite Dissenters. Defoe's authorship was exposed, and he was tied to a public pillory for three days, and then, was sent to Newgate Prison. Upon returning home physically and mentally exhausted, he discovered his pitiful state — his business ruined, his family in utter poverty and his health broken. He had no other way out but to leave his principles and to shift his support in favour of the Tories.

Defoe was working under Tory minister Robert Harley who used Defoe's talent of effective political pamphleteering. During this period, Defoe was sent to Scotland several times and he produced reports, pamphlets etc based on his visit. He also brought out the periodical *Review* (1704-13) where he adopted a moderate approach and continued to write on politics, religion, trade and commerce, moral issues and often expressed his independent views. In 1714, when the Whig government was formed he continued to work for it simultaneously publishing for Tories only to criticise the Tory point of view.

**Stop to consider:**

Find out how these religious, educational and political institutions played their roles in Defoe's life and career:

**Dissenter or Nonconformist:** The English Dissenters are the Protestant Christian group who separated themselves from the Church of England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century after the Restoration. They were against the state interference in religious matters. Their reluctance to conform to the Church of England made them Nonconformists. Such group of people used to attend their own churches and educational institutions.

**Presbyterianism:** It is a section of Protestant Christianity which believed that the Bible and Jesus Christ are most important things in the church. Presbyterianism was started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Scotland and became popular in England during the days of the Civil War.

**Tory:** A Tory is a supporter of one of the major British political group of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Tories seek to retain the traditional system of rule of the royals and control of the church in the state. They were against any reformation in favour of parliamentary system.

**Whig:** A Whig is the supporter of the parliamentary democracy and believes in limited power of monarchs. They were in favour of accepting the Nonconformists against the Catholic influence existed in the power system. Whigs were active in politics from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In his late fifties, Defoe tried his hand in writing novel. In the year 1719, his immortal work *Robinson Crusoe* was published. It was a work of fiction, though the reflection of reality in the character of Robinson Crusoe is there, the fictional nature of the events and places could not be missed. It is a masterpiece that received immediate popularity. The unforgettable journey of Crusoe presents the story of adventure of an indomitable spirit as well as an account of self-discovery. The uncharted island where he had spent twenty eight years is actually the micro-world where his personal as well as spiritual transformation takes place. Crusoe's struggle for physical ease and psychological dilemma make the novel appealing and dramatic. The sequel to the novel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* was published in the same year where the protagonist Crusoe returns to the island and sets out to continue his adventures in different lands. But this book did not enjoy the same amount of success like its prequel.

The immense popularity of *Robinson Crusoe* inspired Defoe to write more novels. So, *Robinson Crusoe* was followed by *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Colonel Jack* (1722). Though not a novel in true sense, Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) was shaped as a realistic fiction based on the events of the Great Plague of London. *Roxana* (1724) and *Captain George Carlton* (1728) were the works of his closing years.

Defoe's life ended quite ingloriously. He could never overcome the pressure of debts and often he had to spend days in debtors' prison. He died in 1731 when he was in a hide out to save himself from his creditors. But as a writer, his contribution to English literature can never be ignored. Though not full time novelist, Defoe played an effective role to establish the genre of English novel on a firm ground. His works have often been criticised as loosely structured, sometimes improbable and inconsistent. But later re-evaluations of his novels found in them elements of deeper philosophical conditions. It has been said that Defoe's novels are never devoid of practical and religious nuances displaying the underprivileged characters struggling with adverse conditions to reach their goals finally. It must be noted that Defoe himself came from a humble background. He did not have the refinement of other famous contemporaries like Swift, Pope and Dryden. He lived the most of his life as a trader

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or a political aide. But he never abandoned his own society and religious belief and his novels are a true reflection of that spirit.

**SAQ:**

Defoe was a master of journalistic prose. How did it interfere his fictional works? (You can write your opinion in 80 words)

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In which way Defoe's life is reflected in his fictional works?

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### 1.5 Defoe's other works

In this section, some famous works of Defoe, especially his novels, will be discussed in brief. It is a well-known fact that Defoe preferred to write journalistic prose. So, even in his fictional works the narrators of his novels write their first-hand experiences in the manner of writing journals with marked details and meticulous attitude. His understanding of the life of middle class English people supplied him the content.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was followed by *Captain Singleton* which is also an adventure story of the titular hero, a merchant, in the ocean and his confrontation with the pirates. In the year 1722, he published a number of his notable works. *A Journal of the Plague Year* was one brilliant work among these that reconstructs the days of the Great Plague of London through the eyes of a fictional character called H.F. In a way, it is a historical fiction written in a journalistic manner.

*Colonel Jack* and *Moll Flanders* were two other works, of which the latter was more popular. This novel shows the low life of the London society in which the female protagonist Moll strives to get financial security. In order to achieve this, she commits many deeds that are improper and forbidden in the eyes of society. Jack's experiences have noticeable similarities with those of Moll. Like Moll, his poor background compels him to choose the life of a criminal and the course of events lands him in Virginia. Serving as a slave and then as planter, Jack returns to London as a reformed man. After a series of failed marriages, he finally settles happily. Defoe's *Roxana* is presented in the autobiographical style to record the journey of a woman refugee in England, who looks for a secured life. In this novel, Defoe illustrates how moral degradation took place as a result of economic deprivation. Both Moll and Roxana's situations drive us to reconsider the traditional concepts of sin and crime.

In almost all the novels of Defoe, there are a few common key features. The theme of hostile social or natural conditions where one's personal struggle and suffering to survive is essential is always present in his fiction. His protagonists fight alone to overcome personal and moral crises. In Thomas Keymer's words, Defoe's characters are "forced to negotiate treacherous environments of their own" (15). Such outward conducts of the characters ultimately lead them to their self-realisation and redemption.

The final years of Defoe's literary career also produced some non-fictional works on diverse issues. There were books on foreign travels and trade as the agent of the Tory government. The greatest of them was *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* that gave an account of the system and status of British economy, trade and commerce in the early years of the Industrial Revolution. His essays discussed the subjects of supernaturalism, criminal life of England and social conducts showing his ease to encompass a range of topics within journalistic prose writing. Besides that, Defoe has several works written either under different pen names or anonymously. Considering their themes and style of presentation, there are more than five hundred works that have been attributed to him till now.

**SAQ:**

What are the similarities one can we find among the protagonists of Defoe's novels?

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**Check Your Progress:**

1. To which extent, in your view, think that most of the Defoe's novels are picaresque in nature?
2. What traits of journalistic prose are present in Defoe's novels?
3. How do Defoe's characters progress through the narrative? What is the significance of their progress?
4. How does Defoe's own experience of travelling play an important role in his novels?

**1.6 Placing *Robinson Crusoe***

*Robinson Crusoe* was written in the later part of Defoe's career. By then, Defoe had experienced the success and failure as a tradesman, been charged as bankrupt and got imprisoned and received humiliation due to his controversial political writings. He exercised his talent of writing in fiction quite late, and in 1719 came out his first novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe had the habit of giving his novels long titles, and following that fashion his first work of fiction came to be known as *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who Lived Eight and Twenty Years, All Alone in an Uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, Near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having Been Cast on Shore by Shipwreck, Wherein All the Men Perished but Himself. With an Account how he was at last as Strangely Deliver'd by Pyrates. Written by Himself*. As the descriptive title suggests, Defoe tried to give his narrative a realistic touch by declaring the fictional protagonist as the writer of the book. But, Defoe's authorship was soon exposed.

As Defoe had no standard model to follow, he had to experiment with form and technique. And it is quite obvious that *Robinson Crusoe* cannot be called a perfect novel. Yet, its immense popularity till date surprises us. His novel does not have a perfect storyline and it is full with implausible events. The character sketching is not carefully done. There are objections regarding its racial biasness. But it cannot be denied that the picture of the new

world and exciting life that he presented in his book was something new for his contemporaries. As the events had been presented with minute details from first person perspective, it seemed authentic to the reading public. Coleridge praised this talent of Defoe when he said that Defoe had applied “in a fictitious narrative, such an enumeration of minute incidents as might strike the beholder of a real fact”. Walter Scott, too, appreciated this practice of Defoe to insert details that had perfected his work as highly authentic.

Defoe has been a constant inspiration to his successors. In the works of the Victorian novelists like Dickens and Hardy, we find several traits of Defoe’s novels. Defoe’s works were questioned by late Victorian critics for being too realistic and devoid of psychological involvement of his characters. But Virginia Woolf contested the idea that Defoe presented an objective view of the world in his book arguing that Defoe’s protagonist has gone beyond presenting dry facts of day-to-day’s life in a journalistic manner. She believed that the new world Crusoe depicted was modified by his perception of what he had seen and felt, which involved the active and independent participation of his mind.

There is another aspect of *Robinson Crusoe* on which the critics have emphasised. More than a first-hand account of adventure, they consider Crusoe’s life on the island as a journey to find God and struggle to conquer his inner imperfections. The physical hardship leads him to undergo psychological transformation. His insincerity towards God is replaced by deep faith that brings him peace. Walter Allen rightly points out that “Defoe dramatized the inescapable solitariness of each man in his relation to God and the universe”.

Apart from these critical receptions, Defoe’s book has influence on literary and other artistic fields. It started the literary trend of writing ‘Robinsonade’ that is the ‘desert island story’ or ‘castaway narrative’. *The Swiss Family Robinson*, *Strange Island*, *Treasure Island* and *Lord of the Flies* are a few examples of this trend. Besides, various graphic versions, abridged editions for young readers, stage, television and film adaptations of the book appeared over the years that affirm the overwhelming acceptance of *Robinson Crusoe* over the centuries.

<p><b>SAQ:</b> Approaches to Defoe’s novel <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> have changed over the ages. How do these contrasting views help in exploring the potentiality of <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>? (You can write a critical note in 100 words)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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### 1.7 Summing Up:

In the beginning of Unit-I, a brief introductory discussion has been made on Daniel Defoe and his masterpiece *Robinson Crusoe*. In order to familiarise you with this novel a section has been dedicated to discuss the evolution of the genre of novel. It started with the age of romances and early prose writings of medieval times that are taken as the early sources of novel. But novel’s formation as genre was still distant. As the literary world was heavily

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influenced by likes and dislikes of the aristocratic class, experimentation with established genres was rarely done. Here and there, some prose fiction were brought out but they did not have the potentiality to be the new model of writing. With the coming of the Age of Reason in England, the English society underwent a transformation. The rise of middle class and spread of mass education prompted the writers to take up subjects from the life of common people and write them down in colloquial and less formal ways. Novel was the most suitable genre for them. The popularity of such writing caused its flourish in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The sections that deal with life of Defoe and his works contain some significant phases of the author's life and their impact on his literary creations. Defoe came from a humble background and inherited the spirit of the Dissenters. His successful career as a tradesman came to an end accidentally, and he got involved into political broil. He was forced to compromise with the situation but the indomitable spirit he had found its expression in his writings. The characters of his novels were just like him. They move in the world of misfortune and struggle before going through a series of experiences. But, in the end of the battle, they transform to have redemption. The picture of Defoe's contemporary society was vividly portrayed in his novels. What makes his novels more acceptable to us are his sense of practicality and realistic approach and his regard for people who undertake the journey to write their own fortune. In a way, his novels are accounts of adventures in faraway island or in the criminal world, where the protagonists like Robinson, Moll, Jack and Roxana get the lessons of their life. In that sense, most of Defoe's novels are picaresque in style that inspired the famous novelists in the successive ages.

The section that deals with placing the prescribed novel will help you understand the importance of the text as a product of Defoe's elaborate career as well as the status it enjoys in the world of literature and art. Thus, in the first unit, the discussions attempt to assist you to have the preliminary idea needed for the study of the novel in detail in the following units.

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**Unit-2**  
**Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe***  
**Introducing the Novel**

**Contents:**

**2.1 Objectives**

**2.2 Introduction**

**2.3 What Happens in *Robinson Crusoe*: The Plot in Brief**

**2.4 List of Characters**

**2.5 Summing up**

**2.6 References and Suggested Reading**

**2.1 Objectives**

In the second unit, the discussion will focus on the prescribed text. An attempt to point out the main themes and issues related to the text will be done briefly. A summary of the plot will be followed so that you can have an overview of the plot of the novel. Finally, the list of characters will be provided for better understanding of the storyline. So, after reading this unit, you will be able to:

- contextualise the novel with its contemporary issues, Defoe's views and his philosophy
- summarise the plot so that the storyline can be understood and important events and ideas can be identified easily
- get acquainted with the major and minor characters of the novel who take part in the course of action in the novel

**2.2 Introduction**

In the introductory section, a brief discussion on different contexts of *Robinson Crusoe* will be done. It will help you understand the story of Crusoe and his adventures in a better way. It is well-known that Defoe's favourite genre was journalistic prose, and in spite of that he chose to adopt the genre of novel in later part of his literary career. And it is his novels, especially his first novel *Robinson Crusoe* that gave him immense success and fame. Here, it is to be noted that Defoe has employed two types of techniques of autobiographical writing in *Robinson Crusoe*. The initial sections were written in the manner of writing a diary, a factual enlisting of the events and experiences Crusoe had before and after coming to the island. The latter section was more subjective, as Defoe justified that Crusoe could not record his experiences on regular basis because he exhausted all the ink he had, and so he had to complete it later remembering the past. It helped Defoe in two ways — he could make the novel realistic, and simultaneously, he got an opportunity to insert his perspectives and messages into it. Perhaps it was so because Defoe had tried to create an alternative world in the form of Robinson's island with a certain purpose, and by selecting the genre of

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autobiographical novel and such writing techniques he could achieve his purpose most effectively.

It is well known that due to Defoe's religious and political affinity with the Dissenters, his criticism of conservative Catholicism and its open expression in his pamphlets he had to suffer a lot. Perhaps, novel provided him a safer opportunity to convey his socio-political, religious and ethical views within its imaginary and creative scope. Apparently, *Robinson Crusoe* is an episodic novel of travel and adventures; but the exotic world Defoe creates here can be taken to be a utopian place where one is free to create his own world. The seventeenth century conservative royals and Catholic Church hardly allowed middle class people to chase their dreams. In a way, Crusoe's success in South America and survival in the desolate island reflect the fulfilment of a common man's dream to be the 'master' of his own fortune, his aspiration to rise in the social ladder. This is apparent in the character of Crusoe too, who denied the life of security and against the will of his parents accepted the perilous and uncertain life of a seaman.

One important aspect Defoe portrays in his novel is the contemporary social condition of England. The age marked the expansion of European colonies in parts of America and Asia. So, there was the rise of merchant class and tradesmen who were turning out to be the controller of economic condition of the nation. Crusoe's adventures started with that aspiration. He earned money in his initial attempts, tried to get more but was enslaved. His flight to Brazil and becoming the owner of a plantation and subsequent plans to engage himself in slave trade convey the essence of that trend. Even when Crusoe landed in the island of 'despair', he tried to give it a shape according to his own convenience and needs. Gradually, he felt himself to be the owner of the island. This narrates symbolically the typical process of English colonial expansions whereas Crusoe's approach towards the natives like Xury or Friday reflects the stereotypical attitude of the colonial masters towards their subordinates.

Crusoe also represents the late seventeenth century middle-class man who believed in practicality and realistic explanation of things. The emerging empiricism combined with profit-based mercantilism affected the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries greatly. Crusoe was ready to take the risk, and revolting against his family's preference he chose the life of uncertainty. He accepted the life of tradesman and sailed off. He was no different from his fellow traders. His profit from early trade encouraged him to sail for a bigger one that ended up making him a slave. But, his intelligence prompted him to flee with the help of a native boy Xury whom he later sold to the Portuguese Captain. Crusoe had no hesitation in doing so, as it provided him with money that he might use in business. Even after the shipwreck, Crusoe collected and kept money from the broken ship though it was of no use in the island. His flourishing business in Brazil was not enough for him as he planned to earn more through slave trading. After returning to England, his prompt attempt to receive the share of his plantation and undertaking a hazardous journey to and from Lisbon for that bear resemblance to the typical worldly mentality of the middle-class and tradesman community.

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Crusoe's life in the island is somehow like existing in a utopian land. The island is an ideal place where nature and Crusoe's world seemed to be in perfect harmony. It is the place where Crusoe lands after years of struggle, uncertainty and all kinds of problems that he has experienced as an individual in the civilised society, be it as the slave or the owner of a prosperous plantation. Nature provides him with all means of sustenance and provisions for survival and comfort. All he has to do is to apply his intelligence, good intention and mental and physical strength in order to exploit them according to his needs. His solitude gives him self-sufficiency, calmness and maturity that affect his development as a human being. His maturity is reflected in his growing faith in religion. His father's deep faith in Christianity could not affect him earlier. But, in the island, lonely Crusoe discovers religion more closely. He read the Bible, and prayed to God. He took his isolation as punishment from God for his sins; and his newly discovered faith in Christianity, as he felt, brought him purity and peace of mind that he needed for survival. He was no more restless and pining for his isolation. In a sense, the island became the place where his approach and attitude towards life changed and this transformation led him to deal with the unfavourable conditions of life to emerge as a victor at the end. But, he felt that his world was not complete without the presence of other people with whom he could share this life. For such reason, he taught his parrots to talk. The arrival of Friday gave him mental comfort and he tried to teach him his language, culture as well as religion. He was happy to meet the Spanish prisoner and looked for more people in his island. Perhaps, Crusoe felt that even the ideal world would remain incomplete without human beings capable of providing emotional support that is essential along with physical and spiritual contentment.

*Robinson Crusoe* is a tale of victory of human potentiality. Though here and there loosely connected and sometimes unconvincing, it is unique and appealing in its own way. Many tales of such shipwrecking and survival have been produced so far, but Defoe's novel has stood apart from all of them. If we consider Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, a contemporary of Defoe's work, we shall find that both of these novels talk about adventures of the protagonists in unknown islands. But, when Crusoe's struggle has been shown to prove the capability of indomitable human spirit, Gulliver is a keen observer of the peculiar societies he has found in the four imaginary islands. Unlike Crusoe, Gulliver's motto is not survival but to satirise the flaws and shortcomings of his own society. Defoe's novel has realistic tone instead of Swift's satiric style. The experiences *Robinson Crusoe* depicts are more relatable for its readers, so more acceptable also. It enjoyed such popularity that it pioneered a genre called Robinsonade, though Defoe's novel is not the first of its kind. As claimed, a twelfth century Arabic novel by a Moorish living in Spain wrote *The Improvement of Human Reason: Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan* that also tells the tale of a person's living in a deserted island. Like Crusoe, this person too, builds hut, tends cattle and discovers footprint on the sand. Alexander Selkirk and Henry Pitman's experiences of getting stranded in lonely islands influenced Defoe's work. But Defoe's genius was able to write a masterpiece out of all these — he was successful to create a hero named Crusoe who became the representative of optimism and ambition of the common man of his era.

**SAQ:**

What advantages Defoe had when he employed two modes of narration in *Robinson Crusoe*? (You can try to write a short paragraph in about 60 words)

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How do you place *Robinson Crusoe* as a documentation of contemporary socio-economic condition? (You can try to assess briefly in 70 words)

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Do you think the castaway novels written after *Robinson Crusoe* is rightly termed as Robinsonade? (You can try to justify your view in 50 words)

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### 2.3 What Happens in *Robinson Crusoe*: The Plot in Brief

The complete title of Defoe's novel reads like *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who Lived Eight and Twenty Years, All Alone in an Uninhabited Island on the Coast of AMERICA, Near the Mouth of the Great River of OROONOQUE; Having Been Cast on Shore by Shipwreck, Wherein All the Men Perished but Himself. WITH an Account how he was at last as Strangely Deliver'd by PYRATES. Written by Himself.* The title itself can be taken as an overview of the novel as it introduces the chief character, mentions briefly the course of events the protagonist confronted as well as the mode of narration used in the novel. The complete novel consists of a Preface followed by the narrative of the novel.

#### Preface

In the preface section an unnamed editor speaks about the narrative as an authentic account of a range of adventures written by a 'private man'. His declaration is an attempt to make the work look to be a real and honest one that can provide 'wisdom' to its readers.

#### Voyages undertaken by Crusoe

The narrative opens in 1632 with Crusoe's own account of his life. It tells that he comes from a family living in York, England. His father had been a German immigrant who married an English woman. Crusoe's real name was Robinson Kreutznaer and he was the third son of his parents. Crusoe wished to go for a voyage which his father strongly disapproved. Instead, he advised him to study law. Ignoring his parents' instruction he ran away to join a voyage. But his journey was affected by foul weather and it made Crusoe repent for his decision to be a voyager. He decided to return to his family. But on his way back home, he changed his mind and embarked on a ship. His first voyage gave him some financial success and it encouraged him to go for his next voyage. Keeping his money to a captain's widow, he left England. They headed towards the Guinea coast but unfortunately the ship was attacked by a Turkish pirate ship. Crusoe was enslaved and was sent to the Moorish port of Sallee. He had been planning for a long time to escape, and one day there came an opportunity. When he went out

for fishing in a boat with two other slaves called Xury and Ismael, he tricked Ismael to return to shore and took Xury as his company. They had to spend several days in water and with the natives of Africa before they managed to get on a ship heading towards Brazil. The kind Portuguese captain bought Crusoe's boat and Xury and agreed to take them to Brazil.

Crusoe's plan was to be a planter in Brazil. But he did not have sufficient money for that. Here, the Portuguese captain and the captain's widow in London helped him. After a few years in that plantation business, Crusoe and his business partners planned to start the new slave trading business. Crusoe was proposed to sail to Africa to bring slaves from there. In 1659, he started his journey; but near the Caribbean Sea, the ship was stuck in a violent tempest that almost broke her down. The strong waves carried Crusoe and the broken ship to the shore of an unknown island. Helpless Crusoe found himself alone in the deserted island.

### **Life in the island**

As the storm ceased, Crusoe was much recovered next morning and planned to land. He made a boat with the planks of the broken ship and stuffed it with basic provisions collected from the ship. He also found arms, clothes and even some money. But ironically, the money was of no use in that uninhabited island. He stocked up sufficient amount of food and other provisions from the ship for several days before it was washed out in another squall.

Crusoe's first job was to save himself from the unknown dangers that might be waiting in the unknown land. He selected a place near hills with a view of the sea and set up his tent there. He fortified his shelter with the wooden stakes and the only means to enter his 'fortress' was a ladder. He stored his food and gunpowder properly. He also decided to keep record of his life in the island. So, Crusoe erected a wooden cross and wrote the date of his arrival, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1659, on it and marked every passing day with a notch on it. He began to write a journal to note down his experiences till he ran out of ink.

Days passed, and Crusoe mastered several skills in the meantime. He made furniture, tamed goat, made candles, grew barley that he had accidentally tossed outside earlier. By the next April, he got more useful provisions — driven to the shore by hurricane — that belonged to the lost ship. Crusoe also fell very ill during this time and was very scared of death, and it gradually deepened his faith in God. It also helped him accept his isolation in the island as a relief from his earlier life of guilt and sin.

After recovery, Crusoe was much optimistic and went inland to survey the unexplored places. He discovered fruit bearing trees, tobacco and sugarcane plants there and thought of shifting his shelter. But, he did not want to lose the sight of the ocean too, so instead, he made only a small dwelling there. He was successful to make basket and hedge to cover the hut. He also began to understand the difference of seasons in the island and worked accordingly to grow crops. By this time, he used up all the ink he had stored to write his journal and rest of his story was written later after his return from the island.

Crusoe never left the dream of returning to the mainland. So, he tried to make a boat that could carry him away. He even made a canoe and tried to sail around, but the strong current

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forced him to return. He focused on improving his condition in the island and tried hand in animal tending and pottery making. Soon, he was no more a wretched castaway, rather an independent landowner, a planter, a farmer and master of dog, cat, goat and parrot that he had taught to talk.

The next significant event in Crusoe's island life was the discovery of footprints on the shore, and after a search he found the presence of native cannibals. It made his life somehow uncomfortable. He also discovered the wrecked ship near island and carried more provisions like clothing, liquor, kitchen items and gunpowder to his shelter. But his hope of finding some sailors alive still remained unfulfilled. Still, he expected to rescue one of the captives of the savages someday and to make him his attendant. After almost a year and half, he again noticed the savages returning with two captives. One of them managed to escape and somehow reached to Crusoe who saved him from the chasing savages. The young prisoner was well-built and he eagerly submitted himself to Crusoe. Crusoe named him Friday, the day on which he got him, and made him his companion-cum-servant. He taught Friday some English words in order to carry on the basic conversation. Thus, Friday became the faithful attendant of his Master Crusoe for the rest of his life. Crusoe attempted to make his devoted servant civilised in many ways and Friday's improvement made Crusoe so content that he stopped caring about his plans to return.

Crusoe also preached him some Christian religious teachings. That inspired Friday to spread the message of Christianity in his own land that was distantly visible from the island. As the mainland was also inhabited by the white people, Crusoe thought it to be a chance to meet the Europeans. They began to prepare a boat for journey and waited for the suitable time to sail off. But, in the mean time, savages came to the island again with more prisoners. Determined to save them, Crusoe and Friday gunned down most of the savages and could rescue two captives. One of them was a Spanish man, and another, to their utter surprise, came to be Friday's father. Both of them were given proper care, and it was planned that Friday's father and the Spaniard would go back to mainland and ask others to help Crusoe and Friday leave the island.

After some days of the two men's leaving the island, Friday showed Crusoe an English sailboat approaching to the shore, but that made Crusoe suspicious as rarely an English trade ship took that route during their voyage. Gradually, they found that there were crew members in the ship along with three prisoners. One of the prisoners was the Captain of the ship whom the rebel crew members have planned to leave in a desolate island along with two others. Crusoe offered the Captain his help in return for Crusoe's free passage to England to which he readily agreed. Crusoe's intelligence worked and the mutineers had to surrender. Captain was ready to pardon most of them except Will Atkins and some others who led the mutiny. The ship was reclaimed after a brief fight and the Captain took the charge. Leaving the rebel seamen in the island with provisions the ship sailed off on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1686. Crusoe became emotional and thanked God for giving him the opportunity to leave the island after spending twenty eight long years there. As the memory of his island life, he took with him his parrot, his goat-skinned cap, an umbrella and the money that was useless for him so far.

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### **Returning to England and revisiting the island:**

After a long voyage, Crusoe landed in England on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1687. But his own land seemed strange to him after a long gap of thirty five years. He found that his parents were no more; only his sisters and nephews were alive. The money he had left to the captain's widow was still kept securely. Moreover, the English captain whom Crusoe saved from the rebel seamen presented him almost two hundred pounds. Then he decided to visit Lisbon with Friday to meet the Portuguese Captain to get information about his plantation in Brazil. With his help, he was able to get back his due money from the plantation. Moved by the kind cooperation of his trustees, Robinson gave them some money. Upon returning to England from Portugal after a challenging journey, he planned to sell his plantation in Brazil because it had been difficult for him to accept the Catholicism prevalent there. Instead, he sold his plantation and took care of his family members. Eventually, he got married and settled with their three children. But, after his wife's untimely death, he went out to sea again in 1694 towards the East Indies with his sailor nephew and reached his island. Crusoe summed up describing that his island had already become a prospering colony by then, where the Spaniard, the rebel prisoners and more people were staying amicably. He sent them more gifts of cattle, essential goods and even women. Crusoe concluded his narrative mentioning that the story of settlement in the island would be told in detail in a following book.

#### **SAQ**

Why do you think Defoe added the Preface section to the novel? (You can try to write a short paragraph in about 50 words)

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How do you think Crusoe's experiences have brought the realism and improbability together? (You can try to explain in 70 words)

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#### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Does the twenty eight years of living in a desolate island change Crusoe as a human being?
2. While staying in the island, Crusoe had desired to return to England, and after having a family in England he was desperate to go to sea again. What can be the reason behind Crusoe's desperation?
3. What differences do we notice in Crusoe's attitude while dealing with the Europeans and the non-whites?

### **2.4 List of Characters**

In this section, a list of major and minor characters of the novel has been provided for you in order to have a preliminary idea of the persons who have been essential parts of the narrative.

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They have helped in forming and advancing the storyline. But for deeper understanding of the characters and their relevance in the novel, a detail text based study is necessary.

### **Major characters:**

**Robinson Crusoe:** Crusoe is the protagonist and narrator of the novel who leaves his family at the age of nineteen to adopt the life of a voyager. His early experiences of sea-trading are mixed with success and despair. After escaping the life of a slave he reaches Brazil and becomes the owner of a plantation. His involvement in the slave trade from Africa gets him into a fateful voyage that ends in shipwreck. Crusoe lands in a desolate island in the Caribbean region. Initially, he tries to cope up with the alien condition, and finally with his will power and intelligence he becomes the 'master' of that island. He undergoes a moral and spiritual transformation during his stay in the island. After living there for twenty eight years, he returns to England and leads a family life. But, after his wife's death he sets out again with his nephew in search of new opportunities.

**Xury:** He is the non-white boy working in the Pirate ship that seizes Crusoe's ship and leads it to Africa. He is loyal to Crusoe and helps him escape slavery on the day of fishing. Crusoe and Xury flee and get on a ship to Brazil. Crusoe sells him to the Portuguese Captain of the ship and, as Crusoe mentions, Xury accepts it willingly. Later, Crusoe regrets his decision of selling Xury when he needs help in his plantation.

**The Portuguese Captain:** He is a kind and sincere man who helps Crusoe to go to Brazil and to be an owner of plantation there. He is generous and loyal. Many years later, when Crusoe returns to England and visits him in Lisbon, he again helps Crusoe get his due wealth earned from the plantation in Brazil. In return, Crusoe gifts him a handsome share of his wealth.

**Friday:** Friday is a native Caribbean who is young, handsome, brave and loyal. He becomes the captive of the cannibals and is about to be killed. He remains attached to Crusoe who saves his life. Friday becomes Crusoe's obedient servant and companion. Crusoe teaches him English language and culture and preaches him Christian values. This faithful man accompanies Crusoe to England and protects him well from savage beasts during their journey through Pyrenees Mountain.

**The Spaniard:** He is the shipwrecked seaman whom the cannibals bring to Crusoe's island. Crusoe saves his life and they feel mutual respect for their religious and racial similarity. He stays in the island and later he is sent along with Friday's father to bring other shipwrecked Spaniards to the island so that they can leave the island together. But before he returns, Crusoe leaves for England. After several years, when Crusoe revisits his island he finds that the Spaniard has turned the island into a colony.

**The English Captain:** The Captain is a brave and honest man. He is the Captain of the English ship whose crews rebel against him and take him and his mate to Robinson's island. They are supposed to be left there but Crusoe and Friday saved them. With their assistance,

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the Captain regains his ship and, in return, he takes Crusoe back to England in his ship. In a way, both the Captain and Crusoe need each other for their rescue.

### **Minor characters:**

**The Editor:** He is a character without name. He introduces Robinson's book and mentions in the Preface that it is an account of first hand experiences. Thus, he tries to give it the impression of an autobiographical work of the person called Robinson Crusoe.

**Crusoe's father:** He is a German immigrant in England from Kreutznauers family. He is a middle-class Protestant who advised Robinson to choose a safe profession for him. He speaks against his son's will to select a risky job of sea-adventurer and declares that it will bring him no luck. When Crusoe returns from the island, his father has already passed away.

**Crusoe's mother:** She appears briefly in the beginning of the novel. Crusoe gets his name Robinson from her. She does not help Crusoe to pursue his dream as she supports her husband's opinion, though she conveys her son's message to her husband. She dies before Crusoe returns to England.

**Crusoe's friend:** His friend helps Crusoe to join a ship to London. In a way, he encourages Crusoe to leave his family in order to fulfil his dream.

**The Shipmaster:** He is the master of the ship to London which Crusoe boards when he leaves his home. But the ship faces a storm and the Shipmaster advises Crusoe to return to his family or he may have to face further danger. Initially Crusoe accepts it but later changes his mind and goes to London by land.

**Captain of the Guinea vessel:** He is the Captain of the ship that successfully voyage to North Africa. Crusoe is a part of this voyage. After return, the Captain dies and Crusoe has to travel under a new captain for his next journey to Africa in which they are enslaved.

**Captain's Widow:** She is the widow of the Captain of the Guinea vessel. Crusoe deposits his money with her before his second trip to Africa. He meets her again when he returns from the island. She has been keeping that money for him during this long period. Later, when Crusoe receives his wealth from Brazil he gifts a good amount of it to the Captain's widow.

**Moorish master:** He is the head of the Turkish pirates from port of Sallee, who captured Crusoe's ship in North Africa He becomes the non-white master of enslaved Crusoe. In order to stop Crusoe from escaping he engages him in work at his house. But this man does not seem very prompt or far-sighted. Unknowingly, he gives Crusoe the chance to flee when he sends Crusoe for fishing.

**Ismael:** He was the Moor slave who goes with Crusoe and Xury on the fishing boat from Sallee. Crusoe tricks him to take the boat farther and then forces him to jump into water. Crusoe threatens him to swim away so that he and Xury can escape.

**Negroes:** They are the natives of North African island. When Crusoe and Xury are running away they help them providing food and shelter.

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**Wells:** Wells is Crusoe's English friend and neighbour in the days when the latter was engaged in plantation in Brazil.

**The Captain of the ship from Brazil:** He is the Captain of that very slave-trading ship which Robinson boards to bring slaves from Africa. His ship is caught in a tempest and Crusoe lands in the island.

**The Captain's mate:** He is the assistant of the English Captain whom the rebels make captive and abandon in the island. He fights with the captain against the rebel seamen and they recapture the ship. He gets injured during the fight.

**Savages:** They are natives of the Caribbean region who intermittently visit Crusoe's island with captives. They are cannibals as they kill and eat their prisoners. Crusoe is determined to stop the savages as their ways are against his religious and ethical beliefs. Before leaving the island, Crusoe succeeds in preventing them from coming to his island. But, later he comes to know that the savages are not completely villainous as they have saved several shipwrecked persons.

**Friday's father:** He is rescued along with the Spaniard by Crusoe and Friday when the cannibals bring them to the island. He stays in the island and then is sent to bring the Spaniards to the island.

**Will Atkins:** He is the chief rebel of the English ship and first to attack the Captain. He along with his two other companions are considered to be least trustworthy. The Captain was ready to pardon the others except Atkins whom he wishes to be killed. But Crusoe finally decides to leave him in the island.

**Mutineer crew members:** They are the rebel crew members of the English ship. They made the Captain and some of his aides captive and planned to leave them in the desolate island. Though they belong to civilised white race, to Crusoe they are savage and murderous just like the native cannibals.

**The Guide:** While returning from Lisbon to London Crusoe takes a guide to help them cross the Pyrenees Mountain between Spain and France. But the man turns out to be inefficient as he guides them to take an unsafe route. The travellers have to face attacks of dangerous wolves and bear. Crusoe and Friday somehow managed to kill or drive them away finally to reach France.

**Crusoe's nephews:** Crusoe meets his two nephews after his return to England after many years. He takes care of them, and one of them becomes a gentleman and the other chooses to be a sailor. Robinson goes back to the island after his wife's death with his nephew who is a sailor.

**Crusoe's wife:** Crusoe gets married after his return from Lisbon. With ample wealth in hand, he spends a happy life with his wife and their three children. But his wife dies early. This makes Crusoe to restart his voyage again. Her name is not mentioned in Crusoe's account.

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### Check Your Progress:

1. What kind of relation Crusoe had with his family members?
2. Natives of Africa and South America are often portrayed as barbaric. How have the Negroes and savages of the Caribbean region been portrayed in this novel?
3. What was Robinson's view regarding the rebel crew members of the English ship?
4. What idea do you get about Crusoe-Friday bonding?

## 2.5 Summing Up:

In this Unit II, discussions have been made in order to help you understand the plot and the characters of the novel as well as relate the socio-economic-religious condition and Defoe's scheme and strategy behind writing this novel. The first section elaborates the backdrop of the novel, when the following two sections summarise the plot and the action of the individuals who take part in course of Defoe's fiction. Thus, it is expected that after finishing this unit, you will be able to understand the key themes of the novel and contextualise the storyline and characters with various themes and issues present in *Robinson Crusoe*.

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## Unit-3

### Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

#### Themes and Techniques

#### Contents:

#### 3.1. Objectives

#### 3.2. Introduction

#### 3.3. Structure of *Robinson Crusoe*

#### 3.4. Techniques

#### 3.5. Characterisation in *Robinson Crusoe*

#### 3.6. The Point of View and Narration in *Robinson Crusoe*

#### 3.7. Themes in *Robinson Crusoe*

#### 3.8. Summing Up

#### 3.9. Reference and Suggested Reading

#### 3.1. Objectives

This section aims to make you acquainted with the thematic and technical aspects of the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Major themes and critical perspectives that usually receive the utmost importance among the critics will be briefly outlined in this unit. The objectives of the unit would be:

- provide you with an idea of the structure of the novel
- make you understand Defoe's art of characterisation in the novel
- familiarise you with the critical approaches to analyse the text

#### 3.2. Introduction

In this unit that has been titled 'Themes and Techniques', you will be provided with discussions on some key aspects of the novel. While on the one hand, attempts will be made to acquaint you with the structure of the novel and techniques applied by Defoe in the narrative scheme of the text, on the other hand, Defoe's art of characterisation and major themes in the novel will also be taken up in this section. These technical aspects of the text will help you understand Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in a better way so far the formal considerations of the novel are concerned.

In the brief introductory discussions of his section, you are advised to make attempts towards broader understanding of modes of writing like journalistic prose and autobiographical style. Journalistic prose style employs the method of recording events and incidents with a kind of precision that is usually found in the field of journalism. Attempts are made here to create an impression in the mind of the readers that each of the events is real and occurred in a chronological manner. Autobiographical style of writing is the kind of writing where a first

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person narrator is deployed by the author to record the events and incidents of the narrative. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe used these techniques in order to make his readers believe that the book is an actual record of events by someone named Robinson Crusoe himself. Though, it was revealed later that Crusoe is a fictitious character and the real author was none but Defoe himself. Defoe's art of narration was so authentic that it enabled him to create such an impression in his readers.

### **3.3. Structure of *Robinson Crusoe***

Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* has been subjected to much debate and criticism regarding its structure. The apparently episodic nature of the narrative tends to point towards a lack of unity in the narrative structure. However, when analysed closely, one can find out a close-knit structure beneath the obvious shapelessness of the novel. Ian A. Bell's comment aptly explains this idea when he says that "Though Defoe's fiction may be most memorable for its direct and vivid presentation of episodes, these episodes are functioning units in larger organizations of narrative" (154). Being an early English novelist, without having a competent predecessor, Defoe has attempted to construct the plot of *Robinson Crusoe* in as much a cohesive manner as he could. Unlike some of his other works like *Moll Flanders*, the events in *Robinson Crusoe* seem to be indispensable for the narrative structure. At times, some events might appear to be very loosely connected by the fact of a common protagonist, but while speculated deeply, it can be seen that such events contribute in one way or the other towards the overall cohesiveness of the structure.

*Robinson Crusoe* is more an adventure story than any other category of writing. Here, the events depicted by the novelist have been given priority and the development of the story is dramatic. Defoe artfully deploys the chronological sequence of the events to take the story forward. While reading *Robinson Crusoe*, it must be borne in mind that it is not a mere adventure story or a travelogue. It is a work of fiction that has been planned in the nature of an adventure story. Unlike a travelogue or an adventure story, *Robinson Crusoe* possesses the idea that brings meaning to the incidents in the narrative.

Crusoe's voyages or adventures are thematically meaningful. He never loiters in a meaningless way. He is inclined towards travelling as well as experiencing the world. Through these, he wished to carve out a space for himself and make his fortune. He is hardly an aimless adventurer participating in a number of events that can be separated without causing some damage to the overall effect of the structure and meaning of the story.

A prudent approach to the structure of *Robinson Crusoe* is to read it as the story of a man with an independent bent of mind, covering a period of thirty five years out of which, for twenty eight years he had to live in a desert island consequent upon a shipwreck. His courage and ingenuity helped him sustain himself in the alien circumstances of that island. He worked hard to fetch the things required for his survival. Gradually, he was able to have some mental peace and physical

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comfort as he was able to overcome the initial difficulties there. This approach to the story of the novel makes the structure of the novel easier to understand. Through the events, whether isolated or coherent, the rational and spiritual development of Crusoe the protagonist is gradually unfolded by the novelist. A narrative pattern can be deciphered in which all the events appear to be interconnected with each other that contribute to development of a meaningful plot. The novelist takes the story forward in such a manner that other perspectives to look at the novel become feasible for the careful readers.

*Robinson Crusoe* has been written adopting the style of writing autobiographical self-confession like other novels of Defoe where the protagonist as the speaker unfolds the narrative. But in spite of having ample scope of self-reflection the author focused on presenting facts and descriptions of events. Rarely, Crusoe the narrator has done self-analysis or paid attention to understand characters of the persons he has come across. But it has to be kept in mind that Defoe was a master of journalistic prose that has greatly influenced his writing of novel. His mixing of Crusoe's factual journal writing and working on personal memories within a single text has given his novel an unusual shape. This ultimately makes clear that Defoe did not want to focus exclusively on Robinson Crusoe as an individual, rather on his experiences through which he wished to present the essence of an age.

**SAQ**

Do you think *Robinson Crusoe* has a unique structure? Give reasons in support of your answer. (You can try to analyse in 70 words)

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**3.4. Techniques**

- **Verisimilitude:** Referring to the novels of Daniel Defoe, in the context of the novelist's craft of inventing circumstantial details, De Quincey once opined that Defoe "gives them such an air of verisimilitude, that men read them for histories" (RC x). Though Defoe was inspired by the real experiences of Alexander Selkirk and Henry Pitman in writing the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, it is not a historical novel in the proper sense of the term. But Defoe does manage to give a colour of reality to the novel through his use of circumstantial details and a fine arrangement of a chain of probable and improbable events in the course of the narrative.
  - **Picaresque style:** Picaresque was a popular tradition of writing novels in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and most of the early English novelists like Defoe, Fielding, Smollett and others followed the trend. The picaresque novels, according to Arnold Kettle, deal with the life and experiences of the social outcasts, "of men and women who have no satisfactory place in feudal society, and their characteristics – variety, adventurousness, colour, irreverence, a lack of guiding principle – are the characteristics of the rebels and adventurers who had not yet become a
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self-conscious class” (Kettle 55). Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* followed the picaresque trend but with a difference. Crusoe was a 17<sup>th</sup> century young man and no rogue expelled from the feudal society, as his father was a middle-class trader. Crusoe opposed the idea of his father to have a secured profession and went out in search of an adventurous job. Here his intention was not exclusively to have a wandering life without aim but to secure his fortune. The novel, unlike other picaresque novels, does not have a loose plot construction. The strange events happened to Crusoe one after the other and he faced them successfully. These events have some logical interrelations. They were planned and arranged to fulfil the author’s purpose to bring unity among different themes.

- **Religious allegory:** Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is often considered to have a religious undertone and the protagonist’s spiritual transformation at the time of danger and loneliness has been explained as the event of moral upliftment. Such claims are perhaps not baseless as Defoe is well-known for his religious preferences. Moreover, he had the model before him like John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and other popular Puritan narratives. In these works, the characters and situations are realistic, style is simple; the issue of moral conflict gets the primary focus. “But the significance of the characters and their actions largely depends upon a transcendental scheme of things” as Watt explains, “the persons are allegorical ... their earthly reality is not the main object of the writer, but rather that he hopes to make us see through them a larger and unseen reality beyond time and place”. Citing this reason, Watt further comments that such presence and absence of such characteristics make difference between *Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*, and make the latter the first novel of English literature. There are pages in Defoe’s book where similarity of biblical counterparts can be found in the events. Crusoe’s ‘sins’ are portrayed in his materialistic and insensitive attitudes. He disobeys his father and leaves home and is caught in a violent storm while in ship near London. His shipwreck and landing in the deserted island can be seen as his ‘fall’ from the secured world he was enjoying. In the island, ailing Crusoe is seen dreaming about the figure threatening him to kill. The sense of guilt and fear and his distancing himself from God in past years makes him pray and surrender himself to God. He thinks himself as the Prodigal Son, a favourite of his family yet does not care to tarnish the reputation of the dear ones and finally goes back to them in order to seek refuge. But Crusoe’s occasional religious practices simply do not make him a pious man. Here Watt argues that in spite of having religious preferences Defoe himself “lived fully in the sphere of practical and utilitarian action, and could be wholly true to his being when he described this aspect of Robinson Crusoe’s life”. No doubt Defoe’s Dissenter faith influenced his thoughts of incorporating them in his novel at times, but unlike any religious allegory *Robinson Crusoe* is not a typical example of this genre. It is more secular in nature. Though Crusoe once feared God and His wrath, or preached Friday the supremacy of Christianity over his savage paganism, most of the events of the novel does not indicate much influence of religion on Crusoe’s actions and thoughts.
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- **Realism:** Defoe's novels are often considered to be realistic as the worlds they present are quite similar to the facts, events and moods of the time, place and society that they narrate. Fiction is presented often as reality by introducing the autobiographical and self-confessional narrative style. As we find in *Robinson Crusoe*, the unnamed editor introduces the book, apparently written by Crusoe, by stating the story of the book "to be a just History of fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it" so that it really seems to be a narration of first-hand experience. The narrative is stuffed with such minute details that the story seems to be true, be it of ordinary people and their wishes, the changing socio-economic condition of the 17<sup>th</sup> century England, the challenging life of seafaring people, or the details of faraway places like North African coast or Caribbean region. Defoe's style of writing is quite apt to add realistic touch to the narrative. The language is never highly stylish or poetic one, rather it is plain and colloquial. Mention of exact dates and time, a certain time frame, the detail description of places and events have been done with journalistic precision and formality. This, according to Watt, is quite mention worthy as it makes Defoe's novel more realistic and convincing than the works by his precursors like Sidney's *Arcadia* or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where sufficient evidence of the "reality of time" (Watt, *Rise* 24) cannot be found. Defoe deserves appreciation in character sketching in a realistic manner. Though we know that Crusoe is an imaginary figure modeled after Alexander Selkirk, it is Defoe's ingenuity that has made him almost a real figure. The feelings, emotions and sentiments as betrayed by the character of Crusoe in the different situations he is put in, by the novelist, in the narrative evoke a sense of reality in most of the instances. And whatever may be the extent of improbability in some of the actions of Robinson Crusoe, Defoe must be considered leniently in that he, in writing *Robinson Crusoe*, was a pioneer without any model to imitate. The aspect of realism in the novel remains incomplete if nothing is said about circumstantial reality in the narrative. The events, the time of their occurrence and the minute details related to them are welded in the narrative or in the life of its protagonist in such a way that they appear quite factual and not imaginary. Defoe's credit lies in the fact that he, in those days, when something like an English novel was not much heard of, managed to create a piece which does not fail to impress any conscious reader about its realism in character portrayal and near-perfect circumstantial precision if the location of the novel in its time and literary background is not missed by the reader.
  - **Symbols:** Apparently Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel that quite straightly conveys the facts and incidents that happened in the extraordinary life of the protagonist Crusoe. But there are several objects or things that refer to some deeper concepts. Defoe used these objects or symbols to take his readers beyond the narration of the adventures to get some different experiences and ideas through them.
    - **The Sea:** Sea plays an important role in Crusoe's life. It is the attraction of the sea that did not let Crusoe choose the life of any common secured professional life as his father advised him. Sea gives him opportunity to fulfil his dreams to have an adventurous life
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but at the same time it led him to face several challenges. As a part of nature, sea refers to something vast, abundant yet unpredictable. On one hand, it allows Crusoe to have the life he wants by sailing to different foreign lands and make his fortune, and on the other hand, it put him in troubles like facing the pirates, being enslaved, and finally landing him shipwrecked on the unnamed island. Thus, sea is like life itself that attracts people like Crusoe to embrace it, and at the same time, plays with their fates until they surrender and adjust with its course.

- **The Island:** While sailing towards Africa to be a part of the slave trade Crusoe gets shipwrecked in the Caribbean region and the waves land him on a deserted island. The violent storm and waves have taken almost everything he managed to get in life so far. So, the island is the place where Crusoe has to start from the beginning and develop himself. It is challenging because the place is still uninhabited and barren. Like the sea, the island as a part of nature throws challenge to Crusoe who not only accepts it but gradually gets accustomed to the environment. He grows crops, tends cattle, builds shelter and makes essential goods for himself. Crusoe's interaction with nature develops him physically and spiritually. So, in a way, the island becomes the symbol of nature that tests man's potentiality as well as provides him with the scopes to toil and survive.
  - **Money:** Money is something that has value in the civilised society only. It is considered by civilised man to be essential for acquiring power and comfort. But Crusoe's experiences in the island prove how baseless this claim is. When Crusoe reaches the island he finds some money in the broken ship. But immediately he understands how useless the money is in the island. Only intelligence and hard work bring him a content life there where he cannot buy them with the money he has with him. Again, when he is in contact with civilisation, he sold his loyal assistant Xury only for money. He also got involved in slave trade to have more money and become richer. So, money symbolises greed and insensitivity which is absent in the island untouched by civilisation. It is noteworthy that Crusoe takes the money he collected from ship and the Spanish vessel with him while going back to England because it is again needed to survive in the civilised society.
  - **The Cross:** The Cross is actually a large post near the shore of the island on which Crusoe etched the number of days he spends in that island. He feared that he will forget the number of days passed and so he turned the post into a cross. In that way, the Cross becomes the kind of record book of his existence in that place. Through the use of it, Crusoe desperately tries to have a connection with the civilised world where calculation of time really matters. Though Crusoe names the calendar post a Cross, it has no connection with Christ or Christianity. It is exclusively made to solve Crusoe's purpose and thus, too overstated to be called as 'Cross'.
  - **Crusoe's Bower:** Crusoe's bower is the second shelter he builds out of his love for the abundant beauty of that particular location in that island. The first shelter he prepares near the shore is to save himself from any kind of danger and to have an easy place for
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looking out at any passing ship that can rescue Crusoe from the island. But after securing himself from the basic challenges in the island he starts exploring the inland and discovers the place. It is a gift of nature that he accepts by planning to make it a second shelter for him; and it indicates his changing attitude towards the island that was initially a place of despair for him. The first shelter is there to fulfil his requirements, but his bower is meant for relaxation and to live in close proximity of the beautiful nature — like, having pleasure after finishing the hard work and serving others and God as Presbyterians believe.

- **The Footprint:** After settling in the island and managing to have a comfortable life there the only thing Crusoe is missing is a human companion. But while exploring the island one day he discovered the footprints on the sand and his longing for human company somehow gets thwarted. He is in a dilemma whether he really wants any other person's presence in the island. He is afraid as well as anxious instead of being hopeful that perhaps some European ship has anchored there. The whole event suggests a peculiar condition of Crusoe's mind as he literally runs away from the place in fear considering it dangerous. That habit of solitude and perhaps more than that the desire of being the 'master' of the island are so strong in Crusoe that he does not want to share his state with anyone else. The footprints pose a question further in the readers' mind whether Crusoe actually wishes to leave the contented life in the island and join the risky and challenging life of the civilised society anymore.
  - **Weapons and Tools:** Weapons, especially guns, play an important part of Crusoe's existence in the island. Crusoe has brought the guns from the broken ship and uses this weapon to survive there. It is a device that is related to civilised world, and by using it he controls the life in the island. He kills fowls and animals for food, secures himself from the danger. When he discovers that the island is sometimes visited by the savages who are cannibals he uses his weapon to protect himself from them. Thus, Crusoe's weapon becomes the symbol of protection as well as dominance. Besides, Crusoe has also collected tools like hammer, saw, axe, nails, compass, dial, chart etc., from the ship. The finding of the Carpenter's Chest was really a 'useful Prize' for Crusoe. With these tools and some other ones Crusoe manages to make his living in island easier. The weapons and tools provide him self-sufficiency and controlling power on the island life.
  - **The Bible:** Crusoe finds the Bible in the broken ship. This religious text plays an important role in Crusoe's life as it helps in his moral and spiritual development. The words of the book give Crusoe the moral support that he needs to regain his mental peace and stability. Later, Crusoe used the book to teach Friday the merits of Christian religion. Thus, the book changes as the symbol of imposition of the European culture over the native culture, where the latter is implied as savage, barbaric and primitive.
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**SAQ**

How is Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* different in spirit from the novels that have been produced before and after it? (You can try to explain in 60 words)

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Do you think the use of symbols in *Robinson Crusoe* has made it effective and interesting? Why do you think so? (You can try to justify in 80 words)

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**3.5. Characterisation in *Robinson Crusoe***

It is the aim of a novelist to make his/her work interesting and engaging to the readers. In order to do so the novel must have three primary traits, an interesting and plausible plot, believable characters, and a realistic set up. Defoe in his *Robinson Crusoe* has tried his best to give the impression that the novel is truly a narrative of real events and not a work of fiction. Apart from intertwining various literary forms and using realistic description of places and events he portrayed his characters in such a way that they do not seem to the readers as strangers or belonging to any alien part of this world. In the words of Ian Watt, “Robinson Crusoe ... is Defoe’s most heroic character, but there is nothing unusual about his personality or the way he faces his strange experiences” (78). Like other protagonists of Defoe, Crusoe too exists “on the moral plane of day-to-day living more completely than those of previous narratives”, and his “thoughts and actions only exhibit an ordinary, a democratic goodness and badness” (Watt, 78).

As the novel reveals, Robinson Crusoe as the protagonist does not have the grandness of the epic heroes or the knights of romance, yet the tale of his adventure has impressed readers for centuries. He is just like any other young man of the 17<sup>th</sup> century — practical, cautious, keenly interested in making money and having an adventurous life. Ian Watt aptly comments in this connection that “Robinson Crusoe is not, like Autolycus, a commercial traveller rooted in an extended but still familiar locality; nor is he, like Ulysses, an unwilling voyager trying to get back to his family and his native land: profit is Crusoe's only vocation, and the whole world is his territory” (*Rise*, 67). The idea of securing a conventional life is never acceptable to him. So he sets out and faces many challenges till he reaches Brazil and makes fortune there. His initial days of adventure prove his ability to identify the opportunities and use them for his own benefit. His flee from slavery with the help of Xury and then selling him to the Portuguese captain, all are driven by the thought of having a better future ahead.

Crusoe has several flaws in his character. He seems to be quiet indifferent to relations. He disobeys his father’s suggestion and leaves his parents to pursue his career of trading. His selling of Xury, involvement in slave trading and turning helpless Friday into his attendant all make him



somehow an insensitive and cruel person. Upon his return to England after almost thirty years, he shows no emotion when he meets the rest of his family members. He seems so indifferent to his family that he never cares to state his wife's name in the very brief mention about his family and children. Besides, his notion of superiority of white people, calling the non-whites as Negroes and savages and despising their culture prove his racial biasness. Moreover, Crusoe has no inclination to enjoy the beauty of nature in the island and he always views the place from a utilitarian perspective. His attempts to survive in the island are actually led by the intention of exploiting the resources that nature has provided him with. His ambition leads him to be a landowner in the island from a castaway. With the help of guns, he tries to get control over nature and the savages who occasionally visit the island to kill their captives. Simultaneously, Crusoe runs away from the place when he discovers the footprint on the shore. All such incidents make Crusoe an ordinary figure rather than a hero surviving perilous adventures.

In spite of all that, Crusoe continues to impress readers for centuries. Defoe has made his protagonist an individual possessing both virtues and vices, which make Crusoe a real individual. His patience, tenacity, individualism are praiseworthy, as Watt writes that Crusoe was "alone on his island, deprived of all assistance from his fellows, and nevertheless able to look after himself, is obviously a figure that will enthral readers of all ages" (Myth, 98). Crusoe's ambition to make his own fortune, his initial struggle in the island, his building shelter, tending cattle, growing crops, making furniture and other household goods — everything surprises us. His acts of learning by doing, and individualist approach towards things and incidents greatly impressed philosopher Rousseau who in his book on educating young minds advised to follow Crusoe's approach. He is not afraid of toiling hard, he likes to perfect his learning and he knows how to use things to suit his purpose. He is not completely void of religious feelings, though his idea regarding the need of divine assistance is limited to personal level. He does not forget the persons who help him in the time of need. The Widow of the Captain who has kept Crusoe's money secured for almost thirty years, or the Portuguese Captain who helps Crusoe to regain his share of the Brazil plantation are helped financially by Crusoe upon his return to England. It may so happen that Crusoe's talents have been utilised by him for his own good and not so much for others, but that is something which makes Crusoe a common man of flesh and blood who can narrate the tale of human condition convincingly.

### **Stop to consider**

Following are some important information about significant classical character references. Try to note how they have been used to explore Robinson Crusoe's character:

**Autolykus:** Autolykus, a figure known for his art of theft and cunningness, is the son of the god Hermes and Chione in Greek mythology. The name and characteristics was borrowed by Shakespeare in the comedy *The Winter's Tale*. Here the person named Autolykus is a vagabond, trickster, peddler and pickpocket in Bohemia.

**Ulysses:** Ulysses, Odysseus in Greek, the protagonist of Homer's epic *Odyssey*, is the king of Ithaca. He has been portrayed as wise, clever and courageous. The Homeric epic narrates how after the Trojan War, Odysseus/Ulysses returns home after ten years of eventful voyage and reasserts himself as the king of Ithaca.

The other character who has prominence in the course of the novel is Friday, Crusoe's non-white attendant. He is described in the novel through the voice of Crusoe. From Crusoe's narration we come to know that he belongs to a certain Caribbean tribe. He has been captivated and brought to the island by other cannibal natives and Crusoe rescues him from them. Crusoe names him Friday, as he has been rescued on that very day, and immediately the master-slave relationship begins between them. We never come to know about Friday's perspective regarding the whole episode and the following events, yet his presence in Crusoe's life is crucial as Friday becomes the representative of the subjugated races of the non-white world under the oppressive force of European colonialists. As the story unfolds, Friday is a handsome, well-built, active and loyal person though Crusoe does not pay much attention to explore his qualities. He is interested to teach him to call 'master' and to say 'yes' and 'no' to meet the basic needs. This shows a clear picture of callousness and insensitiveness towards an individual and his culture as "Crusoe does not ask Friday his name, he gives him one; and there is throughout a remarkable lack of interest in Friday as a person, as someone worth trying to understand or converse with. Even in language — the medium whereby human beings may achieve something more than animal relationships with each other — Crusoe is a strict utilitarian" (Watt, Myth, 113).

Friday is a more interesting and lively character in comparison to Crusoe. He takes good care of his master and shows interest in Crusoe's culture and religion and tries to assess the comparative superiority between his own religion and that of Crusoe's. It shows his eagerness to know other culture and ability of impartial judgment. When convinced, he is even ready to spread the message of Christianity among his people to stop them from cannibalism. Then, his joyful excitement at the sight of his father safe from cannibals reveals his emotional and innocent nature which is absent in Crusoe's treatment to his family members. He is faithful to Crusoe as he promised because he accompanies Crusoe to England without waiting for his father to return to the island. He always follows Crusoe and saves him from dangers as he does during their return from Lisbon to England.

In respect of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English social system, a formal master-slave relationship is quite realistic. But, as the narrative goes, existence of a more cordial bond between Crusoe and Friday may seem possible. Even an unemotional and rational man like Crusoe has to spend some words to appreciate Friday's qualities and loyalty, and though not expressed openly, Crusoe has some affection and care in his mind for his faithful servant. Friday's colonial master may have deprived him of his native land, language and religion but Friday still holds his warmth and cheerful spirit that generates a positive impression about the people of the subjugated races.

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Another character who finds a significant place in the novel is the Portuguese captain who is portrayed as an honest, friendly, helpful and kindhearted gentleman. He helps Crusoe twice in his time of crisis. First, when Crusoe and Xury are running away from their Moorish master and have no means to escape from Africa, the captain out of kindness takes them to his ship and helps them to reach Brazil where Crusoe establishes as the owner of a plantation. Years later, he again helps Crusoe to recover his wealth from his Brazil plantation after the latter returns to England from the island without much resource to sustain. As Crusoe's agent, he helps him to recover the money and property which Crusoe could never have done alone. For long twenty eight years, he has been taking care of another man's wealth in spite of being in financial difficulty himself. Crusoe has also acknowledged the captain's honesty and generosity, and he provides the captain financial help, and obviously, the captain deserves that much gratitude from Crusoe.

The Portuguese captain has been portrayed in a positive light in the novel. He represents those white Europeans who are benevolent, honest, loyal and genuinely good at heart. He is different from his contemporary seamen who are materialistic, self-centred and views every action from the profit and loss perspective. As a human being, he is morally stronger and possesses more goodness than the protagonist. His nature and actions compel us to rethink about the clichéd idea regarding the white colonisers. Actually, the characters like Friday and Portuguese captain challenge our existing impressions about the non-white natives and white Europeans and allow us to explore human nature from a different perspective.

**SAQ**

How does the character of Robinson Crusoe represent the 18<sup>th</sup> century ambitious man? (You can try to explain in 60 words)

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Whom would you prefer as a better individual between Crusoe and Friday? Give reasons for your answer. (You can try to assess in 70 words)

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**3.6. The Point of View and Narration in *Robinson Crusoe***

In a novel, point of view reflects the perspective from which the events and the actions are narrated and viewed. Defoe has made the titular hero Crusoe speak for himself and describe the events from his perspective. In that way, the point of view used in the novel is the first person point of view. But at the same time, as Crusoe is one of the characters of the novel, readers get information about other characters and their experiences from Crusoe's narration. Thus, Crusoe

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serves the role of the third person narrator too. Here Crusoe has some limitations, because he can only narrate the things about others on the basis of his interaction with them and it is not possible for him to anticipate how they are going to act or to understand what is going on in their mind. So, unlike an omniscient narrator who is not a part of the story and narrating things from outside, Crusoe presents the story from a first person as well as third person limited perspective.

Crusoe's narration in the novel has incorporated two formats of writing. One is written in self-confessing autobiographical style in which his description along with retrospection has been noted down. The other style of writing he uses is that of the journalistic prose. Crusoe starts writing his journal in the island from September 30, 1659 and continued till his ink gets exhausted in order to keep record of the dates and events. Here we find the list of facts and information and less space for contemplation as the pages have been filled up only to store information. The portion that Crusoe has written recollecting his past, there he talks about his family, his ambition, adventures, hope and despair and so on. But the journal portion includes the brief entries sometimes written in incomplete sentences. It is noteworthy that Crusoe's narrative has very little space for emotion and sentiment and hardly ever the language gets poetic. In spite of being written from a subjective point of view, the tone always remains objective and practical, as if his aim is to present facts only. His feelings are rarely noted down and seldom has he used rhetorical language. He cares only for those things that seem essential for his survival and benefit and notes them down in his book. Likewise, he never tries to analyse the characters of others and their feelings, and depicts the events of interactions with a detached attitude. His description is wholly based on his observation which he presents as the matter of facts. Defoe's adoption of such style of narrative for his book may be natural as well as deliberate. Defoe himself was a master of journalistic prose writing and implementing that style in his narrative was quite easy for him. Again, the adoption might be pre-meditated as a man like Crusoe, who is of practical and worldly nature, producing a narrative with poetic or rhetorical elements seemed quite unusual and unrealistic. So, except in some deeply moving or overwhelming incidents, Crusoe the narrator has maintained a certain dispassionate attitude throughout the book.

**SAQ**

Do you think that Crusoe as narrator has done justice to assess the events and analyse the characters he meets in course of the novel? (You can try to justify in 70 words)

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How has Defoe's emphasis on factuality affected the natural development of his novel? (You can try to explain in 60 words)

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### 3.7. Themes in *Robinson Crusoe*

- **Civilisation and Nature:** Crusoe belongs to a civilised society and possesses the traits of it. As a product of European civilisation, he has the typical notion that his society, religion and culture are superior to the non-white cultures. His connection with civilisation comes to an end after he becomes a castaway in the lonely island where nature dominates in place of civilisation. It is both the destroyer and provider. The tempest in the sea, heavy downpour, earthquake, all are demonstration of nature's unpredictable and destructive power whereas she presents fruits, crops, birds, animals, shelter, favourable conditions that make Crusoe's survival in the island possible. But, as the novel unfolds, Crusoe always prefers civilisation to nature. In his initial days in the island, he has to depend on nature's mercy. But as days pass, he begins to change natural set up of the place and shape it according to his need and choice. He uses the tools, weapons to make the mark of civilisation on the island. Crusoe is seldom impressed by the beauty of nature in the island, except occasion like discovering the beautiful valley. Crusoe is grateful to nature for the gifts, but at the same time, every gift of nature is viewed by Crusoe from its utilitarian aspect and he wishes to be the master of the island. In the words of Ian Watt, "Crusoe observes nature, not with the eyes of a pantheist primitive, but with the calculating gaze of colonial capitalism; wherever he looks he sees acres that cry out for improvement, and as he settles down to the task he glows, not with noble savagery, but purposive possession" (100). This European tradition of colonial aspiration and Crusoe's wish to transform the natural world of the island is clear even in his treatment to the native 'savages' and his assistant Friday. He never tries to learn about these people who live in close contact with nature but teaches Friday English language, habits as well as religion so that Crusoe can feel to be in close contact with his 'superior' culture. The change of the wild island into a European colony at the time of Crusoe's revisit at the end of narrative shows the attempt of civilisation to have control over nature.
  - **Aspiration and Contentment:** Defoe's protagonist is undoubtedly the product of the 17<sup>th</sup> century England as the trend of the age finds its mark in Crusoe's attitude and aspiration. At the very beginning of the novel, it is clear from young Crusoe's conversation with his father. When Crusoe's father, a religious-minded middle class man asks his son to choose a secure profession for himself Crusoe disagrees. He is not content with the idea of the comfortable life; he likes to have something challenging and adventurous that will also bring him financial security. The 17<sup>th</sup> century was a time when most of Europe set out for expedition to find new overseas regions to make fortune. So, Crusoe leaves his home and joins the first ship to London. During his first voyage, he faces challenge in the form of tempest that forces him to reconsider whether his choice between contentment and aspiration has been a right one. But as the narrative progresses, we see that Crusoe always prioritises the life of action over passive existence. He undertakes several voyages, gets captivated and flees from it, lands in Brazil and becomes owner of a plantation. But without being content with his financial success he goes for another expedition to Africa to start slave trade, this journey
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ends in shipwreck and his landing in the solitary island where he has to spend twenty eight years of his life. When he has already adjusted himself comfortably in the new place he wished to be the owner of the place. He rescues Friday from the cannibals, and his life with his new assistant has been going quite well. Again Crusoe wishes to return to England by any means; and surprisingly, after having a family of his own upon his return he wishes to go back to sea again. So, he is never satisfied, and this struggle between his idea of contentment and ambition does not allow him to settle down in life. Thus, the novel can be read as a narrative of this unending struggle and its consequences, and at the same time, this theme has been the root cause of all actions which make the text appealing and fascinating to the readers.

- **Religion:** Religion remains one of the major themes in Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*. the novel may be considered as its protagonist Crusoe's conflict and final coming into terms with religion or faith. In the marooned island, Crusoe's lost faith is restored. The first thing that Crusoe reads from the Bible promises deliverance from all odds and troubles if he glorifies God in return and as Crusoe realises, God has kept His promises more than once. At the same time, Crusoe also becomes aware of the fact that he has not glorified God as advised in the Bible. Crusoe now becomes experienced and matured enough to draw a parallel between the events of his life and the incidents described in the holy text of the Bible; in this process, his faith in God is restored as a result of his deeper understanding or realisation of the events of his life in the context of the Bible. But Daniel Defoe also incorporates in the narrative some moments in which his protagonist's faith in God wavers. Crusoe's discovery of the human footprint in the island and his reaction to that is one such moment. Crusoe panics and feels as if the sense of fear that has gripped his mind at the discovery of footprint dispelled his hope and confidence in God. Crusoe, who has learnt to believe in God's providence in the island, is disturbed to some extent, by the fear of man now. Alongside, the themes of religion and faith, the idea of penance and rewards also inform the narrative of the novel to a considerable extent. Crusoe equates his act of disobedience to his father to the 'Original Sin' and tends to believe that all his subsequent troubles emanated from that sin. His struggles in life, particularly those in the deserted island, can be seen as his act of repentance and punishment and he gradually learns to be grateful to God for redemption. Crusoe's feeling when he first sees the sprouts of the grain seeds he sows is an example in this regard.
  - **Civilised and Savage:** The binary of civilised-savage is an important issue in the novel. Crusoe, as a representative of the white-European society presents the view and conviction of his time and society that European culture and Christianity are superior to those of the non-whites. The Negroes of Africa and natives of South America in the eyes of Crusoe are inferior to the whites. In the island, when Crusoe first discovers the footprint he feels the fear of some unknown danger in his paradise. Later, he discovers that the natives of the region use to visit the island and they are cannibals. For Crusoe, such visits are intrusions, as he feels it
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as threat to his monopoly over the island, and out of his prejudiced concept and fear of losing control over the land he considers them as savage. In the course of time, one of these 'savages' becomes his faithful attendant whom he rescues from the other savage cannibals and turns him into a slave. He gives him the name Friday without caring to know his original name. Crusoe teaches him to obey his commands, understand his needs, and worship the Christian God. Being a member of the 'superior' race, Crusoe believes that it is obvious for him to be the 'master' of the person of an 'inferior' race, and thus he never shows interest to understand the values of native culture. Such racial biasness is clear in Crusoe's attitude who believes that whites are civilised and the savage non-whites are destined to serve the white-masters. But Crusoe's conviction has been challenged by the generosity and helpfulness of the Negroes of Africa, by the faithfulness of slave boy Xury, whom Crusoe sells to the Portuguese captain, and by the loyalty of his 'slave' Friday who is ready to risk his life for Crusoe. These incidents ultimately lead readers to think that the civilised-savage disparity presented in the novel is not at all universal but just the result of Crusoe's notion of superiority of the white man in racial hierarchy.

- **Colonisation:** The narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* can also be discussed in the light of the discourse of colonialism or imperialism. When analysed closely, one can notice that the theme of colonialism runs throughout the novel as an undercurrent. It is in this context that Edward Said's comment on Defoe's protagonist becomes pertinent when he says, "Robinson Crusoe is virtually unthinkable without the colonizing mission that permits him to create a new world of his own in the distant reaches of the African, Pacific, and Atlantic wilderness" (75). Interpretation of the novel from the colonial perspective is facilitated by the narrative of the novel itself. After Crusoe and Friday rescue two prisoners (one is Friday's father and the other is the Spaniard) from the cannibals and carry them upon a hand-burrow, Crusoe thinks within himself that 'his' island is peopled now and considers himself to be the lord over them. He surmises the entire island to be a country that belongs to him and he is the undisputed ruler of it. Crusoe experiences a sense of complacency imagining that his people in the island are sufficiently subjected and considers himself to be their sole lawgiver to whom they owe their existence. Such thoughts that cross Crusoe's mind bear testimony to the fact that Crusoe sees himself, like a colonialist, as the absolute master and authority over his subjects. Crusoe's attitude to Friday particularly reveals his colonial mindset. Friday is taught the language of the ruler, i.e. Crusoe, and is trained to assist his master in every profitable enterprise undertaken by Crusoe. He also considers himself, as mentioned earlier, the mighty master of the island. Such thoughts and attitudes of Crusoe, can be aligned with the history of colonialism in which the imperial powers imposed themselves as the ruler of the lands that they had visited initially as mere traders or travellers. Crusoe's shipwreck and subsequent settlement in the island, his invention or discovery of things needed for his survival, his rescuing of Friday and others from the clutches of certain death, his treatment of them as his
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lawful subjects, etc., fit to a well set pattern of colonialism at work in the narrative of the novel.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. How do the symbols used in the novel make it something more than a mere series of episodic tales?
2. How does Defoe create an atmosphere of reality in *Robinson Crusoe*?
3. To which extent, in your view, have the main themes of the novel influenced the narrative?
4. Which elements of *Robinson Crusoe*, in your view, are still relevant and appealing to the readers of current generation?

**3.8. Summing Up:**

In the final unit, discussions of structure and narrative techniques used in *Robinson Crusoe* have been discussed to provide the basic idea regarding those aspects of the novel. While explaining the structure of the novel it has been found that Defoe's novel is quite unique in that matter. The first novel of Defoe, blends many different and distinguished formats of prose fiction together to create a new form. With his mastery, Defoe used the elements of picaresque tradition, episodic development of story, realistic facts and trends, religious allegory, journalistic style of prose writing, autobiographical writing technique, travelogue, everything with an ease. As for narration and point of view, Defoe let Crusoe speak for himself and present the events that take place in the course of the novel. So, Crusoe is simultaneously the narrator as well as one of the characters of the book. He narrates from his point of view with an objective attitude focusing on description of the detailed facts and actions, and emphasising less on contemplation and personal expression. The other issues taken up during explanation of the technical aspects are the art of characterisation, use of symbols and the dominant themes of the text. Critical comments regarding the structural elements of the novel have also been included so that the idea gets more transparent and profound. So, after reading Unit III, you are expected to understand the novel's distinct structure and narrative technique, its art of characterisation and to examine and analyse the different aspects of the text critically. By doing so, you will be able to go beyond the pleasure reading of a classic book and discover the essence of the text in true sense.

**3.9. Reference and Suggested Reading**

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**Unit 4**  
**Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels***  
***Background***

- 4.1 Objectives**
- 4.2 Introduction**
- 4.3 Jonathan Swift: Biographical Sketch**
- 4.4 Swift's Major Works**
- 4.5 Gulliver's Travels and The Tradition of Travel Writing**
- 4.6 Intellectual backdrop to Gulliver's travels**
- 4.7 Swift and Satire**
- 4.8 Summing Up**
- 4.9 Reference and Suggested Reading**

**4.1 Objectives:**

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Learn about Jonathan Swift's life
- Assess the works of the novelist
- Understand this significance of the text in the context of travel writing
- Situate Swift in the satirical tradition
- Situate Swift in the intellectual context

**4.2 Introduction:**

Jonathan Swift is a very peculiar writer in English literature. He shares with his contemporaries in the Augustan Period such as Alexander Pope, Joseph the social concerns as a major springhead of writing, but unlike Addison and Steele, he did not write for the audience. To read Swift was to be disturbed. We will explain later how Swift devised his unique kind of satire not merely as a critique of society but also of the reader. In *The Battle of the Books* Swift defines satire thus: "Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own." (Carter:History, 156) In this course, you are supposed to read Swift's most popular fictional work *Gulliver's Travels*, which is arguably the best of his novels. In this unit, however, we shall conduct a background study that would include the life and work of the writer and a general assessment of the novel under study.

**4.3 Biographical Sketch**

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin of newly settled English parents Jonathan Swift (1614-1667) and Abigail Erick (1640- ). Their family ancestry can be traced back to William Swyfte of Canterbury (1500-1567) who married Agnes Barbett. Their descendants down to the satirist held important positions in the ecclesiastical order. Adam (1642-1704) moved to Ireland and practised as a solicitor, and his fifth son was

Jonathan Swift the elder. Abigail Erick was born in Ireland to parents who had migrated there from England, and was a distant relative of Sir William Temple (Swift was to associate himself with the Temple family later). soon after Swift's father died, his uncle Godwin Swift took the family to his home. Abigail returned to her ancestral home in Leicester, leaving infant Swift in the custody of a nurse. The nurse took him to Whitchaven where they stayed three years. Eventually Swift was brought back to Dublin and sent to Kilkenny Grammar School. He studied there from 1673 to 1682 before he moved on to Trinity College where he received his B.A. in 1686. Swift left for England in 1689 leaving his M.A. incomplete amid the tumultuous time of the Glorious Revolution.

In England Swift visited his mother in Leicester, and became secretary to his kinsman Mr. Temple. He remained as a member in the household of Temple for close to a decade, taking a residence at Moor Park. Swift developed an inner disorder he called 'labrithine vertigo' leaving for Ireland for a cure, and resumed his duty as Temple's secretary in 1691. He received his M.A. in 1694, and in the same year he became an Anglican deacon. In 1695 he was ordained as the Church of Ireland priest but disappointed at being assigned to a small, dilapidated parish at Kilroot. On Temple's invitation, he came back to Moor Park and remained there till 1699. Here he began work on *A Tale of Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*, two powerful satire on corruptions in religion and learning. They were published in 1704. The texts received final form in the fifth edition published in 1710.

Swift devoted a considerable part of his genius to religion and politics. Temple died in January 1699. Swift returned to Dublin as chaplain to the Earl of Berkeley, Lord Justice of Ireland. In 1700 he became Vicar of Liscannon and then Prebend of St. Patrick's Cathedral. In 1702 he obtained the DOCTOR OF DIVINITY degree from Trinity College. Between 1706 and 1709 he worked as a Church of Ireland representative and lobbied to have Irish clergymen exempted from having to pay a tax called "first fruits and twentieth parts" on the other hand, Swift's political affiliation shifted from the Whigs to the Tories. In fact, in 1710, he abandoned the Whigs. His failure to secure preferment among the Whigs and his resentment of the religious doctrines they increasingly upheld were said to be reasons behind this shift. But he also felt that the Whigs were indifferent to the welfare of the Anglican Church in Ireland and to their demand to repeal the Test Act. (*Norton Anthology* vol 1, 2301) The fall of the Whig ministry was concomitant with the Tory's rise to power under Robert Harley. Swift began writing for the Tory Examiner and came in association with Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot. He became the editor of the Examiner the party organ of the Tories and proved himself a powerful political journalist.

In 1703 in England, he published *A Tale of Tub* and 'The Battle of the Books'. "Becker staff Papers" was published in 1708 when Swift began writing for Steele's *The Tatler*. Swift's political affiliation shifted from the Whigs to the Tories. Earlier on, he was associated with the Whigs, and by 1709 he shifted his position. His failure to secure preferment among the Whigs and his resentment of the religious doctrines they increasingly upheld were said to be reasons behind this shift. The fall of the Whig ministry was concomitant with the Tory's rise to power under Robert Harley. Swift began writing for the Tory Examiner and came in association with Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot.

The first anthologized collection of his writing, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* was published in 1711. In 1712, "Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue" was published, in which establishment of an academy was proposed for the said purpose. He also had a brief stint back in Dublin as the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. But he did not want to stay there for long and felt

exiled from England. Again, in England he worked together with Pope, Arbuthnot and other members of the Scriblerous Club on the *Memoirs of Martin Scriblerous*.

In 1718 he became friends with Thomas Sheridan and Patrick Delany and was subsequently involved in Irish political affairs. He looked upon the Irish as the victim of English and Whig oppression. In the year, he published “Proposal for the Universal Use of the Irish Manufacture” in which he argues against English trade policies. By 1721 he began to write *Gulliver’s Travels*. Swift advocated for Ireland, wrote Drapier’s letters expressing solidarity with Irish parliament against introduction of copper coinage in the country. He successfully rallied the Irish into refusing to accept Wood’s coinage. The patent was revoked. Swift gained popularity with the Irish and achieved the status of an Irish patriot.

Swift died in the deanery in 1745. He was buried next to Steele in St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

#### 4.4 Swift’s Major Works:

- 1704: The Battle of the Books; A Tale of a Tub
- 1708: The Bickerstaff Papers
- 1710: The Examiner(ed.); Meditations on a Broomstick
- 1711: An Argument against Abolishing Christianity,
- 1711: *The Conduct of the Allies*
- 1712: A Proposal for Correcting the English Language
- 1724-25: *Drapier’s Letters*
- 1726: *Gulliver’s Travels*
- 1728: A Short View of the State of Ireland
- 1729: *A Modest Proposal*
- 1738: *Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*
- 1739: *Verses on the Death of Dr Swift*

Swift wrote his first book *A Tale of A Tub* is a story of three persons, Peter, Martin, and Jack, who represent Roman Catholic Church, Church of England and Protestant Dissenters, respectively. It was written during his employment with Sir William Temple, *A Tale* is an attack on corruption in religion and learning and was immensely popular. Temple’s opposition to certain modern learning is reflected in his “Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning” which was published in 1690. As a rebuttal to Temple’s essay, William Wotton wrote “Reflections Upon Ancient and modern Learning” (1697) and Richard Bentley wrote “Dissertation Upon the Epistles of Phalaris”. Swift wrote *The Battle of the Books* as a defense of Temple. Let us not forget that most of Swift’s prose work were topical and written in an urgent socio-political context.

Swift cannot be simply categorized as one among the English novelists in the eighteenth century; he is a writer quite different from Richardson or Daniel Defoe, for instance. One major point of difference is Swift’s active engagement in contemporary politics as a writer or an intellectual. His first political tract, “A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions between the Nobles and Commons in Athens and Rome” (published in 1701) is about the political battle in the parliament between nobles and commoners, especially impeachment of the Whig lords, where the author draws examples from Athenian history.

From 1708-10 Swift was occupied by campaigns repealing Test Act and writing on the relation between church and the state such pieces as “An Argument against Abolishing Christianity”, “A Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners”, A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons in Ireland to a Member of the House of Commons in England, concerning the Sacramental Test”, “ The Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man” etc.

*The Conduct of the Allies* (1711) , a very popular essay by him saw two more editions within five days after it was printed and 8<sup>th</sup> edition in 1715. It was a critique of England’s war policies, of Whig aim of conquering Spain and also contained analysis of the war’s potential effect on England’s economy. More more than a decade, the Whigs had been at war with the Spanish succession. Meanwhile, disagreement with Whig policis made him come closer to the Tories and achieved the editorship of the Examiner, their party organ. The essay *The Conduct* called for an end to this war and supported a peace treaty with France.

From 1710 to 1713 Swift was at the vortex of his political-public life when he was also writing letters to Esther JOHNSON (Stella) and her older companion Rebecca Dingley, later published as *Journal to Stella*. It was also the time when was working in London as a representative of the Irish church. *Journal to Stella*, published posthumously, in 1765 is a series of 65 letters that, by his own admission, is a sort of a journal, and has been immensely popular. Scholars attend to the *Journal* as biographical and historical document. For one thing, the *Journals* describes the political, social, and literary milieu of early 18th-century London. It has been conjectured that through these letters, Swift wished to unburden his mind while he was associated with powerful and prominent personalities of the time and lived a predominantly public life. In the midst of his public engagements his private self expressed itself intimately before Stella. The letters revealed a personal, intimate language, tone and mood where he spoke almost without inhibition. On the other hand, they also betray Swift’s obsession with power, where he equates his daily success with the opportunity to have access to important figures. (Critical Study, 211)

In 1712 he published his “Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue,” where he proposed for the establishment of an academy for that purpose. Arthur Mainwaring dismissed Swift’s proposal to purify English language, in his essay *The British Academy* published in the same year.

Swift spent his life shuttling between England and Ireland, London and Dublin. He chapmioned the Irish cause, yet, as observed by literary historians, while in Ireland he felt unhappily exiled while a complete identity with England was not possible because of the Whig politics that governed her. (Short Oxford History, 281-282) All the same, much of his polemical and propagandist writing were geared towards the cause of Irish independence. We have already mentioned his tract “Proposal for the Universal Use of the Irish Manufacture”, which was his earliest pamphlet on Ireland. The tract univocally opposes economic and political oppression on the irish unleashed by the british parliament. It calls for boycott of english clothes produced and sold by the English and asserts that the irish people could prosper when they produce their own goods. In fact, the essay is a reaction against the 1699 English Woolen Act that promoted importation of goods into Ireland, and provides a strong economic logic to Irish nationalism.

Though *The Drapier’s* letters were written in 1724-25, the complete series of seven letters in one volume was published by George Faulkner in 1735. Of course a few of them were printed in 1725. The context of these letter is as follows: the British government created a royal patent in 1720 which would



grant permission for minting Irish copper. William Wood an ironmonger was granted the patent for £10,000 in 1722. In this crucial decision in which neither the Irish nor the commissioners of the Irish Revenue were consulted, a devaluation of Irish currency was imminent. It created controversy and gave rise to pamphlets attacking England's subjugation of Ireland through the granting of the patent. And the most powerful statement against Wood's manufacture of copper coins came from Swift in the form of the Drapier's letters. It is in consequence of the impact of Swift's letters and public consciousness that the patent was finally revoked. One of the many pamphlets Swift wrote on Irish affairs is "A Short View of the State of Ireland", yet another important commentary of Swift's on England's oppression of Ireland. The origin of the pamphlet can be traced back to Sir John Browne's *Seasonable Remarks on Trade* which asserted that the poor condition of Ireland is exaggerated. The issue of oppression of Ireland by England is variously treated in such work as the Drapier's Letters, "The Storey of the Injured lady", part 3 of Gulliver's Travels, "An Answer to a Paper, Called 'A Memorial of the Poor Inhabitants, Tradesmen, and Labourers of the Kingdom of Ireland'" etc.

*A Modest Proposal* is Swift's short yet important political document with sustained irony and parody, and occupies a distinctive place in the satirical tradition of English literature. It deals with Ireland's recurrent famines, poverty, corrupt economy, English landlord's neglect of Irish tenant, and it shocks us with the cold rationality with which the persona offers a devastating proposal to mitigate the crisis facing Ireland. The persona of the projector begins by expressing sadness at the sight of the poor, and moves on to cold statistical view of human suffering, finally proposing restoration of health of one section of society by sacrificing the children below the age of twelve.

*Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*, popularly known as *Polite Conversations*, is where the linguistic habits of upper classes becomes the object of satire. He shows here how the ruling section of the society spends time in empty rituals of polite conversation using cliches and repetition, while a large section of society live in poverty hunger and neglect. *Polite Conversations* It is the last major work of Swift.

#### **Stop to Consider:**

Do you think that Jonathan Swift can be placed alongside other canonical writers of fiction in the eighteenth century? Is it his public engagement and political activism shaped what he writes, or has he created a complete fictional world like, say Charles Dicken or Thomas Hardy?

#### **4.5 Jonathan Swift and the Tradition of Travel Writing**

Travel writing flourished in the eighteenth century in consequence of a variety of factors such as the spread of colonialism, discovery of trade routes, establishment of new roads for trade within Britain, as well as the general impetus of enlightenment. Preoccupation with the idea of travelling, and the figure of the traveler pervade the eighteenth century literature. It was seen as an individual activity propelled by a variety of motives, but whatever be the private reasons, travelers also betrayed a consciousness of being the citizens of a particular nation and a custodian of the distinctive values of a culture in contradistinction to that of the culture they visited. A common ideological propensity underlying most of the travel

narratives of this time is the unwavering faith in the superiority of the British culture. Common forms of travel writing were journals, letters, memoirs, essays and other travel accounts.

Henry Fielding wrote a journal of his voyage to Portugal in 1754, posthumously published in 1755 as *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1). It was a personal account of travel experience with focus on physical discomfort and all travails of journey, yet this personal account also airs an implicit pride of Britain's superiority. Tobias Smolett's *Travels through France and Italy* (1766) was written in a series of letters focusing on health conditions and issues of disease around the places being travelled. Smolett praises European architecture yet did not forget to express his identity as a Briton. Not that all travel accounts were the harvest of the labour of the distinctively remarkable British writers. Travelers of the time included a number of professional castes and communities such as the merchants, pirates, colonial settlers, country house tourists, scientific explorers and the like. In a variety of ways they wrote their travel accounts upholding their rootedness in British culture and promoting the British national interest (the phrase 'national interest', you see, being at times synonymous with 'colonial interest'). (2)

Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* was a popular piece of travel literature which saw multiple editions in the eighteenth century. In this account he somewhat belittles earlier kinds of travel writing and upholds his personae as an educated, well-read traveler. Addison and Steele spoke of the benefits of travel and its edifying role to the traveler, of how it broadens one's vision and dispels prejudices. (3) Travel was overall a masculine affair, and the received image of travelling is that of a male traveler entering a feminized landscape or a virgin land. (You may see how even travel figures in other, more imaginative sort of literature such as poetry as a metaphor for man's aggressive relationship to woman. Think about John Donne!) However, eighteenth century literature was not all male affair; a few very remarkable texts from women's circles has enriched this domain. Remarkable is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters of travel accounts as she travelled extensively as a diplomat's wife for five decades. Remarkable in her account is the everyday, domestic life of the people of various places being visited. Another, Piozzi records of her travel of Europe in letters and journals in a lively style akin to Montagu's. Mary Wollstonecraft, you must have known her as a key figure of feminism for her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*) also wrote letters during her journey to Scandinavia that deal with a variety of topics yet has an autobiographical content. Her letters, twenty five in all, were brought out in the book titled *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* in 1790s and was quite popular.

Rise of European travels also generated a spirit of travel within the nation; increased trade created new network of roads within England. Country houses were opened for tourists, and they gave rise to a flurry of guide books, regional maps, road atlas. Daniel Defoe's *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, an important work of domestic travel literature was published in 1724-27 which became, over the years, a popular guide book. Here Defoe claims authenticity of account by presenting eye-witness account, and lent to his material some organization and structure, in contrast to the erstwhile structureless travel writing. Defoe's text spurred interest in Scotland prompting many subsequent travel writers to focus on this part of the British Isles, as in Samuel Johnson's *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775). Similarly Mary Granville visited Ireland and wrote a series of letters. Arthur Young wrote *A Tour in Ireland* in 1780, expressing his awareness of the social disparity in Irish life and condemning penal laws against the Catholics (728).

Rise of travel beyond Europe is even more crucial for colonial expansion as well as for widening the scope of scientific studies of various kinds. George Anson's *A Voyage Round the World* (1740) was a popular work which saw multiple editions. Travel literature was popular with the readers and stimulated their imagination. Defoe, the famous writer of *Robinson Crusoe*, also wrote *A New Voyage Round the World* (1725) and *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (1726). William Dampier's *A New Voyage round the World* (1697) inspired many subsequent travels and travel writing. It was a popular genre which, however, created and disseminated stereotypes of native other. In Dampier's descriptions stereotypical representations of the Australian aborigines figure in a negative light. Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774) is another example of such travel work replete with stereotype of the non-western people. Other significant texts of travel literature of this period include Alexander Falconbridge's *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788), Richard Pococke's *A Description of the East* (1743-5), James Bruce's *Travel to Discover the Source of the Nile* (1790), James Cook's journals of travel brought out by John Hawkesworth in 1713, among others. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* ( ) interfused facts with fiction, and it was steeped in the tradition of travel writing. Travel accounts often bring about interplay between factual account and imagination, and this had a lasting and profound impact on the novelistic tradition in the eighteenth century.

Jonathan Swift had an extensive reading of travel literature, both factual and fictional. He read Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, Dampier's *A New Voyage*, Herbert's *A Description of the Persian Monarchy*. He did not have great experience of travelling though, he crossed the sea between England and Ireland several times, and travelling across Ireland also gave him a wealth of experience. *Gulliver's Travels* is a seminal text of travel narrative of this time. As you read the novel, you will learn that the narrator Lamuel Gulliver fashions himself as an ardent traveller, that his fascination with the seas drags him out of his home into the travails of voyages. Swift makes use of the conventions of travel writing not to entertain the readers, unlike other travel narratives, but to articulate his satiric vision.

#### **Stop to Consider:**

I have said that Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* makes use of the conventions of travel writing to articulate his satiric vision. What are the conventions of the eighteenth century travel literature? How does Swift use them for the purpose of socio-political satire? You will not arrive at an answer right now. Go through the novel, and think back!

#### **4.6 Intellectual backdrop to Gulliver's travels**

Like any artist or writer, Jonathan Swift was a product of his time; contradictions of contemporary society and politics did shape him. Andrew Sanders writes that political and religious contradictions during the reign of Queen Anne affected England's national life, and that Swift was engaged by both the political contradictions and more philosophical issues of human behavior. (*English Literature* 280). As Sanders comments, part of Swift's writings was devoted to the cause of Irish nationalism, he felt exiled being in Ireland nor did he identify himself with England. Sanders argues that Swift's literary strategies were related to this overall socio-political backdrop fraught with contradictions. In other words, his literary fascination with the contraries and juxtapositions had to do with the contradictions of his times.

Closely linked to his attack on the follies and corruptions of contemporary society is, the, this idea of what is a human being. As Basil Willey contends, eighteenth century accommodates contrary views of man: that man is naturally sociable and endowed with an innate rationality and human institutions are extensions of divine power, and that man represents a deviation from such cherished values and ideals.

Newtonian physics and mathematics exerted revolutionary impact on the eighteenth century mind. The universe is increasingly believed to have a design, order and symmetry, and any phenomenon in the natural world could now be examined for its underlying order and law demonstrable by physics and mathematics. Behind this ordered and symmetrical universe the design of a rational creator was felt too. Sanders writes, "Religious mystery could be enhanced, and sometimes even replaced, by rational wonder." (274) This principle of universal law, order and coherence joined hands with ideas of John Locke. Locke flouted notions of innate idea and upheld knowledge based on external sensation and its internal reflection. If knowledge issues from concrete experience of the external world, rather than working of the internal psyche, eighteenth century literature also focused more on the external reality—people, things, events rather than the travails of human mind. Description was a common preoccupation among writers—be it ethnographic, scientific, satirical. In Swift you will see how description and accounts are crucial in his satirical, fictional and poetical works.

Language, to Locke, is social in nature and operates through social consent or agreement. It is from a similar consent of the citizens that government operates. According to Locke a crucial function of the government is the preservation of property of citizens. Citizens through mutual consent confer power to the government and surrender individual freedom. But misuse of power enables them to legislate themselves or pace legislation in a new form. Law, then, is a product of social consent. Locke and Shaftesbury call for a rational Christianity and common sense and a perception of God through his creation. The wonders of nature, now increasingly an object of scientific study and exploration, is seen as God's power. Man, to Shaftesbury is naturally virtuous and sociable and acknowledges a true correspondence between the the natural universe and the individual. This notion of benevolence of human being is contradicted by Bernard de Mandeville whose ideal model of society is a honeycomb with bees adhering to the whole because of self-interest. How to ensure social well-being and happiness? is it premised on a belief in the innate benevolence of human being? Mandeville does not posit man's acquisitiveness and love of luxury and self-interest as irredeemably evil; these may be fostered to promote social happiness.

John Locke also propounded educational ideas such as the advice to keep the children from phantasy and to engage them in physical activity.

A few words about the Royal Society of London would be in order. Part of agenda of the Society was to stabilize the English language. To Locke, mathematics provides a model for language. It obviously militates against the idea of imagination and creative use of language. Swift was in agreement with the general thrust of the Royal Society's agenda. He apprehends that English had become more obscure in its fast growth trajectory with popular everyday words becoming more confusing to sense and conversation getting degraded.

Swift registers response to such ideas fermenting in his times, in his magisterial *Gulliver's Travels*.

#### 4.7 Swift and Satire:

The eighteenth century is often labeled 'the age of prose and reason'. It can also be seen as an age of satire. Dryden, Pope, Voltaire and Swift were key satirists of the time. 'Nature' and 'Reason' were seen as synonymous, and rationality was seen as a key attribute of the natural humanity. When human affairs are viewed from this standpoint of this pristine state of natural rationality of humans, problems abound. Human affairs do not always confirm human rationality. There are aberrations. These aberrations were typical objects of a satirist's scrutiny. Thus, satire was a means to expose human follies, vices, and forms of deviousness from a normative rationality and order. Obsession with order and symmetry in the universe was a dominant thought that arises from natural sciences of which Newton was a key representative and proponent. (I will discuss Newton's impact in the eighteenth century thought in another section.) However, eighteenth century social and political life was rife with everything that militated against the cherished ideals of, and belief in human's innate rationality, and order and symmetry. Expansion of trade and commerce overseas, increase in material wealth and rise of individualism resulted in quests for power, pleasure and all forms of material indulgence. However, as Basil Willey says, ideals of humanism and Christianity did not die down. Satirists were not detached from the conventional moral positions; to the contrary, conventional morality enabled them for their satirical projects which worked through various modes of negation, subversion, and criticism. On the whole, the satirists were saddled by an awareness between the gap between appearance and reality, between the ideal and the actual.

As I said, eighteenth century was an age of satire. In the realm of dramatic literature we have such popular pieces of dramatic satire as John Gay's *The What d'ye Call It* (1715), *Three Hours after Marriage* (written with Pope and Arbuthnot in 1717), *The Beggar's Opera* (1728); Henry Fielding's *The Author's Farce, and the Pleasures of the Town* (1730), *To Thumb* (1730), *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* (1732), *Pasquin: A Dramatic Satire on the Times* (1736), *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737), *Evrydice Hissed; or, A Word to the Wise* (1737); Samuel Foote's *The Mirror* (1760); David Garrick's *Lethe; or Esop in the Shades: A Dramatic Satire* (first staged in 1740); Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (1777/80), *The Critic, or Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779/81). Key figures in verse satire were Samuel Garth (1661-1719), Daniel Defoe (1664-1721), Matthew Prior (1664-1721), Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), Jonathan Swift, Edward Young (1683-1765), John Gay (1685-1732), Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Especially the first half of the eighteenth century was a fecund period for satire; from 1760s it gave way to novel where personality of the human figure was the centre of focus unlike his/her external deeds. Satirists of this century give us innumerable characters, but they were essentially types typifying the satirical intention of the writer.

Satirical literature of the time was a living testimony of the Augustan literature's close and dialectical relationship to society and politics. Writers depended on political patronage or affiliated to political parties, and many wrote political propaganda. A dominant line of study of this genre of the time is to unravel the political code, explain contemporary allusions and references, and look at the historical facticity of a given representation. Even so, beyond the writers' obsession with the peripheral and the quotidian, images of human folly and corruption present themselves. Mock-heroic satire of Pope reveals not just a certain image of a historical figure but also its classical counterpart; incongruity between the contemporary and the classical models explains the peculiar power and charm of satire. Classicist obsession of the satirist is an important clue to their satirical method: classical models were, as it were, symbols of order and symmetry which provided a writer a perspective from which to see the

contemporary disorder. However, satire was by itself not a fixed literary form. It is a distinctive literary style as well as a style of thinking that pervaded prose, poetry and drama. Style varies with the writer.

#### **4.8 Summing Up:**

Jonathan Swift is a known figure in the scenario of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English poetry. As a poet Swift is clear, prosaic, witty, and patently anti-romantic. But Swift the writer of Gulliver's travels has overpowered Swift the poet. Beyond prose and poetry, however, is the satirical vision which defines Swift's literary identity. In this unit we have discussed Swift's life and work, his use of satire, his intellectual backdrop as well as the tradition of travel writing in which Gulliver's travels must be situated. In the next units we will discuss the novel, its plot, characters, themes and narrative techniques.

#### **4.9 References and Suggested Readings:**

Crook, Keith. *A Preface to Swift*. Pearson Education, 1998.

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**Unit 5**  
***Jonathan Swift: Gulliver's Travels***  
**Introducing the Novel**

**Unit Structure:**

**5.1 Objectives**

**5.2 Introduction**

**5.3 What Happens in Gulliver's Travels: The Plot in Brief**

**5.3.1 Book I**

**5.3.2 Book II**

**5.3.3 Book III**

**5.3.4 Book IV**

**5.4 List of Characters**

**5.5 Summing Up**

**5.6 References and Suggested Reading**

**5.1 Objectives:**

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Grasp the plot of the novel
- Evaluate the characters
- Identify the major events of the novel

**5.2 Introduction:**

The 4<sup>th</sup> part was written at the end of 1723, while most of the third part was done in the following year. In 1725 the full draft of Gulliver's Travels was ready. Getting the text to the print was a clandestine affair, conducted by Alexander Pope with assistance of John Day, Erasmus Lewis. It was to be published as soon as possible, and printing was done in five printing houses. The first edition of the text published anonymously in October 28, 1726 as *Travels Into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver*. Published in two octavo volumes by the printer and bookseller Benjamin Motte in London, the book was an instant hit and sold in a week. With no original manuscript at his disposal, Motte used a transcript and had certain sections re-written. Despite Swift's complaint, Motte did not restore the original text. George Faulkner published a new edition in Dublin in 1735 which was more authentic rendering of the original manuscript, and this 1735 edition is generally held to be the standard version of the text. ( Critical Reading 130-131) After the first edition, two more octavo editions came in 1726 and a duodecimo in 1727. In 1726, two separate Dublin editions of the work came out. It also came to be serialised in Penny Post from 25 November, 1726. The book sold well in French too.

### 5.3 What happens in *Gulliver's Travels*: The Plot in brief

#### 5.3.1 Book I:

*Gulliver's Travels* is basically about four rounds of travel spanning several years undertaken by Samuel Gulliver who since his boyhood has felt a curious fascination for the sea. These travels beget him diverse and curious experience; he braves danger and impediments and brings home a new world of experiences. But restive, settled life back home cannot detain him for long; he would set out in another round of voyage to explore yet another unknown territory and people. In the first voyage, his ship heading for the South-Sea wrecks in a raging storm. Gulliver swims on, and reaches a shore, and falls asleep in exhaustion. When he wakes up he finds himself tightly fastened to the ground with many tiny threads by a group of miniature human beings who are not more than six inches tall. This is the land of Lilliput inhabited by diminutive people. To these people Gulliver is a curiosity, a 'mountain-man' as they label him. Alert and agile, the Lilliputians are also caring and hospitable. They attack him with swarms of tiny arrows whenever he asserts himself, but as Gulliver acquiesces to their command, provides him with food and drink and apply ointment on the wounds over his body. In an extraordinary feat of engineering, they construct a wagon big enough to carry him all the way to the Emperor's court. Gulliver strives to cope with at times comically precarious situation during his stay, and citizens of Lilliput travel all the way to the capital to have a glimpse of him so much so that regulations are enforced to control the crowd. To shelter a giant of a man is to cause scarcity of supplies and famine, yet Gulliver's good behaviour endears himself to the emperor who shows him hospitality and decides to feed him and order clothes to be tailored for him. Hundreds of men are employed at his service, teachers are engaged to make him learn their language, while a potential danger is averted by making him part with his scimitar and a pistol. Curious sports events are arranged to entertain him and arrangements are made to make him acquainted with the culture of the land. Even so, Gulliver is kept as a captive, and his repeated plea for liberty is eventually heard by the Emperor. Gulliver is granted liberty with a few conditions: he cannot leave the land, cannot destroy property and kill people when he walks on the road, and he must help the Emperor in leading war against the empire of Blefuscu. The clash between Lilliput and Blefuscu was connected to a more insidious internal conflict in the land which stemmed long back out of a dispute over a trivial issue of the proper way of breaking an egg. The dissenters to the state's accepted method are exiled into Blefuscu and are rumoured to join hands with the Emperor there to launch an onslaught on Lilliput. Gulliver agrees to defend the empire and successfully defeats the naval fleets of Blefuscu in the sea as a result of which he is conferred a prestigious state honour. However, he refuses to comply to the Emperor's command to conquer Blefuscu, and this caused him to be out of favour with the latter. What aggravates the situation is an incident of fire in the Emperor's palace. While all petty operations to control the fire fails, Gulliver effectively extinguishes the fire by urinating, so that the Empress is obliged to shift to another room in the palace. Though Gulliver's method proves instrumental in solving the problem, he violates through this method a certain regulation of the state. Gulliver now has his opponents in the court: the treasurer who accuses him of having an affair with his wife, the admiral who begrudges Gulliver's success in the war against the empire of Blefuscu. Articles of impeachment against Gulliver are presented in the Emperor's court. Gulliver plans to flee from Lilliput and reaches Blefuscu. The emperor of the land provides him shelter, while an order from the Emperor of Lilliput urges the mountain-man to be back to their land. Finally Gulliver with the help of the Emperor of Blefuscu succeeds in sailing back to his homeland.



### **5.3.2 Book II:**

In his second voyage Gulliver is left stranded by his shipmates in a different territory, which is the land of Brobdingnag- the land of the giants. He finds himself alone in a barley field where a reaper brings him to a farmer. The farmer brings him home and shelters him as a pet, and his nine year old daughter becomes quite fond of him. Gulliver strives to communicate with them with several European languages but to no avail. The farmer's daughter who offers to nurse him begins teaching him their language. The situation here is even more difficult because the people here are twelve times as bigger, and animals and insects are of gigantic proportion. Gulliver retains his good behaviour which eases the tension and he is allowed to dine with the family together. Pets and non-human creatures are as dangerous, and his diminutive size indeed makes him physically dangerously vulnerable. At the behest of a neighbour, the farmer plans to earn money by showing the strange man-like creature in public places, an undertaking that aggrieves Glumduckich, the daughter. Subsequently Gulliver is taken to various public places of the towns; his acquisition of their language through the maid proves instrumental in making the shows a success. However, relentless travel to far-off places for public performance almost turns him exhausted, and his health declines because of the relentless exhibitions schedules planned by the farmer. The king, upon hearing of this curiosity, offers to buy Gulliver from the farmer and the latter is only happy to partake of the diminutive man for a good sum of money. Gulliver shows no gratitude to the farmer at this transaction and strives now, instead, to endear himself to the royalty, especially to the queen, who grows fond of him. At his request, the king leaves Gulliver under the care of Glumduckich. Cynical at first, the king too accepts Gulliver owing to his good manners and verbal communications. The queen's dwarf, himself bigger than him manifold, turns jealous for the attention Gulliver attracts from the Queen. He finds occasion to put his rival in trouble, as once he drops Gulliver into a bowl of cream, but receives punishments as well. Gulliver because of his comparative smallness is physically vulnerable. For instance he has to fight the wasps once. At the same time he is now more alive to the ugliness and squalor of people and things he sees. The women at the court feel safe to undress themselves in front of Gulliver who is now only disgustingly aware of the ugly aspects of their skin. The maidens at the court find him innocently entertaining and strip him naked. As he happens to visit the towns of Brobdingnag, the architectures there fail to elicit open unreserved praises from him. He sees images of poverty and squalor and sickness in the city. On the other hand, once a monkey is about to take him away but for the intervention of some people in the court. Yet, he becomes a laughing stock among the courtiers and his stories of distress elicit only hearty laughter. However, the king converses with him and inquires about Europe. Gulliver offers an unrelenting account of administrative, historical aspects of his country. This only enhances the king's typically negative image of Europe saying the Europeans are a pernicious race which has infested over the face of the world. nevertheless, the king on the whole is kind and hospitable to Gulliver, but the traveller is never at ease and longs to come back home. Once the king and the queen visit the sea shore with Gulliver put inside a box and under the care of Glumduckich. As Gulliver is left alone for some moment, an eagle carries the box as it flies away and drops it in the ocean. Eventually Gulliver is rescued by some English mariner and brought back home.

### **5.3.3 Book III:**

In his third voyage, Gulliver sails to the west Indies; three days after he sets out on sea, he and his shipmates face a storm and two pirates overtake them. Eventually, he is set adrift in a canoe. At last, Gulliver finds himself on the shore of an island. He visits a number of islands finally reaching a rocky,

deserted island where he camps in. There, he notices a flying landmass heading for him. It is the flying island of Laputa which can both rise up to the sky and descend to the earth. Gulliver tries to attract the attention of people on the flying island, and they lower a chain and pull him up. It is an island with people of strange ways and attire. Their heads are tilted to one side and they have curious, squinting eyes. Their clothes display pictures of celestial bodies and they have The servants there carry flappers and they strike the ear of the listener and mouth of the speaker to help in the conversation. The king of Laputa sensing that Gulliver does not understand their language employs one to make him learn their tongue. The society or the state of Laputa runs with principles derived from Mathematics and music which has permeated everyday life of the people. For instance, the food items on the dining table are shaped in geometrical pattern, and a tailor prepares Gulliver's dress according to mathematical principles while the dress so prepared turns out to be ill-suited to him. Even their language is built up of concepts of mathematics and music, and the rest of human knowledge is foreign to the Laputians. However, they are only obsessed with the abstract theoretical principles of mathematics, and despise practical geometry which is why their houses are ill-built. They are averse to imagination or creative undertaking or to any knowledge which cannot be conveyed through the limited vocabulary of their mathematical language. They are always anxious over some impending cosmic disaster and are obsessed with astronomical questions. Further, they believe that the socio-political affairs can be controlled by moving the globe. The floating island itself is circular and operates like a ultra-gigantic machine under the care of astronomers who obey to the king's command to fly to some destination. It is a circular landmass that operates thanks to its big loadstone in the centre and rise and fall according to magnetic properties of attraction and repulsion. The flying conditions of the island gives it a strategic importance. The island can be flown to any city and used to quell rebellion by obstructing the city from exposure to rain and sun. At times of stiff resistance, the landmass can be made to descend on the designated territory and kill people and ruin houses. However, such descent of the island may also invite a potential risk of the king being killed by the rebels and overthrow the regime. However, having spent two months in the island and all his curiosities being satisfied, Gulliver leaves the place with a letter of recommendation to a person in Lagado, the metropolis.

In Lagado, Gulliver stays in the house of one Lord Munodi (to whom he is recommended). It is a territory with poor, ruinous houses, a place of poverty and want where farmers till their lands in a hopeless, futile fashion. Forty years ago, certain people from this land went to Laputa and returned after a couple of months inspired with the very spirit of the Laputians. They initiate many modernisation projects with a great dislike of status quo in their land. Their project is to put all knowledge from agriculture to arts on a new footing and set up academy of Projectors. The projects failed and the country lay in ruins giving rise to poverty. But the professors of modernity get engaged to their projects even with more fervour. People like Munodi and other persons from the gentry took to traditional ways of living in the countryside. Lagado is characterized by the Grand Academy which Gulliver visits. The academy houses varied and bizarre experiments and scientific projects which continue despite they failed to yield intended result. These are all upside down experiments which seek to reverse the natural process. For instance, there are experiments of extracting sun-beams out of the cucumber, or of conferring human excrement to the original food. Another project here is about building houses from the roof downwards. Similarly apprentices work under a blind instructor to distinguish colour by feeling and smelling. Yet another bizarre agricultural project is to plough with the help of hogs- an undertaking that proves futile yet expensive. In the academy production of knowledge evolved in resolving political contradictions among

the parties involves inter-changing of parts of the brains of the contending people. A machine is constructed whereby the words in their language would combine in a number of ways and generate books that cuts across disciplines. There are even methods of shortening discourse, evening abolishing words which is intended to increase longevity. Further, based upon the perception that the natural and political bodies are analogous, contradictions and problems in the political body, name, the senate is planned to be resolved through treatment of the senator's bodies. There are discussions also of imposing taxes on human vices or virtues to raise the state revenue. Similarly, diet and excrement of the suspected persons are to be closely scrutinized to detect plans for potential rebellion or conspiracies against the king. From this bizarre land of improbable, uncanny, comic, even grotesque projects, Gulliver moves on to Glubbdubdrib, the land of the sorcerers.

In this magician's territory, Gulliver is made to watch historical figures long dead who are conjured up to the palace of the king. He faces such figures as Alexander the Great, Pompey, Brutus; Aristotle, Homer, Descartes and other learned figures. In comparison, spectacles of modern history is disgusting to him because here many an innocent are executed while villainous people are placed in high pedestal. He learns that origin of the so called great events in history is so lowly, mean. From Glubbdubdrib, Gulliver finds himself in Luggnagg where he endears himself to the king and stays for a couple of months. It is the land of the Struldbrugs—the Immortals, a peculiar species of humans who are born with distinct signs over their bodies telling they are immortal. Gulliver is amazed to learn of the Immortals and offers to convey his free opinion on them to the king. When asked what he would do if he were himself a Struldbrug, Gulliver gives wistful account of such a life: how he would be rich, gather knowledge in arts and sciences, keep written record of socio-political and cultural changes across centuries as well as geographical transformations, resist corruption from permeating social life. However, such euphoric account of an imagined immortal life is countered by a Luggnagian as sheer delusion. The gentleman then relates the condition of the Immortals in their land. Being immortal involves not being eternally frozen in the prime of youth but being subjected to the challenges of ageing. After attaining thirty years of age, the immortals become dejected and melancholy, and after fourscore years, infirm, peevish, morose, vain and talkative. They become incapable for finding pleasure and turn jealous, instead. After eighty, they are officially treated as dead and becomes vulnerable in various ways. Thus, in stark contrast to Gulliver's preconceived notion of an immortal's life, the real account of the immortal in Luggnagg conjures up a rather ghastly spectacle. From Luggnagg he travels to Japan. After a brief stay there, he returns home in a Dutch ship.

#### **5.3.4 Book IV:**

Gulliver spends a couple of months happily with his family, when he decides to set out for next voyage as the captain of a merchantman. Several men die in the prompting him to recruit replacements who turn out to be pirates. The pirates instigate the rest of the people against him, and they raise a mutiny imprisoning him in his cabin and finally leaving him stranded in an island—the land of the Houyhnhnms. Several strange, ugly animals—the Yahoos—trouble him till he is rescued by a Dapple Grey—later known as the 'master horse'—who brought him to their residence. Gulliver notices that after a courtyard is another house where three Yahoos are tied up. A Sorrel Nag unties one of them, and now the master carefully examines the Yahoo and the stranger. The Houyhnhnms are perplexed to notice the curious garments Gulliver is wearing which is the only mark of his difference with the Yahoos. Gulliver refuses rotten staff and hay offered to him as food, and expresses his wish to drink milk, instead. Soon, he

becomes a centre of attraction, and the Houyhnhnms household endeavour to teach him their language. Gulliver's description of travel and eventuality is dismissed by them as "the thing which was not" (because they don't have the word 'lie' in their language Gulliver instantly becomes a curiosity among the neighbourhood and Houyhnhnms flock to see him. As the Houyhnhnms don't recognize any territory beyond the sea, Gulliver's true account of his original country is not immediately believed to be true.. One night, Sorrel Nag inadvertently him in his bed without clothes, and relates the matter to the Master Houyhnhnm. From that incident, Gulliver's physical affinity with the Yahoos becomes a known fact. When asked about his country and people, Gulliver tells how the horses are treated as an animal in his country by the yahoos who are rational, civilized creature. Such upside down accounts of both species disappoints the Master Houyhnhnm. Moreover, in so far as Gulliver remains as a curiosity with a distorted physique at least in the eyes of the master Houyhnhnm, he is propelled to elaborate who he is and the society he hails from. Thus, Gulliver is in a way compelled to offer his view of society, politics, law and culture as it prevails in England. For instance, as for the motive behind travel—a common propensity of many people in Gulliver's native land—he reveals how various evil practices, propensities and crimes make people set sail for other destinations. Similarly, in conversations with the master horse, Gulliver talks about war, myriad petite things that could trigger it, and ruins and destruction of lives that it brings about. In the same vein, he also relates how corruption turns Law into a farce. Thus, Gulliver offers a comprehensive picture of the socio-political life in England and Europe at large and talks about prevalence of social disparity and how economic processes enhance it. The Master Houyhnhnms now finds that the yahoo's in Gulliver's land are much more detestable than those in the land of the Houyhnhnms.

As time passes in this strange land of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver feels a growing dislike of human being whose virtues he cannot assert now. On the other hand, his Master perceives that greed, drunkenness, laziness, violence are common possession of both the Yahoos here and human beings of his land. Gulliver is granted permission to spend some time among the Yahoos to substantiate against his master's conclusions. Eventually, he realizes that the yahoos are a most abominable species of beasts, and an instance of female Yahoo's promiscuity appalls him.

While Gulliver is prompted to give an account of the culture, and politics, and administration of England when in conversation with the Master, he also offers an account of the Houyhnhnms, their ways and culture as well as their system of administration. The Houyhnhnms are governed by means of a "Representative Council of the whole Nation" Where the perennial issue is the extermination of the Yahoos. When Gulliver enjoys life in this land in perfect health and detached from distractions of human society, the Representative Council feels offended at the Master's fair treatment of him, and calls for his return to his homeland. Deeply hurt at the decree, Gulliver nevertheless complies and builds a canoe with the help of the Sorrel Nag and eventually departs from the land of the Houyhnhnms.

Voyaging across the sea, Gulliver reaches a shore of Australia, remains there for some days, but is made to flee when a crowd of natives runs after him with an intent to attack him. A Portuguese ship heading for rescues him, and its captain Pedro de Mendez shelters him at his home after they reach Lisbon. Eventually Gulliver decides to return to his home and sails for England one day.

Gulliver lives a quiet life at home. His praise for the virtues he associates with the Houyhnhnms and hatred for vices characteristic of both the yahoos and human beings delays his re-assimilation with the human society, and his mental rehabilitation with his wife and children is slow.

#### 5.4 List of Characters:

**Samuel Gulliver:** Gulliver is the protagonist as well as the narrator in the novel. A short biographical account of Gulliver is given in the first chapter of Book 1, namely "A Voyage to Lilliput." A physician and sailor, Gulliver had a humble beginning and carries a strong fascination for the sea, and an almost insatiable desire for novel experiences that a voyage can beget him. Questions of any tension between his family and his desire for outdoor undertaking is no relevant here. In fact, his desire for travel overpowers his concern for family which he can push aside in an off-handed fashion whenever there is an occasion to travel. At the end of the four travels he has a difficult time assimilating himself into the emotional texture of family life. As a narrator, he proclaims objectivity and authenticity in his narration of the events. This supposedly realistic account of his varied experience at different territories unwittingly becomes self-deprecating, as he has to go through a set of humiliating situations and awkward experiences. His travels, at last satiate his appetite for experiences, but they also deeply influence and transform him, which is more evident at the end of his last voyage. The land of the Houyhnhns is to him an utopia, emblem of a set of cherished ideals. But celebration of the ideals of unmixed virtue only makes him hypocritical, as he refuses to accept his own humanity.

If Gulliver asserts the authenticity of his account of the strange events and situations across his travels, he himself is uncritical of the events that unfold before him. Look at his name. Does it carry a suggestion of gullibility? He describes whatever explanations are offered to him. Look at how he describes various foolish experiments carried out at the Academy of Projectors in his third voyage. He describes them with a cool objectivity and never attaches any critical comment on them. On the other hand, he ignores what is obvious. (*Critical Companion to Jonathan Swift*, 158) for a considerable time in the land of the Houyhnhnms, he displays anxiety to cover up his complete physical similarities with the Yahoos. The irony is, however, deep-seated his hatred for the vices associated with the Yahoos, eventually he unwittingly embodies them. He prides himself of the virtues which he does not possess, and his attitude to his wife at the end is disturbingly condescending—a typically Yahoo flaw, which he ends up exemplifying.

However, it would be a misreading of Gulliver's travels to see it as a character study of Gulliver. Even as Gulliver's initial penchant for adventurous experience through voyage gets transmuted into a cynical view of humanity, we don't see in the narrative a complete trajectory in which a human personality develops. The organisation of the novel into four separate narratives of adventure carries a different purpose in Swift's satirical vision; it does not offer clues to Gulliver's psychological realism.

**Mary Burton Gulliver:** Lamuel Gulliver's wife. A marginal character. It is mentioned that Gulliver receives a substantial dowry marrying her. Account of his relationship with Mary is too scanty to speculate on. It is mentioned that she bids him not to go for travel when he is ready for the third voyage. At the end of the fourth voyage, Gulliver despises her as the species of the Yahoo. As for her own subjective world, there is complete silence.

**Emperor of Blefuscu:** The Emperor of Blefuscu treats Gulliver with kindness. After Lilliputians defeat the Blefuscians at the naval war, the emperor of Blefuscu seeks peace negotiations with his Lilliputian counterpart and invites Gulliver to their homeland. Finally Gulliver flees to Blefuscu when he faces conspiracy against him, and the emperor shelters him.

**Emperor of Lilliput:** A shrill-voiced tiny emperor who decides to feed and shelter Gulliver. He has the traits of a tyrannical ruler. For instance, he imposed conditions on the free movement of the 'mountain-man', and he boasts himself as "monarch of all monarchs" and "taller than the Sons of Man" (Gulliver's Travels). The Emperor's despotic character finally comes to the fore when he commands Gulliver to preside over the conquest of Blefuscu. Gulliver's refusal angers him, and his escape to Blefuscu adds fuel to the Emperor's wrath.

**King of Brobdingnag:** A giant king. His treatment of Gulliver is at times cold, yet less vindictive and despotic as a ruler compared to the Emperor of Lilliput. Initially incredulous, the King becomes fond of dealing with him and has long conversations with him regarding various aspects of European life such as religion, law etc. Besides, as Gulliver becomes closer to him, they have a series of private conversations in the king's bedroom. The king forms a very low opinion of the Europeans, which somewhat offends him. Gulliver's praise of England rather consolidates the king's low view of the English people.

**Farmer in Brobdingnag:** the giant farmer in Brobdingnag shelters Gulliver who is discovered in a barley field. Advised by another farmer from his neighbourhood, Gulliver's master in this land travels to far-off places exhibiting the diminutive Gulliver and earning money. He turns out to be utterly selfish and ruthless in exploiting Gulliver for money, and even leaves him starved and dying. He readily agrees to the king's offer to buy Gulliver for some money. Gulliver remains indifferent to his master when the latter takes leave of the king's court, suggesting how much he is harassed by him.

**Glumdalclitch:** Daughter to the farmer in Brobdingnag who hosts Gulliver and later sells him to the king. A nine-year-old girl, Glumdalclitch treats Gulliver well, unlike her profit-seeking father. She is employed as a babysitter for Gulliver at the king's court.

**Governor of Glubbdubdrib:** the emperor in the Glubbdubdrib, the land of the sorcerers who entertains Gulliver in his 10-day visit by conjuring up historical figures both ancient and modern and making them converse with him.

**King of Laputa:** attended by Flappers, the king of Laputa is a disengaged monarch and is an epitome of abstract speculations. He is obsessed with abstract theories to the detriment of common sense and practical engagements. Some scholars see him as a lampoon of George I. However, he has a rather tense relation with his subjects in Balnibarbi. He is a cruel ruler who has at his disposal a number of physical means to suppress mutiny.

**Struldbrug:** the race of immortals in Luggnag. They can be born to any Luggnagian family, and has a distinctive mark on their body which is a sign of their immortality. Law forbids them to marry. Gulliver upon hearing of the immortals, entertains a very lofty view of them, but soon learns that they are measurable creatures because they are subjected to the condition of ageing and lose their health, beauty and finally become insane and crave mortality.

**Houyhnhnms:** ultra-rational horses which govern the land of the Houyhnhnms. To Gulliver, they embody reason, perfection, compassion and all unmixed virtues. They speak and reason and does everything required to live a decent life. However, there are Houyhnhnms of the lower kind , and they serve their superiors. They bear a keen aversion for the yahoos, and Gulliver has a tuff time struggling to prove his difference from the Yahoos.

**Yahoos:** in Gulliver’s account, the Yahoos are a disgusting breed of animals in their physical appearance, manners and ways. Their food habits, sexual behaviour , and vulgar manners speak, for Gulliver, of a grossness one cannot but hate. In stark contrast to the cold rationality of the Houyhnhns, the Yahoos revel in their brute instincts. In the language of the Houyhnhns, ‘Yahoo’ carries a range of negative associations.

### 5.5 Summing Up:

Gulliver’s Travels is a well structured novel. it is divided into four journeys , where you will be exposed to varied experience of the protagonist. Even by going through the novel you will be enthralled by its peculiar charm, and it is noht for nothing that the novel has been circulated as a children’s classic. The characters are fascinating, and of course the most interesting one is Gulliver himself. Though each of his journey has a point of return, he is always propelled by the thrill of traveling to unknown lands across the seas for which he woul always brave danger. However, once you fell the thrill of the narrative as an adventure tale, you will ask yourself a number of questions. In other words, Gulliver’s Travelshas thrived as a major text of British , even world literature because it negotiates important political and philosophical issues which are discussed in the next unit.

### 5.6 References and Suggested Reading

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## **Unit 6**

### **Gulliver's Travels**

*Themes and Techniques*

#### **Unit Structure:**

#### **6.1 Objectives**

#### **6.2 Introduction**

#### **6.3 A critical overview of *Gulliver's Travels***

#### **6.4 Themes of *Gulliver's Travels***

##### **6.4.1 Parody of travel Literature/negotiating the idea of travel**

##### **6.4.2 colonialism, imperialism and the English civilization**

##### **6.4.3 physical disproportion and moral issues**

##### **6.4.4 Self and the Other**

##### **6.4.5 Critique of Enlightenment**

#### **6.5 Summing Up**

#### **6.6 Reference and Suggested Reading**

#### **6.1 Objectives:**

In this unit, you will be able to

- Develop a perspective toward the novel in terms of its form and focus
- Assess the various incidents narrated in the novel
- Evaluate the characters
- Understand the basic themes of the novel
- Learn about the narrative/representational technique employed in the novel

#### **6.2 Introduction:**

In the previous units, you have learned about the background and the plot as well as the characters of *Gulliver's Travels*. Jonathan Swift is a distinctive figure of satirical literature, both prose and poetry, but it is *Gulliver's Travels* which lends him his popular identity in the field of literature. The novel was not immensely popular during his lifetime, but continues to captivate readers till date, surviving many upheavals and turns in literary movements since Swift's time. It continues to be read as a children's classic, as well as a serious fictional text for adult minds, and its critique of colonialism and imperialism or the centrality of reason is still relevant. Now, we are better equipped to look at the world depicted in the novel closely, teasing out the themes and ideas as well as its form and style. However, you will do well to go through the text for yourself before you read this unit.



### 6.3 A Critical Overview of *Gulliver's Travels*:

The Structure is neat: Lemuel Gulliver, the first person narrator recounts his adventure of voyage. The narrative is structured in four segments ( i.e. Book I, II, III, IV) each of which represents a distinctive voyage. The pattern of arrival and exit marks each travel, and in between is a world of bizarre, fanciful, shocking, experience. Gulliver arrives in Lilliput in his first voyage creating dismay and wonder and anxiety in both parties, him and the Lilliputians. this segment of the narrative is filled with wonder, amusement,, humour while we also witness treachery, war, violence, diplomacy and politics. Gulliver feels threatened and compelled to depart from the land. The reader gradually assumes the perspective of Gulliver. The Lilliputians, to Gulliver, are a curious 'other'. Swifts however attends to minute, everyday aspects of the consequences of this uncanny encounter , thanks to his extraordinary power of imagination. Such description includes making beds, eating even acts of urination and excretion. The Lilliputians are obviously more amazed than the giant new comer, and they travel all the way to the city to have a glimpse of him so that the emperor is compelled to impose restrictions and enforce regulations to control them. Their attitude to Gulliver is ambivalent. He is at once a curiosity and a threat. It is only when Gulliver turns more acquaint and agreeable in manners that the hostile diminutive people turn hospitable and kind and carries him off to the shelter of the emperor. But ambivalence is also at the level of administration: the initial confusion of king's court as to the policies to be framed for Gulliver speaks of this ambivalence. The encounter involves both parties in a sort of ethnographic observation which are significant and interesting. Gulliver's gigantic size creates panoramic vision of the houses and the external world which amuses him. But this telescopic vision fails to perceive the Lilliputians as an individual. This strange, diminutive other casts its gaze back at the physically empowered self. Gulliver's watch is viewed as a machine attached to a string, or as a God. Swift's comic imagination always has a satiric, critical perspective.

What happens in the second travel turns out to be a replica of the first. But this time, a subversion takes place: what Gulliver is to the Lilliputians, the Brobdingnagians are now to him. In other words, he is now a Lilliputian in terms of physical size. This alteration of perspective has interesting and has serious fallout. While war and treachery characterizes Lilliput, life is more risky and critical in the land of the giants. Diminutive frame of the narrator not just makes him vulnerable to attack from animals, birds and insects but provided him with a troublingly unromantic vision of the human body. He is now alive to the grotesque ugliness of women's bodies, to conditions of disease. Central to this voyage is the representation of the self. A discourse on Europe and England is what binds him with the king. Gulliver's overtly and self-consciously uncritical description of England is contested by the king who intervenes in Gulliver's discourse with a set of incisive questions. Swift creates a perspective which makes enables Gulliver's account of England susceptible to the king's interrogations.

While physical size remains an aesthetic principle for Swift to work out his ironic vision in the first two books, the third book uses even more fantastic trope such as the condition of the flying island and a land of bizarre scientific experiments as well as the situation of the immortals. Experiments at the grand academy of Laputa are not just related to feverish craze for modernization but also modes of finding the limits of speculative reasoning. Political disagreements are sought to be resolved through frivolous yet fatal means suggesting mechanisms of control through creation of a totalitarian and monolithic society. Abolition of words is another such fatal proposition which ridicules the universalist claims of enlightenment. Connections between means and ends, cause and effect, problems and their solutions are

ghastily mismatched, creating sometimes disgustingly bizarre effect. The third travel, then, is not so much about events and incidents through which the protagonist passes but about things he visits and experience he gains thereof. Here we have a close view of human intellectual endeavour and toil, through relentless and blatant exercise of facile reason, an endeavour which is but a manifestation of human folly and idiosyncrasies and which is ludicrously frustrated at the end. Experimentation of Lagado are extreme culmination of the legacies of Laputa where mathematics and music reign supreme.

Historical figures are conjured up in the Land of the Sorcerers, and we see a contestation of the ancients and the moderns, a Swiftian preoccupation. Aristotle dismisses Descartes. Gulliver is deeply skeptical of the worth of the moderns. The ancient values of Courage, sincerity and wisdom have, in modern times, metamorphosed into atheism, spying, injustice and rampant corruption. Progressive trajectory of human history is contested here. Human beings increasingly diminutive size speaks of increasing moral depravity. On the other hand, in the land of the Luggnagg, the rare breed of immortals-Strudbruggs—inspires in the narrator an imagined utopia where increasing repository of historical knowledge fosters wisdom, sincerity, magnanimity and such like virtues. This utopian vision is shattered with the real experience of the immortals when Gulliver learns about their painful process of ageing and their growing ordinariness and atrocious behavior and their tragically ironic wish for mortality.

In the fourth visit, the dichotomy of the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos is clear to see, but the emerging vision of man is more complex. Physical difference between the species is clear, but Gulliver's attempt to cover up complete identity with the yahoos is a source of anxiety for him. The narrative, however, shifts from body to mind, from question of visible shape of body to issues of cultural behavior and mental traits. Gulliver's endeavour is to be recognized as a human being distinct from the bestial Yahoos, prompting him to deliver a discourse on the English society. Ironically, his discourse of England in effect reinforces the discourse of the yahoos in England. When Gulliver presents a rather disillusioned picture of the European society, it only reaffirms and consolidates the master Houyhnhnm's aversion to Yahoos. The whole notion of corruption and perverse operations of law is defamiliarized through the perspective of the Houyhnhnms who live in a more or less stable, well-ordered and supposedly 'perfect' society. Gulliver's overt and unabashed criticism of his own cultural location suggests that he is drawn towards the mores of the horses. He decides being, to stay at the Houyhnhnm land forever though events turn more hostile for him and he has to return to his homeland.

Swift extends his irony to its furthest limits. Gulliver's fascination with the immortal Strudbruggs finds a jolt as he comes to learn about their real state of affairs. His self-disgust and his longing for the life of the Houyhnhnms renders him incapable of returning to common stream of life. All this issues from a notion of perfection, something that turns the houyhnhnms society into a totalitarian one where virtues thrive in their supposedly pristine state, while domestic realm of marriage, sex and relationships are singularly controlled/governed by the singular logic of social necessity. Aestheticist perception of ordinary life is too prohibited. Back in his family and social life in England, Gulliver feels utterly disoriented. His rehabilitation into human society is slow. Thus, apparently a fascinating story of adventures and misadventures and accounts of interesting improbabilities, Gulliver's Travels finally raises a most serious question: what is a human being?

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Do you think that Swift uses the trope of travel only to recount Gulliver’s adventures? Or does he use the trope to deal with serious issues of society and human life?

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2. How do the four voyages offer distinctive set of adventure? How does Swift use physical size, and various other fantastic elements to distinguish each of the ‘land’s and people described ?

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**6.4.1 Parody of Travel Literature:**

Travel literature’s primary intent was to entertain and divert the reader with descriptions of voyages and incredulous flora and fauna and strange customs of places visited. Swift did not have firsthand experience of extensive sea voyage, though he crossed sea between England and Ireland several times. In Gulliver’s travels we have shipwreck and misadventure, constant reference to longitude and altitude, details of boat-making and so on. The narrative is essentially structured around relation of four voyages where the protagonist departs from and returns to the English sea-port. Gulliver sets sail for experience of incredible, fantastic lands and their people out of a sheer instinct for travel. Every time, except for the last voyage, his enforced stay eventually exhaust his propensity for travelling and compels him to return.

The thrill, excitement and wonder usually associated with the idea of travel cannot exhaustively define the experience of travel recounted in Swift’s text. One way in which Gulliver’s Travels departs from the conventional narratives of travel is the depiction here of what is apparently trivial, laconic, or even disgusting. The first book depicts a fire breaking out in the king’s palace and how Gulliver extinguishes it by urinating. It creates a sort of comic havoc, and the queen takes serious offence of Gulliver’s act, partially contributing to create an atmosphere too adverse for the protagonist to stay back in Lilliput. The most potent image of excremental reality is offered in the fourth book which depicts the Houyhnhnmland. The Yahoos on seeing a stranger in their land defecates on him, an incident responsible for Gulliver’s feverish attempt in subsequent times to fashion himself as radically different from the Yahoos.

It is true that Swift makes use of the conventions of travel writing prevailing during his time. But to what effect? Does he simply entertain the readers or articulate a satirical vision, or a critical view of things? If you go through some of the major travel narratives of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century, you will see how a sense of the traveler as a citizen of a particular nation and belonging to its culture with its own set of distinctive values underlies the travel narratives. A typical British traveler is a proud custodian of his

cultural values as an Englishman, as well as a critical observer of cultures of the places he would visit. Gulliver's Travels goes against this political position of the conventional travel narratives and creates an ironic vision of the English culture and civilization. Gulliver, for the most part of the four-part narrative is a proud defender of everything English. But Gulliver's defence of English civilization and culture is defamiliarized through the critical perspective of the king of Brobdingnag. Read the passage in the Book II which describes a series of conversations between Gulliver and the king. The penultimate understanding of the English culture and civilization is summarized by these words put in the mouth of the king: "I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

Swift parodies the travel narrative not just to uphold this satirical vision of Gulliver's culture but for a more powerful destabilizing political project. In the fourth voyage Gulliver gradually imbibes the alien values of the Houyhnhns and wishes to live with them forever. he even endorses an ideological project of enlightening his native people , an enlightenment project that would civilize Europe through inculcation of unmixed virtue characterized by the Houyhnhnms. Read the fourth voyage, especially focusing on Gulliver's transformation and how he suffers from a continual state of self-disgust.

**Stop to Consider:**

In the Book II one of the misadventures of Gulliver is his sea voyage in a pool of water watched by the Brobdingnagians. Storm is artificially created causing a serio-comic trouble to the Toy-like Gulliver sailing on the miniscule sea of the water pool. The aura of sublime adventure associated with voyage was dismissed, even ridiculed.

#### **6.4.2 Colonialism , Imperialism and the British civilization:**

Gulliver undertakes his journeys because of his insatiable desire to travel more than in expectation of material gains in the first place. He amasses some wealth in the course of his travels, but amassing fortune was never his primary intent. Neither is he a self-conscious critic of imperialism and colonialism nor an ideologue of pacifism. In Lilliput he gladly defends the host country against the onslaught of the Blefuscu's naval army. He is appointed as the leader of the Liliputian army and he effectively safeguards the land where he stays.. However, he is not disposed to obey the king's command to conquer Blefuscu and bring the island in subservience to Lilliput. On the contrary, he offers a warm, cordial treatment to the delegates from the enemy island. From a moral standpoint, whose rationale is not difficult for us to see, he unwittingly expresses himself as a critic of Lilliput's imperialist agenda and seeks negotiations between the rival islands.

In his second journey to the land of the giants he wins confidence of the king and engages in a series of conversation with him. His relation of the political system of England and the English culture which amazes the king. Please note that Gulliver is not Swift's mouthpiece; he is a character whose perspective is held in critical view through juxtaposition of the viewpoint of the other. Gulliver here is a defender of the English cultural, political and legal and military system. This normal and normative political cultural position of Gulliver is contested by the king all through the conversation. You may note how the king's initial sense of wonder at Gulliver's discourse translates , in the course of their conversation, to a keen hatred of the English system. In other words, the king's intervention in Gulliver's representation of

England and its civilization sensitizes us to a perspective oppositional and resistant to Gulliver's unabashedly Eurocentric discourse. Gulliver's political bias is no longer revealed through his defense of England, for instance, when he says that European countries are free from prejudices and narrowness of perspective. He demonstrates the excellence of the British culture through his feverish account of the British war machinery. It is the peculiar turn of Swiftian irony that Gulliver's endorsement of British militarism only makes the king more apprehensive and more skeptical of the worth of English culture. On the other hand, Brobdingnagians for all their excellence in philosophy, history, poetry and mathematics, lacks utilitarian ideals, rationalism and materialism which are hallmark of the English civilization. Gulliver is asked how the state is run, when he replies that the necessary money comes from the extensive war. The king is not at all satisfied, he "asked what business we had out of our own islands, unless the score of trade of treaty, or to defend the coasts with our fleet" (119).

Critique of the English civilization is also offered through representation of Lilliput. The political and religious contradiction rife in Lilliput is satirized by exposing its sheer absurdity. This absurdity of political clash and war is demonstrated through depiction of the clash of the big-endians and small-endians. It resonates well with the political and religious contradictions of contemporary England.

**Stop to Consider:**

A critique of the European intellectual culture is offered in the Book III where absurd, uncanny projects engage the people of Laputa. Perhaps this untrammelled speculative culture culminates in a dystopian vision of a society where the state operates only as a gigantic torture machine. Look at the flying island of Laputa. What does it imply? Do you think that it is sheer fantasy?

#### **6.4.3 Physical disproportion and Moral issues:**

The first two books present an obvious contrast:

Gulliver finds himself in a land of people six inches tall. These diminutive people call him the 'mountain man'. This physical disproportion creates many a serio-comic situation from providing accommodation to Gulliver to tackling disaster at the Emperor's palace to waging war against the Blefuscuians. Their small stature makes the Lilliputians physically charming, but also allows Gulliver to comprehend their peevishness, hostility, fickle mindedness, as well as their anxiety at the presence of the gigantic 'other'. They are not necessarily essentially hospitable or magnanimous. The support extended to Gulliver is a fallout of a policy decision made by the Emperor and his cohorts. The ruling dispensation is first temporarily baffled at the sight of this 'mountain man'; and this ambivalence ends after a consideration of the economic and ecological consequences of any policy that is adopted vis-à-vis the giant stranger. True that it is Gulliver's own attempt to win favour of the ruling dispensation that makes them soften their attitude to him.

The Lilliputian's clash among themselves and with the foreign land of Blefuscu, that goes back to a time in the past where people were divided in opinion based on the trivial issue of breaking an egg. The never-ending skirmishes with the Blefuscuians causes them more harm than good but it does not deter them from the war path. Immediately, this violent, war-loving nature of the diminutive people does not have intrinsic connection with issues of physical stature. However, in the second book we have an analogy between the Lilliputians and the Englishmen in this peculiar context of their indulgence in war. The king

of Brobdingnag's comment in this context is resonant, when he compares the Englishmen with the odious vermins. Metaphor of vermin can as well be used to describe the Lilliputians.

In contrast, in Brobdingnag the equation has reversed: Gulliver is the Brobdingnaggains what the Lilliputians were to him. This reversal of physical disproportion is at once a reversal of perspective and in consequence a reversal of ethical positions. True that the Brobdingnaggians are not necessarily good because of their enormous physical dimension, but the king is a man of insight and wisdom and an upholder of the legacy of his great grandfather. He is a man who rules the land effectively despite occasional skirmishes among people, and upholds an anti-imperialist, anti-war principle. In the seven sessions of conversations with Gulliver, the king comments on the people of Gulliver's species back in his country, repudiating their indulgence in warfare, their folly and deception.

We can perceive a similarity between Gulliver and the king of Brobdingnag in one respect. Gulliver in Lilliput posits himself as an anti-imperialist and anti-war civilian. In the land of the Giants, however, he is relatively diminutive and hence lacks a moral perspective endorsed and upheld by the king. He celebrates British war machine and its mighty power, its immense wealth amassed through destruction of other nations. Brobdingnagian king's ethical position is now akin to Gulliver's during his stay at Lilliput.

#### **6.4.4 The self and the other:**

The complex, ambivalent relationship between the self and the other constitutes an important theme. Gulliver is not just a distant traveler who observes the alien people and their culture from a safe distance with a reassurance of a return. He inhabits the space of the 'other' if for a definite time span. Physical disproportion creates contrary perspectives with the result that the relationship between the self and the other is fairly complex and dialectical. The Lilliputians, for instance, too perceives Gulliver as a strange other. Contrary feelings of curiosity and dismay, shock and hostility marks the ways in which the diminutive people in Lilliput registers this other. For all his physical advantage of being a giant compared to them, Gulliver acquiesces to the conditions set by them for his stay in Lilliput. He is sober, congenial, clement, and prone to communicate with them by learning their language. The Lilliputians are unable either to accept him as a possible specimen of human being nor outrightly dismiss him as a threat to their national interest. Their ambivalence vis-à-vis the 'mountain man' is reflected in adoption of a state policy regarding him where the authorities mull over ecological and economic consequences of either killing him or accommodating him. They are not necessarily magnanimous to him. The economic cost of supporting him is well compensated by using him in the war against Blefuscu, a battle they win thanks to Gulliver's military prowess. All the same, the idea of the 'mountain man' as a threat to the state runs like an undercurrent which surfaces after he flees to Blefuscu.

In the Book II Gulliver is not so much a threat because of his relative smallness of frame. Conversely, he suffers physical threat from animals, pets and insects in Brobdingnag especially wherever he stays with the farmer. It is during this second visit that the relationship between self and other becomes politically significant. With the pacifist and wise king of Brobdingnag he reveals himself as a proud Englishman. Gulliver's English identity is articulated through Gulliver's account of England, while the non-English, non-European king vehemently counters his impassioned and celebratory discourse of English culture, and offers an incisive critique of Gulliver's self-representations.

In the land of the Houyhnhnms the issue of otherness assumes an urgency and occupies a centre stage. All through the novel Gulliver tries his best to cope with the differences he discovers in distant lands and project himself as a gentle and acquiescent and cooperative individual. In the land of the rational horses, he faces a different question—how to negotiate issue of the other within. Physical similarity with the Yahoos poses a big problem both for him and for the Houyhnhnms. Sorrel Nag discovers him without clothes in bed at night and discovers this similarity. Situations become eventually more precarious for him. Meanwhile, Gulliver also experiences a transformation within and assimilates himself to the dominant culture of Houyhnhnm land where unmixed virtues are practiced. Eventually, Gulliver wishes to forget his homeland and plans, instead, to stay with the Houyhnhnms forever. However, Gulliver's express hatred of the yahoos and praise of the moral society of the wise horses fails to provide any reassurance. Policy adopted in the Houyhnhnms's society vis-à-vis this problematic specimen of 'Yahoo' is that of exclusion.

These political and moral dimensions of this complex, dialectical encounter between Gulliver and the native population in the distant lands are explored in *Gulliver's Travels*.

**Library Work:**

In a way, Gulliver's Travels anticipates an important development in the twentieth century history: the rise of Fascism. What compels Gulliver to return to his homeland despite his wish to live in Houyhnhnms land forever is a state policy of exclusion. Extermination of the Jews' was a state policy adopted in the Third Reich in Germany which was a logical culmination of the cultural construction of the Jews as 'other'. Read up a bit more this crucial segment of modern history your library. Can you relate it to the way the Houyhnhnms construct the Yahoos as a 'beastial other' who have a dubious origin in some foreign territory?

### 6.4.5 Critique of Enlightenment

To read *Gulliver's Travels* only as an adventure narrative is to overlook crucial dimensions of the text. Adventure narrative it is, and in no way a religious sermon or philosophical treatise. But it articulates through its form of satire a crucial response to larger issues of intellectual history. Let us ask ourselves some of these questions in this way: is human history a trajectory of progress, a movement towards a more improved and happy human society? Does the practical projects of modernity ensure this achievement of happiness and progress? Is reason the sole arbiter of this envisaged progress? Can sheer exercise of reason ensure a truly moral society? Or, what is the true nature of this moral society which is driven by sheer force of reason and intellect?

Enlightenment thinkers upheld reason and intellectual exercise as a defining trait of humanity and a necessary condition of progress. ( I am not going to dwell on how immense theoretical work in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century deconstructed European Enlightenment in a number of ways.) Let us concentrate on the issue of history. Enlightenment thinkers militate against the religious conception of history as expression of divine will. They hold that humanity is moving along an uninterrupted trajectory of progress through progressive emancipation of mind. 'Reason' and 'progress' are the coordinates of this view of humanity's journey from a state of ignorance and barbarism to one of civilization. Swift deflates this optimistic vision of human history from various angles. In the first two journeys, we see people from different stages of this putative trajectory of development: the gigantic Brobdingnagians are pre-modern, while the material expertise, town planning as well as extraordinary feat of engineering of people of Liliput are obvious

tokens of their modernity. But Lilliput is not all the better for their material accomplishments. On the other hand, Brobdingnag is not an utopia and conflicts among the people are still a trouble, yet the great legacy of the king's wise forefather is reflected in the overall governance of the country. If historical development involves project of modernity, the effect of modernization turns out to be disastrous in the third voyage. The gigantic flying island, which by itself is an amazing feat of modern technology and scientific knowledge, is used as a machine of torture and oppression. All modernization projects at Balnibarbi fail in a ludicrous way.

Similarly, Swift exposes the ubiquitous operation of reason in varied domains of human intercourse. Especially the third voyage is primarily about weird and frantic operation of human mind under the spell of reason. In the third part Gulliver's relationship to the people is not Swift's primary focus. Gulliver visits the places here as a tourist and observes things. Problems galore. First, the Laputians have a deeply speculative habit of mind impede their sensory organs. There are anomalies in the governance of social life because of this eccentric intellectual culture. Vagaries of the everyday life are subjected to the conditions of mathematics and music and the result is ludicrous. The tailor measures Gulliver's body in terms of mathematical concept and the resulting outfit ill-suits him. They have a language that fails to articulate experience pertaining to 'imagination, fancy, invention' (153). Being cut off from the common pleasures of everyday life, they are tormented by thoughts of imminent cosmic disaster which is why they are always in a state of disquiet. The flying island in Balnibarbi, on the other hand, is not merely a fantastic thing but a scientific machine with its own *modus operandi*. This stupendous achievement of science (a giant flying machine through which they learn the position of stars) operates as an instrument of torture and mass oppression.

Similarly modernization projects in Lagado have failed. At the zenith of Swift's critique of the operation of reason is the depiction of the scientific experiments in Lagado. Extracting sunbeams out of a cucumber, building a house downward from an airy base, converting human excrement back to the original food—these are few of the gross, absurd and grotesque ways in which the centrality of scientific reason is sought to be proclaimed. Reason is perverted not probably because of its own inner perversity but in varied perverse and mechanical ways in which it is implemented. Reason in Lagado is the only mantra of human improvement, a miracle of civilization which is invested in all domains of human intercourse brushing aside all questions of compassion, imagination, understanding and social values that sustain social life. Creative thinking, imaginative engagement and the need of an environment of verbal interaction in social space are pushed to the margin in favour of a mechanical mode of generating books or a bizarre project of annihilating language altogether. It is through this vehement and insane exercise of reason that political status quo is supposed to be ascertained and economy to be maintained.

Gulliver is himself, for a brief spell of time, under the spell of the progress narrative of Enlightenment as well as a vision of incremental knowledge. The moment he learns about the immortals he undertakes an utopian self-projection as an immortal. According to this vision, he would amass huge wealth and then devote himself to learning and educating young minds. He would be something of a timeless historian who would meticulously record important events as well as epochal change in culture that take place across generations. incremental historical knowledge and acute sensitivity to the present and eventual



reign of moral virtues in society is an exaggerated version of the Enlightenment project itself. However, this utopia is shattered when Gulliver learns about the horrendous reality of the Struldbruggs.

**SAQ:**

How is the vision and reality of the Struldbruggs contrasted in the novel? ( Read about the real conditions of the immortals as described in the text, and prepare the answer.)

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**6.5 Summing Up:**

We have discussed the major issues of Gulliver's Travels. The themes of the text are linked to the techniques employed. For instance, the critique of imperialism and colonialism would not have been possible without the use of perspective: the big and the small people create a difamiliarising condition for each other, and this is also what creates a complex interrelationship between the self and the other. Gulliver's Travels is as much a critique of the time it was produced as it is condition by the time. You may read the text as a product of the time, but you may also find clues that enable you to see it as a much more modern text compared with the other literary texts of the eighteenth century.

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## **BLOCK- III**

**Unit 1**  
**Samuel Johnson: *Rasselas***  
**Background**

**Unit Structure:**

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Biographical Sketch of the Author
- 1.4 Samuel Johnson's Major Work
- 1.5 Situating the Author
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 References and Suggested Reading

**1.1 Objectives:**

This unit is an attempt to understand life and works of Dr. Johnson. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- i. Get an idea about Samuel Johnson's personal and professional life.
- ii. Form an idea about Johnson's literary works.
- iii. Situate Dr. Johnson in the context of the 18<sup>th</sup> century literary world.

**1.2 Introduction:**

Samuel Johnson or Dr. Johnson was a literary genius of the Augustan period or the 18<sup>th</sup> century England. First of all, he was a man of commanding personality. He was also a voracious reader. These two features of his personality are clearly visible in all his literary works. Dr. Johnson had used his hands in almost all the literary genres available to him in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and brought perfection to them. He began his literary career as a journalist but later became more popular as a poet, conservative critic, editor of drama, dramatist, lexicographer, literary biographer and even a novelist (if we can consider *Rasselas* as a novel).

A pessimist and a classicist in nature, Samuel Johnson was a true critic of all the artificialities and frivolous attitudes of his time. Dr. Johnson, as a writer and critic, sometimes faced allegations that he was a blind adherent of classicism. Besides, many consider him a biased critic. However, such generalized views can never be applied to such a great writer whose whole corpus of writing is relevant in the present time as well. Dr. Johnson remains one of those few writers from the Augustan period, who enjoys wide readership in spite of writing with strict classical norms.

**1.3 Biographical Sketch of the Author:**

Dr. Johnson was born in the year 1709 to Michael and Sarah Johnson who were booksellers. At the age of 40, Sarah gave birth to this genius who was about to suffer continuously owing to his poor health and

poor economic condition. As a child Johnson went to the famous Lichfield Grammar School and showed his extraordinary merit and intelligence. Like another 18<sup>th</sup> century genius Alexander Pope, Johnson excelled in Latin from his childhood. Later he attended Pembroke College, Oxford but as his poor financial conditions haunted him everywhere, he had to leave the college just after one year. Apart from lack of money, Dr. Johnson was also struggling with several diseases, especially from Tourette Syndrome, which was gradually plunging him into blindness like John Milton. However, Johnson's academic career came to a happy ending as he was able to receive a degree from the university of Oxford around the year 1755. Later, Trinity College Dublin and Oxford University awarded him honorary doctorate degree as well.

Johnson also had an extraordinary personal as well as professional life. At the age of 25, Dr. Johnson married a widow named Elizabeth who was 46 years old and a mother of three children. This marriage provided financial stability to Johnson to some extent and he opened a private academy named Edial Hall School. However, this project did not work well and Dr. Johnson had to abandon this project at the very outset. In the meantime, his writings were being published and he began to be recognized as an important writer of his time. He regularly contributed to the periodicals of his time and gradually, he had several publications to his credit. With his literary publications, Johnson achieved temporary financial security too. However, lack of money remained a constant problem in his life and Johnson was even arrested for not paying his debt. Samuel Johnson may have to struggle with his problems and financial insecurities but he continued to produce literary gems one after another till his death in the year 1784.

As far as the character of Dr. Johnson is concerned, there are many interesting facts which are available to us from James Boswell's famous biography. As we have repeatedly mentioned, Johnson had an ailing health; however, he was a gigantic man to look at: strong, tall and robust. His huge torso along with his commanding personality always made him the leader of any gatherings. Boswell opines that Dr. Johnson was a bookworm and undoubtedly, Johnson was the man who had read the most than any other in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Samuel Johnson was a conservative Anglican who was always committed to Tory. Johnson loved to indulge in all sorts of literary discussions with his friends. There were many scholars like Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, Edward Gibbon etc. who loved to listen to Johnson's criticism of life and literature. This group later gained popularity as the famous Dr. Johnson's Circle. This famous circle tried to carry forward the legacy of one of the greatest critics of all times, i.e. Samuel Johnson, which is perhaps culminated in James Boswell's (who was also one among the members of the Circle) famous biography *Life of Johnson*.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Mention two problems with which Johnson had to struggle throughout his life.
2. Write a note on the character and personality of Dr. Johnson.
3. Prepare a short note on the famous 'Dr. Johnson's Circle'.

#### **1.4 Samuel Johnson's Major Works:**

Although Johnson's writings began to be published as early as 1732-33 on the pages of several periodicals, but his first major and noticeable literary work was "London", a satire in 1738. "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" in 1749 established him as one of the greatest satirists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

other than Alexander Pope. During this time Johnson had also produced a tragedy named *Irene* which was not received enthusiastically by his audience.

Dr. Johnson's reputation as a critic now rests mainly on his three critical prose works: *The Dictionary* (1755), an edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765) and *The Lives of the (English) Poets* (1781). According to Johnson's own claim, he had completed his dictionary in a very short period of time. His dictionary was full of flaws but it was instrumental in providing a proper design and structure to the method of writing dictionary. He had standardized many words and his model had remained one of the most imitated one for more than 100 years.

Johnson's edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* was published in the year 1765. This is a unique edition which presents before us a very different picture of Samuel Johnson, the classical thinker. Now it appears that Johnson was not a very good editor of plays and he had committed the same errors like other editors of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But he was different in his criticism and praise of William Shakespeare. One of the most notable points in Johnson's criticism in the "Preface" of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* is that the critic has defended William Shakespeare even though the latter had not followed the classical norms of the three dramatic unities. By admiring William Shakespeare, who hardly cared for any classical norms in drama, Dr. Johnson- who was a devout classical critic, displays his ability to think freely and his ability to admire a true gem of literature.

Another important work by Samuel Johnson is his critical prose work *The Lives of the (English) Poets*. In this work, Johnson critically looks at the lives and works of many famous poets of his time. It is in fact a short biography of as many as 52 poets, mostly from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This book was also instrumental in shaping Dr. Johnson's literary career.

Dr. Johnson was the editor two periodicals of his time.: *The Rambler* (1750-52) and *The Idler* (1758-60). These periodicals did not continue for a very long time but they included many notable essays from some remarkable writers and essayists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Among his other works, *Life of Mr. Richard Savage*, a biographical criticism and *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, a translated version of Jerome Lobo's descriptions are worth mentioning.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. How would you categorize Dr. Johnson as a writer? Do you think that he is simply a conservative critic or a free thinker?
2. Consider Johnson as a satirist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Briefly describe Johnson's important prose works.

### **1.5 Situating the Author:**

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was a dominant literary figure of the 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Popular among his readers, admirers and friends as Dr. Johnson, Samuel Johnson was a key personality in the development of neo-classicism in 18<sup>th</sup> century English literature. Dr. Johnson had attempted his hands at different literary genres and left his mark of expertise in all of them. Some modern critics love to remember him simply as a Shakespearean critic (because of his edition of the plays of William Shakespeare); while some others love to give him respect as the earliest lexicographer of English

language whereas many remember him chiefly for his famous critical prose work *The Lives of the (English) Poets*. In addition to them, he had also left his sparks of pure talent in the field of satires with poems like ‘London’ and ‘The Vanity of Human Wishes’.

#### **Stop To Consider**

Neo-Classicism is a movement related to art, culture and enlightenment in the 18th century Europe with its emphasis on classical texts and paintings. Dr. Johnson was an influential Neo-Classical writer along with Alexander Pope, Jonathan swift and many others.

### **1.6 Summing Up:**

Samuel Johnson was also a successful editor of different periodicals including *The Rambler* and *The Idler*. Apart from all those books across so many genres, it was the personality of Dr. Johnson which was influential enough to shape the pattern of his contemporary literature. Dr. Johnson may have to spend his life with financial insecurities and ailing health, and he may have sometimes landed in some ill famous controversies, his popularity and influence in contemporary English literary society can be traced from the fact that many scholars were genuinely attracted towards Dr. Johnson which eventually formed the famous ‘Dr. Johnson’s Circle’.

### **1.7 References and Suggested Reading:**

Boswell, James. *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. London: Dent, 1906.

Curley, Thomas. *Samuel Johnson and the age of Travel*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976.

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## Unit 2

### Samuel Johnson: *Rasselas*

#### Introducing the Novel

##### Unit Structure:

##### 2.1 Objectives

##### 2.2 Introduction

##### 2.3 Situating the text

##### 2.4 Plot Overview

##### 2.5 List of Characters

##### 2.6 References and Suggested Reading

##### 2.1 Objectives:

This unit is an attempt to understand the text i.e. *Rasselas*. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- i. Understand the plot of *Rasselas*.
- ii. List out major and minor characters in the book
- iii. Analyze the incidents and developments in the text.

##### 2.2 Introduction

*Rasselas* is an important literary work by Dr. Johnson, which the author designed to present in the form of a moral tale. The design of this book was already in the author's mind for quite some time but he had to write it too hastily. Joseph Addison's *Vision of Mirza* has a visible impact on *Rasselas*. Besides, Johnson's translation of Portuguese missionary Jeronimo Lobo's *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (1735) prompted him to select Abyssinia as a setting for this moral tale. *Rasselas* was an immediate success and inspired its readers to look at this book from different angles like a novel, philosophical statement, an episodic romance etc. Dr. Johnson initially developed the concept of this book with his title "The Choice of Life" in mind; later it was changed to a more simplified one i.e. *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. However, 'the choice of life' remains the central theme around which the developments take place.

### 2.3 Situating the Text:

*The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* was first published anonymously on 20<sup>th</sup> of April, 1759. At the time of its composition, Dr. Johnson was a man of almost 50 years. Although *Rasselas* is often considered as a novel, he had designed this book more as a moral tale rather than as a novel. However, there are many speculations and many readers like to consider it as a philosophical novel with a moral note. There may be problems of placing *Rasselas* under one particular literary form, but one thing is sure about this book, i.e. Dr. Johnson wrote it in great haste. The most popular idea about the composition of *Rasselas* is that Dr. Johnson had written it in just one week after the death of his mother to meet up the expenses of his mother's funeral. According to James Boswell, the famous biographer of Samuel Johnson, the latter wrote this work so that "...with the profits he might defray the expense of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he composed it in the evenings of one week". (Boswell, 1906: 209). However, critics Wharton and Mayerson challenge Boswell's view and points out that Dr. Johnson had written *Rasselas* in anticipation of his mother's funeral.

*Rasselas* is a unique creation, especially among all the works of Samuel Johnson. It is quite different from his great satires and his critical prose works. As a philosophical novel or as a moral tale or even as a statement of pessimism, *Rasselas* is quite ahead of its time of composition. However, the moral teacher inside Dr. Johnson speaks out loud through the medium of this book. Dr. Johnson's attitude as a classicist thinker and a general tone of pessimism are clearly visible in *Rasselas*.

#### Check Your Progress:

1. Who is James Boswell?
2. Why there is a problem in considering *Rasselas* only as a novel?
3. What is the most popular idea about the composition of *Rasselas*?

### 2.4 Plot Overview:

As Borges has rightly pointed out, Johnson wrote *Rasselas* in a slow but musical style where every sentence is perfectly balanced. This episodic prose romance in 49 chapters transports the readers to an exotic Happy Valley where Rasselas, the fourth son of the emperor of Abyssinia is closed up. Rasselas is confined up in the Happy Valley with other sons and daughters of royalty "...till the order of succession should call him to the throne". (Johnson, 2009: 7)



### **Stop To Consider**

Abyssinia is the ancient name of modern Ethiopia. Johnson deliberately transports his readers to a remote location so that the metaphorical nature of the text becomes visible. Almost all the places, characters and incidents in *Rasselas* have a symbolic significance.

In the Happy Valley every desire was immediately granted. All the confined royal personalities were very satisfied because "...The valley, wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with the necessaries of life and all delights..." (Johnson, 2009: 8). However, the twenty-six-year-old Prince Rasselas grew discontent day by day. He could hardly derive pleasure from the valley. He would often sit before tables covered with luxury but forget to taste them. Rasselas grows tired of all the luxuries available so easily to everyone inside the valley. He finds that all the sources of happiness that once pleased him appear dull before him now. So, when a sage enquires about the cause of the prince's distress, Rasselas replies that, "...I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint." (Johnson, 2009: 12).

When Rasselas grew too much dissatisfied with the valley, he meditates on the means of escaping from this place. He meets an artist who promises him to make a pair of artificial wings that will enable the prince to fly away from the valley. But unfortunately, the experiment did not work. Then the Prince strikes up friendship with another learned man, an artist and a man with vast experiences of the world. This scholar and artist who was known by the name Imlac, believes that knowledge is more than equivalent to force. It is Imlac who manages to find a way out of the valley for the prince. However, at the time of leaving the valley, Rasselas' sister Nekayah also joins them.

Rasselas, Nekayah and Imlac disguise as merchants and arrive at Cairo, as Cairo was a place where travellers and merchants assemble from all the corners of the earth. Imlac believes that this experience will enable the prince to make his 'Choice of life'. The prince wanders many places and befriends many persons in pursuit of real happiness. Rasselas believes that happiness must be something solid and permanent, without fear and without uncertainty. But the more the prince associates himself with people, the more he realizes that being happy is not so easy.

Soon this group confronts with an unfortunate accident. While the Prince, his sister and Imlac was inside the great pyramids, Pekuah, an attendant and close friend of Nekayah gets kidnapped as Pekuah opted not to go inside the pyramids. They become weary of Pekuah as they could not gather any information about her whereabouts. Later, the group comes to learn that Pekuah was kidnapped by the Arab monarch. Rasselas helps Pekuah come out of her bondage from the hands of the Arabs. Pekuah recounts her captive life in the hands of the Arabs where she admires their hospitality and manners.

As the adventure continues, the group of the prince meets new people, especially an astronomer with whom they share sometime. All his experiences made Rasselas' 'choice of life' even more confusing as he failed to find everything that once he desired to see outside the Happy Valley. As a result, in an aptly entitled last chapter i.e. "The Conclusion in which Nothing is Concluded", Rasselas resolves to return to Abyssinia.

## 2.5 List of Characters:

*Rasselas* has only a few characters and among them only three are present in the novella from the beginning to the end. Their characters have been discussed below:

**Rasselas:** Rasselas is the protagonist of the novel and all the episodes in the book take place around him. He is the fourth son of the Emperor of Abyssinia. Following the custom of the Abyssinian royalty, he had been confined in the Happy Valley where he could enjoy his life without any disturbance. From the very beginning of this novella, we find Rasselas as an unhappy prince in the valley. He might have been happy earlier but with the passage of time, he finds this place dull and boring. Rasselas observes that he has no difference with the animals in the valley. Rasselas desires to see real happiness, which according to him, is "solid and enduring.

Rasselas is a very confused character. As he confesses before his guide Imlac, he is confused about the right "choice of life". He informs Imlac that his problem is his inability to understand his cause of worry. Rasselas tries to find out the solution of his worries in several ways. He wanders in the free world, makes acquaintances with different people from different age groups etc. He looks into the lives of the people but fails to find out anything that could offer him the right path to make his choice of life.

Rasselas is an epitome of freedom. He may have all the pleasures (both materialistic and aesthetic) available to him, but he longs for freedom. He is different from the rest of the Abyssinian royalty as Rasselas abandons his captive life and embarks on a journey in search of palpable and long-lasting happiness.

In many ways, Rasselas represents Dr. Johnson's character too. Rasselas' hatred of captivity, indifference to materialistic pleasure, quest for happiness and knowledge along with his characteristic pessimism are some of the features that also defines the character of Dr. Johnson.

Rasselas is a strong character who is determined to be a free man. His desire to fly away from the valley symbolizes his desire for freedom. He is respectful towards Imlac and Nekayah. He is also sympathetic for Pekuah. He is skeptical but he is never arrogant and frivolous. Rasselas is confused and determined at the same time. However, it appears that Johnson's emphasis on moral and philosophical ideologies make him a dull character. It is also noticeable that we hardly see any development in the character of Rasselas.

**Imlac:** Among the major characters of the novel, Imlac is important just after the protagonist. Imlac is a man of learning and it is Imlac who is successful in finding an escape route for Rasselas from the Happy Valley. According to his own story, Imlac was born in the kingdom of Gojama, near Nile River. His father was a wealthy merchant who was "...honest... but of mean sentiments". (Johnson, 2009:22). His father wanted Imlac to be wealthier than himself and sent Imlac to school. But Imlac found delight in knowledge. In his early youth, Imlac deserted his father and began to wander in remote places through sea voyages. Imlac passed through several countries and places of the world including India, Arabia, Persia, Palestine etc. He learned the nature of different people and their customs and thus gratified his lust for knowledge.

As a result of his vast knowledge and experience, Imlac was able to guide Rasselas in a world full of strangers. Imlac serves not only as a guide who shows Rasselas the way out of the Happy Valley to Cairo, but also kept the prince hopeful and energetic even in moments of utter hopelessness and desolation. Imlac symbolizes a man who has gained control over his life and situations with the help of his vast knowledge.

From many angles, it appears that the character of Imlac is modelled on a typical Renaissance personality. Like a Renaissance character, Imlac is a man of vast knowledge. He loves travelling to remote places. His quest for knowledge is indomitable. Many critics look at Imlac's character as a foil to Rasselas. Rasselas' confusion is displayed against the clarity of vision, knowledge and experience of Imlac. Sometimes it also appears that Rasselas and Imlac are two different sides of Johnson's own personality. Imlac may not be the protagonist, but Johnson is partial towards Imlac who is a scholar than Rasselas who represents royalty.

**Nekayah:** Nekayah is Rasselas' sister and a companion of the prince in his adventures on the world outside the Happy Valley. She is also dissatisfied with her life inside the valley and longs to go outside. She accompanies Rasselas and Imlac to Cairo where they are exposed to different sections of the people. She is fond of her attendant and companion Pekuah. When Pekuah is kidnapped, she becomes restless. Nekayah is compassionate and caring towards others.

Nekayah is present in this story from the beginning to the very end but there is not any significant incident or development where she is involved. However, she is also a determined character and possesses the power to revolt against the systems. She represents those sections of women who prefer knowledge and freedom over materialistic pleasures and artificial attitudes.

**Pekuah:** Pekuah can be considered both- as a major or a minor character in *Rasselas*. She is an attendant and friend of Nekayah. Her role becomes more prominent towards the ending of the story. She was kidnapped by the Arabs from outside the Pyramids. She remained composed and strong in the midst of her kidnappers. She displays her strength of character when she recounts her (mis)adventure with her kidnappers. She did not blame the Arabs for kidnapping her; rather she admired them for their hospitality.

Apart from these characters, there are a few minor characters in *Rasselas* as well. The Artist who made a pair of artificial wings for the Prince and the Astrologer are some of those of characters. They appear on some specific occasions and make the canvas of Johnson's characterization more colorful.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Make a comparative study between the character of Rasselas and Imlac.
2. Write a note on the women characters in *Rasselas*.
3. Do you think that Imlac's character has some important symbolic significances?

**2.6 References and Suggested Reading:**

Boswell, James. *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. London: Dent, 1906.

Curley, Thomas. *Samuel Johnson and the age of Travel*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976.

Fussel, Paul. *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing*. New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1971.

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## Unit 3

### Samuel Johnson: *Rasselas* Themes and Techniques

#### Unit Structure:

#### 3.1 Objectives

#### 3.2 Introduction

#### 3.3 Major Themes and Issues

#### 3.4 Art of Characterization

#### 3.5 Style and Techniques in *Rasselas*

#### 3.6 Summing Up

#### 3.7 References and Suggested Readings

#### 3.1 Objectives:

This unit is an attempt to analyze themes and techniques in *Rasselas*. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- i. Explain major themes and issues in *Rasselas*.
- ii. Discuss Johnson's art of characterization.
- iii. Understand Johnson's style and techniques in *Rasselas*.

#### 3.2 Introduction:

Dr. Johnson's literary works contain a unique style and generally follow classical norms. Being a classical scholar, he strictly adhered all the rules and traditions of the classicists. Besides, Johnson remained a poet at the core of his heart even though he had written in different literary genres. Dr. Johnson was a man of strong morality with a pessimistic attitude. So, his literary works have a tendency to impart moral education to the readers.

#### 3.3 Major Themes and Issues:

This gloomy but otherwise musical tale has a few important themes and issues. Some of them are discussed below:

**'Choice of Life':** The quest of *Rasselas* for a situation where he can make his right 'choice of life' remains the most dominant theme throughout the novella. The fact that Johnson wanted to entitle this book initially as "Choice of Life", itself tells us about the importance of this

theme. Rasselas is constantly in search of his right choice of life which would make him happy in true sense of the term. Rasselas is an unhappy prince and the reason behind his unhappiness is his inability to make his choice of life. As Rasselas was unhappy with his life inside the Happy Valley, he desperately desired to escape from it. Rasselas' quest for choice of life not only symbolize his yearn for freedom but also his desire to enjoy real happiness in life.

The quest of the prince to attain a state of mind where he can make a choice of life serves as the driving force behind the development of the plot. Rasselas' journey to Cairo along with Imlac and Nekayah is also a part of his quest for this 'choice'. In many ways, Imlac the scholar guides the prince so that he could make his choice. However, being a pessimist, Johnson ends this novel in a confusing state where the prince is unable to make a right 'choice of life'.

**Life as a Journey of Unattainable Happiness:** Discontentment and unhappiness remains another important theme in *Rasselas*. The unhappy prince strives for happiness and searches among different sections of people in Cairo the real source of happiness. But unfortunately, they come to the conclusion that real happiness is still a mirage. When Rasselas was fed up with his life in the Happy Valley, he comes out of it and interacts with different classes of people to know about their state of happiness. But to his utter distress, Rasseals finds that people have many reasons to be unhappy in this world.

Rasselas meets scholars who are dissatisfied with their limitations of knowledge; he meets gay and energetic youths who indulges in temporary and sensual pleasures; Rasselas meets another man living a solitary life in a hermitage who laments his lack of friendship etc. Rasselas feels that it is perhaps impossible task to attain happiness in true sense. Although Imlac gives us an impression of a satisfied scholar, but he too seems more satisfied than happy.

**Limitations of Human Beings:** *Rasselas* is not only about the protagonist's unsuccessful journey in search of happiness, it is also a book about the limitations of human beings. As a prince in the Happy Valley, Rasselas could have been the happiest person on the earth. But he has been kept in a captive mode which also symbolizes duties and responsibilities of the princes. Their duties and responsibilities keep them unhappy and anxious. In his attempt to escape from the valley, Rasselas meets an artist who made a pair of artificial wings for the prince. But being a human, the prince could not fly away from the valley. The prince realizes his limitations as a human being on the planet. In Cairo, Rasselas meets several sections of people like wealthy merchants and experienced scholars who were unhappy because of their limitations in their respective fields. Rasselas realizes that no amount of wealth or knowledge could break the chains of human limitations. As a result of these realizations, Rasselas returns to Abyssinia abandoning his quest for a happy life.

### **3.4 Art of Characterization:**

Dr. Johnson was a keen observer of human nature. His ability to keenly observe human nature and characters make his characters lively, believable and realistic. However, as far as

characterization in *Rasselas* is concerned, it is to some extent weak in comparison to his other works. In *Rasselas* there are three major characters: Rasselas, the unhappy prince; Imlac, the scholar guide and Nekayah, Rasselas' sister. All these characters are more types and representatives of their respective classes than distinctive individuals. Rasselas represents a prince who is unhappy with his life. His quest for a happier life outside the valley symbolizes his desire to escape his present state of conditions. In contrast to Rasselas, Imlac represents the scholar class- a class of people who had assembled knowledge and experience from his sea voyages. Similarly, Nekayah represents the female class. She is, however, representing those sections of women who prefer merit and knowledge to materialistic pleasure.

The characters in *Rasselas* are representatives of different types or sections of people. Hence, the readers could not find any individual distinctiveness among them. Besides, Johnson designed *Rasselas* as a moral tale and a philosophical statement. So, he deliberately did not pay too much attention in the art of characterization. As a result of this, his characters in *Rasselas* appear dull and artificial. Another drawback in Johnson's characterization is that we do not see any development among the characters in this book.

Nekayah and Pekuah are the two significant women characters in this novella. Generally, Johnson had an ill reputation for representing his women characters as frivolous and full of affectation. But Nekayah, the princess and Pekuah her attendant and companion are strong and wise characters. They are wise and sensible. Nekayah abandons her life of comfort in the Happy Valley and joins her brother in search of happiness and freedom. Nekayah stands for those women who long for freedom. She would rather face uncertainties of the world than living a life in captivity. Pekuah also displays her strength of character when she was kidnapped by the Arabs. She remained calm and composed in the hands of her kidnappers. When she recounts the story of her misfortune, she does not simply blame the Arabs; rather she praises their customs of hospitality.

Johnson's art of characterization may be weak in *Rasselas*, but it must be considered that Johnson was writing a moral tale. So, he intentionally stressed on expressing his moral and philosophical statements than characterization.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. What are the drawbacks of Johnson's characterization in *Rasselas*?
2. How Johnson's women characters in *Rasselas* are different from those in his other writings?
3. Do you think Dr. Johnson is partially inclined towards the character Imlac who is a scholar than towards prince Rasselas?

### 3.5 Style and Techniques in *Rasselas*:

When it comes to the style and techniques of Johnson in *Rasselas*, the question of genre becomes more prominent. Many critics consider *Rasselas* as a novella, whereas some others categorize it as a novel. There are a few others who look at *Rasselas* as a philosophical and moral tale or simply an adventure story. *Rasselas* consists of 49 short chapters with very lucid and rhythmical lines. Johnson wrote *Rasselas* very hastily but he carefully designed his structure and delicately chose his diction. The general tone of this book is very simple and most of the times musical. The authoritarian nature of Johnson's personality nowhere poses a threat to the otherwise lyrical novella. *Rasselas* is full of obscure philosophical ideas but Johnson's style is so smooth and engaging that the readers can grasp everything effortlessly.

#### Stop To Consider

A novella is a work of fiction in the manner of a novel but short in length. It is also known as short novel. As a literary genre, novella was very popular among the modern European writers. *Rasselas* is considered a novella as it is shorter than a conventional novel but much longer than a short story.

Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* has been written in a conversational pattern. Most of the ideas are expressed through the medium of conversation among the characters. As a result, readers can immediately connect to the characters and incidents. The primary narrative voice in *Rasselas* is that of the third person omniscient narrator. However, most of the times the characters describe their stories, experiences and ideologies in direct sentences and through their dialogues with other characters. Johnson also makes this novella rich in imageries. Most of his images in *Rasselas* have been derived from the world of nature. Johnson's use of natural and common images brings about a rhythmical environment to this otherwise philosophical novella.

In *Rasselas*, Johnson presents a pessimistic view of life. He believes that real happiness always remains a task unattainable for the human beings. However, the general tone of mockery and criticism which are the hallmarks of his satires and prose works are absent from this book which makes *Rasselas* an enjoyable reading experience.

#### Stop To Consider

Third person omniscient narrator is a narrative voice in which the storyteller assumes an all-knowing perspective. Third person omniscient narrator can be present at all the places at the same time and know about everyone's inner thoughts. Often used in realistic fictions, this third person omniscient narrator is the most reliable of all the narrative voices.



**SAQ:**

1. “Dr. Johnson considered life as a failed journey in search of happiness”. Justify this statement from your reading of *Rasselas*.  
.....
2. Present an overview of the Happy Valley.  
.....
3. How would you consider *Rasselas*, as a moral tale or as an 18<sup>th</sup> century typical novel? Justify your answer with proper examples.  
.....
4. Comment on Johnson’s art of characterization in *Rasselas*.  
.....
5. Write a note on Johnson’s style and techniques in *Rasselas*.  
.....

**3.6 Summing Up:**

*Rasselas* may have been a work of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; it has remained appealing in popular literature in the later ages as well. It is a unique literary production by Samuel Johnson as it manifests several characteristic features of the author and his times and at the same time it delineates a picture so remote to the readers and an ideology so different from popular perceptions.

**3.7 References and Suggested Readings:**

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## Unit 4

### WILLIAM GODWIN : CALEB WILLIAMS

#### BACKGROUND

##### Unit Structure:

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 William Godwin: The Person and the Author
- 4.4 William Godwin: The Philosopher
- 4.5 William Godwin: The Journalist
- 4.6 William Godwin: Major Works
- 4.7 Legacy and Memorials
- 4.8 Summing Up
- 4.9 Further Reading

#### 4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Learn in details about the person behind the masterpiece Caleb Williams
- Know more about William Godwin as a person, an author and a philosopher
- Learn more about the philosophical side of Godwin which became a driving force for this novel
- Know about the time and age this novel is set in and their influences on the setting and narrative

#### 4.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is going to be focused on the author of the novel *Caleb Williams* -William Godwin, rather than the actual novel itself. Any type of text, whether it is a poem, an article, an essay, a novel or a short story etc, is a product of its author's creative imagination and thoughts. It is almost impossible to separate an author from his/her text. To get a hold of the complete meaning of a piece, we need to be aware of all the factors that had an influence on the writer before and during the writing process. Therefore, the writer,

their thought process, things that influence them, their ideas and ideologies, the society and time period they live in etc play a very important role in the formation of the text.

In this unit we are going to learn more about William Godwin as person, an author and a philosopher. We are going to see how these facets of his life influenced his work. We will also be taking a look into the reviews and comments that people expressed about the novel *Caleb Williams*. This unit will help us to arrive at a more comprehensive view of the author, thus expanding our ideas and understanding about the text too.

### **4.3 WILLIAM GODWIN: THE PERSON**

William Godwin was born on March 3, 1756 in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England to a middle class family. He was the seventh among thirteen children born to parents John Godwin and Anna Hull. He received his formal education till the year 1778 at the Dissenting School, Haxton Academy. Physically, Godwin was weak since childhood. Although he had an introverted personality, he was intellectually very active. His religious and philosophical beliefs kept on changing and evolving along with him.

By profession Godwin was a journalist, a philosopher and a novelist. He is also believed to be one of the first people who popularized the ideas of utilitarianism and anarchism through his writing. His most popular works were *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* or *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*.

Godwin married twice in his life. He first got married to the author Mary Wollstonecraft on 29 March 1797. From this marriage he had a daughter named Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. She was born on August 30, 1797. But sadly his wife died shortly after the birth of his daughter on September 10, 1797 due to complications related to birth. His daughter inherited the penmanship of her parents and later on became a popular author herself – Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*. Another mentionable aspect about this short marriage was that Godwin received a lot of criticism for it due to the fact that he had advocated for an abolition of marriage in his book *Political Justice*.

Godwin married for the second time in 1801. His second wife was a neighbor of his called Mary Jane Clairmont. She too was a writer. From this marriage he had a son named William Godwin the Younger. He was born in the year 1803. He too grew up to become a writer. But he died at a very early age of 29 years in the year 1832.

Godwin's thought, ideas and philosophies inspired many of the Romantic writers. As he was not financially affluent as his works failed to gain the much popularity, these writers often supported him monetarily in exchange for his philosophical guidance. One such important figure was the romantic poet

Percy Bysshe Shelley who later on went on to become his son-in-law by marrying his daughter Mary. Other important writer influenced and inspired by him were Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and William Wordsworth among many others.

Though Godwin kept writing for his entire life, none of his other works received the popularity enjoyed *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*. In his last years Godwin became dependent on his children for their support. It was his daughter Mary Shelly who took him in and took care of him till his death. He died on April 7, 1836 at the age of 80 due to complications of a cold in New Palace Yard, Westminster, England.

William Godwin was a major author of his times. He kept on writing throughout his life and produced many good works. But his most popular works were *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* or *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. Owing to the success of both these works he became an important figure of the radical circles of London in the 1790s.

Before becoming an author Godwin served as a minister in a church. In 1783 he left the church and went to London with the intention of becoming an author. He began by writing pamphlets and literary parodies most of which he published anonymously. Throughout 1783 he wrote many texts, including an anonymously published biography of William Pitt the Elder. He then worked as a satirical literary critic for a short time. He published *The Herald of Literature* where he reviewed non-existent works of real authors, often imitating their writing style and techniques. His success with the *Herald* brought him more work as a critic. He was hired to work for John Murry's *English Review* and also got a commission to translate Simon Fraser's memoirs. He then went on to publish some novels like *Damon and Delia*, *Imogen*, *Sketches of History* etc. But none of his early works were financially successful.

After his second marriage to Mary Jane Clairmont, Godwin set up a shop and publishing house in 1805 and named it the Juvenile Library. This publishing house is a landmark in the history of children's literature. Adopting the pen name Edward Baldwin he published many important pieces of children's literature including a version of the story 'Jack and the Beanstalk', primers on Biblical and classical history.

Through this publishing house they also published many books which had gone out of print at that time. One important example of such a book was Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. They also published translated works of European authors. They translated, edited and then published the first English edition of *Swiss Family Robinson* from French. The Juvenile Library became the main source of income for Godwin's family for many decades to come.

Although Godwin kept on writing till the time of his death, he failed to achieve economical success. He was dependent on his followers to support him financially. His later works failed to make a mark in the market or on the audience. He also indulged himself in writing plays, which too did not see much

success. Towards the end of his life he was cared for by his daughter Mary. Aside from a few, after his death he was forgotten by most of the people.

Godwin started his writing career as a non-fictional writer but later on turned to fiction. He thought that fiction was a valuable means through which he can express his ideas in front of the masses. Even though his ideas were philosophical he chose to write fiction because he thought that fiction being popular among the masses, his ideas and thoughts will get better exposure and reach more and more people. Another reason due to which he opted to write fiction was that fiction provide person with an unhindered and a very broad imaginative space. This is true in the case of both the author and the reader. The author gets a freedom to write and express thoughts about things which would otherwise have been impossible in the sphere of non-fiction writing. On the other hand, a reader also easily accepts controversial and contesting ideas if it is included in a fictional work. In order for people to let go of their prejudices and accept harsh or controversial ideas Godwin chose one of the most popular fictional genres his times – the Gothic fiction. Even though he favored the Gothic tradition, his only other work written in this genre is *St. Leon* published in 1799.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- Q1. When and where was William Godwin born?
- Q2. What are the names of Godwin's parents? How many siblings did he have?
- Q3. Where did Godwin get his formal education from?
- Q4. How many times did William Godwin marry in his life? Name his wives.
- Q5. Write the names of Godwin's children.

#### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

- Q1. Write a note on the influence Godwin had on the romantic writers of his time.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q6. Name the publication house opened by William Godwin?

Q7. Name two novels written by Godwin that followed the Gothic genre.

Q8. What is '*The Herald of Literature*'?

### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. Write a note on the Juvenile Library and its contribution to the field of literature? What role did it play in Godwin's life?

Q2. Do you think Godwin was a successful author? Explain.

Q3. Why did Godwin start writing fictions when he started his carrier as a non-fictional writer?

## **4.4 WILLIAM GODWIN: THE PHILOSOPHER**

William Godwin is called the father of philosophical anarchism. Some of the ideas that led to Godwin becoming a forerunner for philosophical anarchism are believed to have stemmed from the morals and teachings he received as follower of Sandemanian Calvinism, a sect of Christianity. Godwin's father, John Godwin was a minister of the Sandemanian Calvinism,. William Godwin also followed this religion until his graduation from school. But as he grew up he let go of his religion and declared himself to be an atheist.

Later on, Godwin converted to political liberalism because of the influences exerted upon him by the political upheavals occurring in America and England. He was also influenced by the discussions he had with his friends and acquaintances and the study of the French philosophers, the Latin historians and English writers. Some people who left a great impression upon him are – Rousseau, Montesquieu, Locke and Swift among many others.

Godwin is regarded as one of the first anarchists who declared that the structures of hierarchy and authority that we find in a civil society are extremely unjust. Instead, he was an advocate for an

egalitarian society based on reason and equality. Godwin was a philosopher and a writer at the same time. Therefore this philosophies often influenced his writings and vice versa.

Godwin's most significant text that contains his philosophical ideas is *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. This book sets forth his ideas related to political philosophy. In this book he advocated for ideas like equality and said that the government was responsible for the kind of people that lived in a society. He was identified as a political anarchist because of this work.

Godwin's moral philosophy centered around two major principles – firstly, the principal of utility as the sole guide to moral duty which meant that a person has every right to pursue his/her happiness as they see fit. But this idea was attacked by the critics on the ground that one's happiness may be the cause of someone else's pain too. Secondly, the principle of private judgments as a block on the lives of others. This judgment is primarily related to moral judgments of an individual.

Although Godwin failed to become a critically acclaimed or popular author of major works sans the two mentioned earlier, he was very successful as a philosopher. His philosophical ideas influenced many of contemporaries and writers from the younger generation. Godwin's thought, ideas and philosophies inspired many of the Romantic writers. As he was not financially affluent as his works failed to gain the much popularity, these writers often supported him monetarily in exchange for his philosophical guidance. Some of such important figures were Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and William Wordsworth among many others.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q9. Who is called the father of philosophical anarchism?

Q10. Name some people who left a great impression on Godwin?

#### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. Write a note on *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* as a text that reflected William Godwin's philosophical ideas.

Q2. Write a note on 'William Godwin, the philosopher'.

#### 4.5 WILLIAM GODWIN : THE JOURNALIST

William Godwin was a political journalist. He turned to journalism due to an unsuccessful career as a commercial writer. He opted to do this only for financial purposes. He started his career in journalism by writing for well-paying Whig journals on Grub Street. He started out as a political journalist for the *New Annual Register*. He then took on the pseudonym Mucius and published his articles in the *Political Herald*. His wrote with an aim to attack the Tories. He also went on to report and publish articles on the Pitt ministry's colonial rule in India and Ireland. Along with this he also wrote a history of the Dutch revolt and successfully predicted the outbreak of major revolutions throughout Europe.

After the death of the editor of *Political Herald* Godwin was offered the position but he rejected it. He was concerned that his association with the Whig party could influence his work as an editor, a profession that required an unbiased attitude; hence he rejected the offer. After some time he ended his association with the *New Annual Register* too to give his full attention and concentration to what came to be known as one of the most significant works of his life, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q11. Name the two political journals which William Godwin wrote for?

#### SELF ASKING QUESTIONS

Q1. Do you think Godwin would have become a journalist if he would have been commercially successful as a fiction and non-fiction writer?

#### 4.6 WILLIAM GODWIN : MAJOR WORKS

William Godwin published a lot of texts throughout his writing career spanning decades. Some of his major and notable works are :-

- *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*

Published on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1793, this book contains Godwin's ideas related to political philosophy. Originally aimed at making a review of the recent developments in political and moral philosophy, the intention quickly changed course. In this book Godwin argued that the type



of government that prevails in the society determines the type of people living in that society. If the government is good the people will turn good and vice versa. He also defended the importance of political inquiry in this book. He also advocate for equality of people and said that people should be seen through their actions and not birth. Revised thrice within five years, this book made him a popular figure in the radical circles of London in the 1790s.

- ***Things As They Are or The Adventures of Caleb Williams***

Written following the Gothic genre, this book was published in 1794. This is his most popular novel. Written in an autobiographical style, this novel is attacks the tyrannical government and the unjust justice system. It relies heavily of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* for the philosophical ideas expressed in it.

- ***St. Leon***

Published in the year 1799 this is the only other novel of William Godwin that follows the gothic tradition. But many critics comment that this works lacks the emotional power and political appeal that can be found in both *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*.

- ***Life of Lord Chatham***

Published in the year 1783, this was his first published work although he published it anonymously.

- ***Sketches of History***

This book was published in the year 1784 and consists of six sermons on the characters of Asron, Hazael and Jesus. Although he wrote this book from the point –of – view of an orthodox Calvinist, the idea that he expressed through this book was that god has no right to ast as a tyrant.

- ***Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Women***

This is a biography that Godwin wrote for his wife Mary Wollstonecraft and published with a collection of her works shortly after her death in the year 1798. He received a lot of criticism and negative remarks because of the way he described her two failed attempts of suicide and her affair with Gilbert Imlay. He was attacked by newspapers and his philosophical ideas came under attack.

- ***Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon***

Published in the year 1801, this book was an answer to his critics and a confession of the philosophical errors that he made in his earlier works.

- ***Of Population***

This book published in the year 1820 was one of the few books that gained some attention in his later years. Godwin wrote this book as an answer to Thomas Malthus' *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. In this essay Godwin criticized and attacked Malthus' assumption that the rate of growth of population in America was worldwide phenomenon and it followed the same trend everywhere.

- ***Thoughts on Man, his Nature, Productions and Discoveries***

This text is a collection of essays written and published by Godwin in 1831. Here he argued that education should be person-specific and should be modified to match and each person's individual talents.

- ***Damon and Delia, a Tale (1784)***

- ***Life of Geoffrey Chaucer (1804)***

- ***Fleetwood (1799)***

- ***Mendeville (1817)***

- ***Transfusion (1835)***

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q12. Name five of the most popular works of William Godwin.

#### **4.6 LEGACY AND MEMORIALS**

After his death in 1836, Godwin was buried next to his wife Mary Wollstonecraft in the graveyard of St. Pancras. In the 1850s, his grandchild from his daughter Mary, Percy Florence Shelley had both of their remains removed to his family tomb at St. Peter's Church.

Many of the surviving manuscripts of some of Godwin's best-known works are preserved in the Forster Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum. His V&A manuscripts for both *Political*

*Justice* and *Caleb Williams* were digitized in 2017 and has become a part of the Shelley-Godwin Archive.

Wisbech, his nplace of birth, has two memorials dedicated to him. One of them is a cul-de-sac named Godwin Close in his honor and the second one is a wall plaque placed in a building adjacent to the Angles Theatre in Alexandra Road.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q13. Which of Godwin's works had been digitized and when? What are they part of now?

Q14. Where was Godwin buried?

#### **4.7 Summing Up:**

William Godwin was a great author and philosopher. Although he failed to produce too many masterpieces in his name, his ideas and philosophy succeeded in influencing some very great minds whose names have been written with golden ink in the pages of the history of literature. These people include the romantic poets Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth.

Throughout his writing career Godwin dealt with different6 types of writing. He wrote both fiction and non-fiction. He wrote using his own name, pseudonyms and anonymously. He has a great number of literary pieces attributed to his name. He received both appreciations and criticisms for his works.

It will perhaps not be wrong to say that he was fearless by nature. He was an anarchist and openly opposed the biasness and injustice that had become a part of the government and justice system of his times. Even when his writings became objects of controversy he did not shy away from expressing his ideas.

He loved his first wife very dearly and was left utterly heartbroken and distraught after her death not even a year into their marriage. Before this he married her even though she already had a daughter from a previous affair, a step that made many of his friends leave him. This too proves his love and care for her. At the same time, he was also a responsible and kind father. He put in a lot of effort to cultivate his daughter Mary to become a great writer. He gave her all the opportunities given to boys, something that was very uncommon in their kind of society. But he was later left broken when she ran away with

Percy Besshe Shelley at the tender age of seventeen. He looked after not only his children but also three other step-children and treated all of them as a equally.

Godwin was an advocate of equality, in life and in front of the law. He believed that people should get the freedom to choose and do what gives them happiness. He was also in favour of people's position in the society being determined by their nwork and actions and not birth.

In conclusion, we can say that William Godwin was a very upright individual. His philosophical ideas have won the test of time and stands true even this day and era.

#### 4.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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## **Unit 5**

### **WILLIAM GODWIN: *CALEB WILLIAMS***

#### **INTRODUCING THE NOVEL**

##### **Unit Structure:**

- 5.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Characters of the Novel
- 5.4 Caleb Williams: The story in brief
- 5.5 Alternate ending of the Novel
- 5.6 Adaptations of the Novel
- 5.7 Summing Up
- 5.8 References and Further Reading

#### **5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Get to know details associated with the novel
- Have a better understanding of the story of novel
- Explain both the content and context of the novel
- Get to know the major characters of the novel

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* is often known as Caleb Williams in an abbreviated form. This novel has another name – *Things as They Are*. Published on 12 May, 1794 by the famous author William Godwin, this novel carried a political agenda along with its core story. The entire story of the novel is completed by Godwin in three volumes, each volume related to a different stage in the life of Caleb Williams, the protagonist. We can see the character growth and maturity of our novel's hero as we read through the entire series of the novel. Through this novel the author tries to call for an end to the abuse of power by a tyrannical government.

In 1793 Godwin wrote a book *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*. This book presents to us the philosophical side of the author and gives us some idea regarding his political philosophy. *Caleb Williams*, the novel, was an extension of the ideas mentioned in the aforementioned book. It is a novel that intended to popularize his political philosophy. This novel is a reflection of the society; it shows how the justice system works. It shows how the legal system can and do destroy the lives of innocent people at times even though it intends to really serve justice. The people related to the systems are not in fault here but that is how the system works.

The injustice that goes on in the justice system is something that Godwin describes as “things as they are”, hence the alternate title of the novel. The original manuscript of the novel also came with a preface which was later removed from publication as the ideas expressed in it were quite alarming for the readers and booksellers of that time. In addition to this, there was also an alternative ending of the story of the novel which was published in some of the publications but it is not very popular. Upon its publication the novel created quite an uproar in the society because of the radical ideas expressed in it. Even though it proved to be a commercial success, it had many negative comments regarding its content. But, in the later years this novel was also adapted into plays and movies, which is a proof of its popularity.

## 5.2 CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL

- Caleb Williams: The protagonist of the novel. He is a man who was born in a very humble family and belongs to the working class of the society. He is a very observant and curious person; two characteristics which ultimately leads to his downfall. Although courageous, he is also somewhat naive and bookish. He works for Falkland as his assistant after losing his parents at the age of eighteen. As he discovers the secret behind his employer, Mr. Falkland's bouts of temper, he is forced to become a fugitive running away for a major part of the story. He becomes an innocent victim of the justice system. The whole novel traces his growth of character and how his ideas and ideals change as a result of his situation and circumstances.
- Ferdinando Falkland: Caleb's employer and landlord. He is a wealthy and well-respected squire because of his friendly and easy-to-go nature. But even though he is very humble by nature, he is accustomed to bouts and fits of anger, the mystery behind which will be revealed in the course of the novel. Initially a very warm, kin and intelligent person, the incident related to Tyrrel, his nemesis, changes him. He becomes a murderer as a result of his conflict with Tyrrel. It is only at the very end of the novel that he confesses but dies soon after the confession.
- Barnabas Tyrrel: Falkland's enemy. His character is in complete reversal of Falkland's warm and friendly personality. He is a very proud and jealous person, characters which leads to the development of his enmity with Falkland. He is not shy to resort to evil in order to achieve his goal.
- Gines: a member of the robbers' gang which gives refuge to Caleb when he was a runaway from law after being blamed falsely by his employer Falkland of theft. He too becomes Caleb's enemy after he is thrown out from the gang by the leader due to his actions against Caleb. A former detective, he later devoted himself to tailing Caleb and becomes the cause of his second arrest. He also repeatedly exposed his whereabouts and ultimately forced him to come back to face Falkland and the justice system.
- Captain Raymond: the leader of the robbers' gang. He gives shelter to Caleb when he was living the life of a fugitive. He is a very philosophical person and can separate the right from the wrong, even though he was a leader of a thieves' gang.

- Emily Melville: Tyrrel's cousin and a love interest of Falkland. She is an orphan who lives under the cruel and tyrannical rule of her cousin. She was saved from death by a fire by Falkland which led to her developing feelings for him. But due to the enmity between her cousin and Falkland she is forced to marry Grimes but she refuses and is imprisoned by Tyrrel. Ultimately, she suffers from a long illness and dies due to fever.
- Grimes: Tyrrel's tenant and subordinate. He is the person whom Emily is forced to marry. He had a very loose moral and character. He is clumsy and roguish. He tries to abuse Emily repeatedly.
- Thomas: Falkland's servant who has stayed with him for a long time. He is very familiar with Falkland's bouts of anger and advises Caleb against getting involved in the mystery behind them. He was once a neighbor and friend of Caleb's father and later on aids Caleb in his escape from prison.
- Collins: another servant of Falkland. He is the one who runs Falkland's estate and advises him to hire Caleb as his assistant. He is the one who tells Caleb the story of Falkland's early life when he becomes too curious about it.
- Benjamin Hawkins: a tenant of Tyrrel who refused to bow down to his authority. His refusal to let his son become Tyrrel's servant brings upon them the cruel treatment of their landlord who vows to destroy them. One of the two people falsely accused of Tyrrel's murder, he is sentenced to death by the law.
- Leonard Hawkins: Benjamin Hawkins' son. Tyrrel wanted him to serve him as his servant but was refused. As a sort of punishment for this refusal Tyrrel does many atrocities against their family. Leonard rebelled and was later on imprisoned due to several false accusations brought upon him by Tyrrel. At the end he too becomes a victim of the false charges of Tyrrel's murder and is sentenced to death along with his father.
- Mr Forester: Falkland's older half- brother. He developed a close friendship with Caleb when he lived in Falkland's estate. It is as a result of his advice that Caleb gets imprisoned for the first time.
- Dr Wilson: Emily's friend
- Mrs Hammond: Emily's friend
- Larkins: a member of the robbers' gang



- An old hag: housekeeper to the robbers. She tries to kill Caleb once because of her dislike towards him. Later, she also informs the authorities about his whereabouts.
- A gaoler
- Miss Peggy: the gaoler's daughter
- Mrs Marney: a poor gentlewoman. She becomes a friend to Caleb in his times of dismay
- Mr Spurrel: Caleb's neighbor who provides his address when he was in hiding in London
- Mrs Denison: an educated and cultivated lady who develops a good and friendly relationship with Caleb for a short while

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q1. When was the novel *Caleb Williams* published?

Q2. What are the other names of the novel?

Q3. State one of the purposes that William Godwin had when he wrote this novel?

## **5.4 CALEB WILLIAMS: THE STORY IN BRIEF**

Caleb Williams is a novel in three volumes which traces the growth and development of the main protagonist, Caleb Williams. Written in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, it is said to be one of the first crime novels of English literature. Some also label it as an example of gothic fiction. Given below is a brief summary of the entire series of the novel.

### **5.4.1 VOLUME I**

The first volume of this novel is in the first person narrative where Caleb himself is the speaker and narrator. This volume contains a total of twelve chapters.

Caleb, the protagonist and the first person narrator of the story, is born in the estate of Fardinando Falkland and belongs to a peasant family. Though poor and humble by birth, he

taught himself to read and write and was good in maths. But he was particularly interested in technical knowledge. He is a very curious person, a characteristic that he himself knows can cause him problems. His curiosity always makes him to keep searching for an adventure. Orphaned at the age of eighteen, he is hired by Mr. Falkland as his amanuensis – an assistant who helps take notes and copying manuscripts- upon the advice of his servant Collins. Caleb sees his master as a kind, quite and reserved person. Therefore when he faces one of his master's paroxysms- a sudden and violent outburst of anger- in the library, he is left quite shocked by the experience. He apologises and retreats. After the initial shock and confusion of the outburst fades away, Caleb goes to find Mr. Collins to ask for an explanation behind that sudden behavior.

Caleb then goes on to describe the story of Falkland's early life, before he started to live a secluded and reclusive life, devoid of his paroxysms; as described to him by Collins. In his early days Ferdinando Falkland was a very well- mannered and well-loved person. He always drew people in due to his gentle nature and good manners. He was very well spoken and witty, often using these talents to get into or out of things very easily. But his nature drew not only friends but also enemies towards him. One of the persons who didn't like Falkland's rising popularity was Barnabas Tyrrel, a fellow squire who lived in the same area. Tyrrel was a very loud, arrogant and jealous person. He often exploited those under him and took full advantage of this position and wealth. Before Falkland came into town, he was the most prominent bachelor of their aristocratic society. So, when Falkland's popularity started rising, he saw him as a rival and enemy. He also didn't like the fact that the poor people of their town went and sought Falkland's help upon been exploited by him. But what caused his hatred towards Falkland to reach its pinnacle was his orphan niece Emily Melville who lived in Tyrrel's estate. Emily adored and fell in love with Falkland after he once saved her life from a fire. This was unbearable for Tyrrel who already considered Emily to be an economic burden. His charge being infatuated with his enemy was unbearable to him.

In order to get rid of Emily, Tyrrel forced her to marry one of his subordinates and tenants Grimes. But Emily refused to his marriage which caused her to get imprisoned by cousin. Tyrrel then came up with another plan to force Emily into this marriage. He asked Grimes to act as a rescuer of Emily and then force himself on her. That will force her to marry him. Grimes acted

accordingly. But the plan failed because when Grimes was trying to abuse Emily in the middle of a forest Falkland was riding by that place and when he saw the scene he rescued her. Thus, Falkland became Emily's hero by saving her once again. After the rescue the enraged Tyrrel imprisoned Emily once again in his estate by saying that she owed him the money for all those years that she lived with him and he looked after her. This increased Emily's trauma and suffering even more and she could no longer bear the abuse and ill-treatment. Later, she fell ill for a long period of time and ultimately succumbed to a fever.

Falkland and Tyrrel had an ongoing enmity between them. But this became very serious when Tyrrel beat up Falkland very badly on the day of Emily's funeral service. Not only Falkland, but the entire town turned against Tyrrel when they were made aware of Tyrrel's ill-treatment of Emily. Shortly after Tyrrel attacked Falkland, he himself was found dead on the street. Because the enmity between the two squires was well known, Falkland was immediately arrested on charges of the murder. Upon his arrest Falkland went to the court and gave a very eloquent and appealing speech in front of his friends and the magistrates. Everyone knew him to be of kind and gentle nature. Therefore, he was able to convince them of his innocence and talk his way out of the court and the charge of murder.

Later on, the charge for the murder of Barnabas Tyrrel fell on Benjamin and Leonard Hawkins. This father and son duo were his tenants whose lives and family were destroyed by Tyrrel when they refused to bow down to his wishes. Tyrrel wanted Leonard to serve him as his servant, but Benjamin refused to the offer. This was humiliating for Tyrrel who always took unfair advantage of his position. Therefore he vowed and actually ruined their lives. Leonard was also imprisoned on false charges due to him. Both father and son had enough reason to kill Tyrrel and other evidences were also found against them. This proved their guilt. At the end they were convicted on the charges of killing Barnabas Tyrrel and hanged to death.

From what Caleb tells us (as told to him by Collins), Falkland's hysterical episodes started after this incident. It also led to a change of his personality. He became withdrawn and started living a secluded life. This is also where the story of the first volume of the novel ends.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q4. What is the illness that Ferdinando Falkland was suffering from? What does it mean?

Q5. What did Caleb work as in the estate of Falkland?

### **SELF ASSESMENMT QUESTIONS**

Q1. Describe the relationship between Ferdinando Falkland and Barnabas Tyrrel?

Q2. What do you think of Tyrrel as a person in connection to his relationship with Emily?

#### **5.4.2 VOLUME II**

The second volume of the novel begins with the increasing curiosity and suspicion of Caleb towards his master's behavior and the mystery behind it. This volume contains a total of fourteen chapters.

Driven by curiosity and a zeal for adventure, Caleb starts looking into the murder Tyrrel and investigating about it. He becomes obsessed with the case as his doubts keeps on increasing. Gradually he comes to the conclusion that the actual murderer of Tyrrel is Falkland and not the Hawkins.

As Caleb started to spy on his master, Falkland's suspicion towards him also increased. One they both of them quarreled because of their difference of opinion regarding Alexander the Great. According to Falkland he was a builder of a great empire while according to Caleb he was a madman, a destroyer and a murderer. As soon as Falkland heard the word 'murderer' his whole demeanor changed and he became very irritated. This change of behaviour was enough to convince Caleb he was right in thinking that Falkland was the real murderer.

After some time a fire incident took place in the estate of Fedinando Falkland. Talking advantage of the chaos of the situation Caleb sneaked into the library and looked into the chest that held all of Falkland's secrets but was unfortunately caught in the action by his master

himself. On realizing that his hidden truth was discovered, Falkland finally confessed in front of Caleb that he was the actual murderer of Tyrrel. At the same time that he also threatened Caleb that if he were to say a word about his to anyone else, he will kill him. Caleb agrees, but soon realizes that he was too scared of Falkland to continue living there. Therefore, shortly after that he ran away from the estate in the middle of the night.

Afraid that his secret will be revealed to someone Falkland issues a warrant against Caleb on charges of a crime that he never committed. Falkland blamed Caleb of robbing him of a large sum of money and running away which he never did. While on the run Caleb comes across Mr. Forster, Falkland's older half-brother. Earlier on, Mr. Forster used to live in Falkland's estate and Caleb and he became good friends during that time. Caleb tells him about his situation and the later advises him that since he is innocent he should go back and plead his case in front of the court. Caleb listens to his advice but the result was not in his favour. Presided over by Falkland's brother-in-law, the trial that was held was unjust and as a result of this Caleb got arrested and thrown into jail.

Once in jail, Caleb somehow manages to convince a guard to aid him in his escape. The guard helps and he somehow manages to run away again. But unfortunately, he gets injured in the process making him unable to run further. Therefore, he gets caught and reimprisoned. As he is in jail Thomas comes to visit him. Thomas is one of Falkland's servants and also an old family friend of Caleb. He used to be his father's friend. He feels very bad upon witnessing the very bad state Caleb is in and decided to help him to escape once again. He goes and comes back with tools to help in the escape. This time Caleb manages to escape successfully and he finally runs away from prison. Caleb runs away into the forest to escape from the unjust justice system. The second volume of the novel comes to an end with the escape of Caleb.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q7. How did Caleb finally conclude that Falkland is the murderer?

## **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. Describe the process through which Caleb came to the realization that Falkland is the real murderer?

### **5.4.3 VOLUME III**

The third volume of the novel opens with the beginning of Caleb William's life as a fugitive. A total of fifteen chapters make up this volume of the novel.

Once out of prison, Caleb Williams hides in the forest to keep away from Falkland and the other people looking for him. But bad luck did not seem to leave his side even in the forest. In the forest he gets attacked by a group of robbers. They rob him of everything and one of them attacks him physically and beats him up very badly. He is then rescued and saved by another robber who takes him to their hideout. That robber rescues him from the ditch he was left in to die and takes him back to heal him.

Upon arriving at the robbers' headquarters Caleb realizes that the man who saved him was actually the leader of the gang that attacked him initially, Mr. Raymond. Although a robber, Mr. Raymond was a just person who has his own philosophical ideas. When Mr. Raymond comes to know that it was actually Gines, one of his men, who attacked Caleb out of no reason he becomes very angry. According to him they may be robbers but not murderers. So, he decides to kick Gines out of their gang because of his reckless action. Mr. Raymond calls for a vote on the issue and when the 4 other robbers agree with him Gines is forced to leave them.

Both the leader and Caleb had their own philosophical ideas. In one scene of the novel we see both of them arguing about the morality and the pros and cons associated with living as a thief, outside the barriers and restrictions of the unjust and oppressive law. Even though Caleb lived with a gang of robbers he was against their work. He is often seen arguing against it and advising them to return to the honest path. This scene gives us a glimpse of the author, William Godwin's own philosophical ideas.

Once Gines leaves the cook and housekeeper of the group, an old lady who was believed to be a witch by many, takes an instant dislike towards Caleb. She favoured Gines and according to her it was only because of Caleb that Gines was pushed out of the group. She tried to kill him once but was unsuccessful in the attempt.

In the meantime, Caleb Williams is labeled as dangerous criminal and leaflets containing his information is distributed all around the district. The authorities even offered a sum of one hundred guineas as a reward to anyone who helped in his capture. Caleb was aware of the situation and when he came to know that the old lady has already revealed his whereabouts to the authority he decides to flee from the forest to save himself. He decides to run away to Ireland and distinguishes himself as a poor Irish man. But bad luck did not seem to leave his side. He is mistaken for another wanted criminal else due to his fake accent and gets arrested on charge of robbing a bank. He tries to bribe the guards to let him go but is discovered to be an actual wanted criminal. He somehow manages to escape from being imprisoned once again and flees to London.

Once in London, Caleb keeps on altering his disguises to save himself. He ultimately disguises himself as a cripple Jewish boy and starts making a living by writing and publishing about notorious criminals and crime stories. But then, his past came knocking at his door. Gines, who was a detective before he joined the robbers managed to track him down. He offered a reward to anyone who gave any information about Caleb in order to take his revenge against him for getting him kicked out of the gang of robbers.

Eventually, one of his neighbors reveals about his whereabouts and he is arrested. However, his accusers fail to appear in court and the jury is forced to release him. Being dissatisfied with the situation Gines captures Caleb once again and sends him directly to Falkland for a face-to-face encounter. Due to the passage of time Falkland had now turned into an old and frail individual. Once they encounter each other Falkland reveals to him that he did not go to the court knowingly. He did not want to accuse Caleb any longer and just wanted him to give in writing that all the accusations regarding the murder that Caleb laid against him were false and Falkland was innocent. But even after everything that happened Caleb refuses to bow down to him and lie. Seeing that there is no way to convince him Falkland finally lets him go after threatening him once again. Falkland then hires Gines to tail Caleb once again and

manages to find out his address. He makes a final attempt to convince Caleb to take back his accusations by sending him money when he was in dire need of it. But Caleb still refuses to accept the deal.

Caleb then escapes once again and goes to Wales. There, he lived in a small town and made a living by repairing peoples' old watches and teaching mathematics. However, his peaceful life did not last for very long. Falkland and Gines' revenge caught up to him and without any explanation people he had come to know there and made friends with started withdrawing from him. Gradually he became unemployed with no way to make any money for a living.

Caleb then decides to leave Wales and go to Holland. But then Gines approaches him and makes him aware about Falkland's plans. He warned him against leaving the country and said that Falkland would go to extreme lengths like murdering him or getting him caught and executed if he tried to leave the country. Caleb then roams all round the country, going from place to place, but was unable to settle down anywhere due to Gines and Falkland. Being irritated with the situation he finally decides to go back reveal Falkland's evil doings in front of the masses once and for all.

Because Caleb was now a free man with no charges against him, he finally manages to convince the magistrate to summon Falkland to court and face his accusations and make the case public. Once the hearing starts Caleb openly laid the charges against his former master.

In a very long and emotional speech he reveals his dismay of having become the same kind of person as Falkland, someone he was trying to get arrested now. According to him he too had become a person like many other in the society who tried to dominate others in order to reveal their powers. They always tried to push each other down to gain access to more power and power over each other. He then goes on to say every human being has something in common, whether they are the oppressor or the oppressed. After this he even talks about the positive qualities of Falkland, including his ideals. At the end they both forgive each other. But after the case concludes Falkland does not survive for very long. He died within a few days of the conclusion of the case.



At the very end of the novel we see Caleb living his life after the court case is over. Although he becomes successful in his pursuit of justice, he is not as happy and content as we hoped he will be after his long struggle. Instead, he blames himself for the death of Falkland. He concludes by saying that the aim behind this story is not to reveal evils and wrong doings of Flakland but to make us aware of his whole life story, both the good and the bad. He does not want people to look at Falkland negatively. He just wanted to let people know about his history and story.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q8. Where did Caleb run off to and where did he take shelter after escaping from the prison?

Q9. What reward did the authorities offer on the arrest of Caleb?

## **5.5 ALTERNATIVE ENDING OF THE NOVEL**

The alternative ending to this novel was actually its original ending. But this version was not officially published as people regarded it as quite depressing and controversial. However, that ending is now available in many of the later publications as an appendix.

According to this version Caleb fails to prove his accusations in court. Instead, Falkland accuses him of doing everything to seek revenge. Caleb refutes and says that he just wants justice to be served and if needed, he would gather witnesses in his favor. But the magistrate refuses his offer and calls his accusations baseless and crazy. The story then suddenly goes to the final scene where Caleb is imprisoned and Gines is his prison warden. The way Caleb speaks and describes things makes us believe that he is mentally unstable. Once Falkland is dead Caleb is informed about it, but he fails to recall or recognize him. The novel concludes with Caleb saying that the true happiness and peace of one's life lies in being like a gravestone that reads "Here lies what was once a man", a statement that reflects on the absurdity and tragedy of death of a human being.

## **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. Write about all the places Caleb went to run away from Falkland and what did he do there. Q2. What role did Gines play in the life of Caleb Williams?

## **5.6 ADAPTATIONS OF THE NOVEL**

### **5.6.1**

#### **STAGE VERSION**

Richard Brinsley Sheridan made an adaptation of this novel and named it *The Iron Chest*. The piece was presented on the stage of his Drury Lane Theatre in 1796.

#### **FILM VERSION**

Caleb Williams was made into a film in 1980 by Herbert Wise. It was a German- French- Swiss- Austrian- British- Italian co-production.

## **5.7 SUMMING UP**

THE novel Caleb Williams written by William Godwin in 1794 is one of the most controversial novels of its time. Many people commented that the novel expressed the author's anarchist ideas. The novel comes in a series of three volumes with forty one chapters in total between them. This novel is labeled as a gothic novel by many.

*Caleb Williams* is a perfect example of a picaresque novel. A picaresque novel is a type of novel in which the main protagonist, who usually belongs to the lower section of the society, goes through a series of adventures throughout the course of the whole story. As the story progresses we can see that our hero too grows, develops and matures along with it, both in age and character. From our reading and understanding of the text we can come to the conclusion

that Caleb Williams, the protagonist of this story fits into the frame of a picaresque hero perfectly.

This novel carries with it a philosophical message, a stream of thought that is believed to agree with William Godwin's own ideals. At the same time it is also a political satire that comments on the unjust justice system and the atrocities done by the rich on the poor by taking advantage of their position and power on the society. This novel also shows how a single person can have both a good and a bad side to him as reflected by the characters of Ferdinando Falkland and Mr. Raymond. As Caleb comments towards the end of the story, this is what makes us human beings and relates us to humanity.

Although this novel and its story became quite controversial and hard to accept when it initially came out in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by today's point-of-view we can say that its messages hold some very essential truths; truths that can be agreed upon by us even today, almost two and half centuries after it was first published. Through this novel Godwin proved himself to be a fearless author. Fear of controversies, censorship, public unacceptance etc did not deter him from writing about some very raw and controversial truths of his time.

## 5.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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**Unit 6**  
**WILLIAM GODWIN: *CALEB WILLIAMS***  
**THEMES AND TECHNIQUES**

**Unit Structure:**

- 6.1 Learning Objectives
- 6.2 Introduction
- 6.3 Picaresque novel
- 6.4 Gothic novel
- 6.5 *Caleb Williams*: Major Themes
- 6.6 *Caleb Williams*: Major Techniques
- 6.7 Summing Up
- 6.8 Further Reading

**6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Get to know details associated with the novel
- Get to know it details what a picaresque novel is
- Get to know it details what a gothic novel is
- Have a better understanding of the themes associated with the of novel
- Have a better understanding of the techniques used by the author while writing the novel

**6.2 INTRODUCTION**

This main aim of this unit is to offer the reader a deeper understanding of the story of the novel and its writing style. Rather than the story itself, this unit is going to be more about the process through which the story came to be what we find it as today. We are going to learn about the creative process and the techniques used by the author to give the story its final form. We will also learn about some of the major themes that the text deals with in the process of its narration.

Whenever we write something, we have a theme(s) on which our piece is based. And based on the theme the author picks us the techniques that he/she will use to make the themes shine and create the final text. This holds true in the case of this novel too. As we read through *Caleb Williams* we will realize that the author deals with some very sensitive as well as universal themes in the novel. He then uses his excellent creative techniques to situate these themes in the text and make it a part of the story. These themes and techniques will be the major focus of this chapter.

While dealing with the themes and techniques used in the novel we also need to know the type of novel *Caleb Williams* actually is. There are several types of novels. Some of them are – scientific fiction or sci-fi, historic novels, mystery novels, epistolary novels, gothic novels, psychological novels, picaresque novels, realistic novels, bildungsroman, social novels etc. The classification of the type of novel depends on the plot and narrative technique of the story. *Caleb Williams* is a picaresque as well as a gothic novel. Its plot and story progression makes it a picaresque novel. On the other hand, its narrative technique the general environment of the story makes it a part of gothic fiction. The succeeding sections of this unit will help us understand the meaning of picaresque novels and gothic novels better. It will also help us to understand and know more about the themes and techniques use in this novel. Altogether, as we conclude reading this unit we will have a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the novel and its story.

### **6.3 PICARESQUE NOVEL**

The term ‘picaresque’ is derived from the Spanish word *picaro*. As a noun *picaro* can mean a kid, a rogue or a young child. As an adjective the word stands for someone who is cunning. Picaresque novels as a literary genre is believed to have emerged in 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, but the term itself was coined much later, in the year 1810. This type of novels is generally realistic in nature and episodic in structure. The story is usually written as an autobiographical style and the speaker is a first person narrator. This aspect of a picaresque novel is very evident in our prescribed novel as the protagonist, Caleb Williams, is the first person narrator and the story he tells us is a story of his life. Another notable characteristic of a picaresque novel is that the

protagonist is almost always of low birth, i.e, he/she belongs to the lower section of the society and to a poor family. The protagonists usually live by the means of their wit and the whole story is a story of their adventure as they grow up with age.

Another notable characteristic of a picaresque novel is that there is little to no character development in the main character as they mature with age. They live by the means of their wits. Caleb Williams too does not show much of a character development throughout the text. He keeps holding on to his ideals and ideology. Even after going through so many hardships he remains adamant on his intention of proving that Falkland is the actual murderer of Tyrrel.

This type of novels contain elements of satire, sarcasm and comedy. Sometimes they also offer us a social criticism of the time and society the story is based in. Some of the popular examples of picaresque novels are – *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gil Blas*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Huckleberry Finn*, etc.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q1. When was the term ‘picaresque novel’ coined?

Q2. What social class do the picaresque hero belong to?

### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. Write a note on ‘picaresque novels’.

Q2. What are the main characteristics of a picaresque novels?

Q3. Is *Caleb Williams* a picaresque novel? If yes, why? Justify your answer with examples from the text.

## 6.4 GOTHIC NOVEL

The gothic novel is a genre of fiction which became popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a genre which has become an important part of the literature of the romantic period. Gothic fiction is a type of fiction where the elements of romance and horror merge together to create an environment of the supernatural. This type of novels is surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery and horror. There is an inherent sense of fear and haunting in the stories. The stories are generally set in a pseudo-medieval setting. The genre derives its name from the Gothic architectural style of the European Middle Ages. When this genre was emerging and becoming popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the plot was usually set in buildings, monasteries and houses made in the Gothic architectural style; hence the association or derivation of the name. These settings are often dark, gloomy, decaying and depressing in nature; always surrounded by a veil of mystery and otherworldliness.

Along with an atmosphere of fear and mystery, gothic fiction also contains a sense of supernatural presence. Generally, the supernatural is not related to magic or witchcraft. Instead its presence is created by a character(s) who is often haunted by sins or memories of his/her past. This makes the character(s) look as if they are suffering from madness at times. The intrusion and influence of the past upon the present of a character, often creating a haunting atmosphere is perhaps one of the main characteristics of a gothic novel. This aspect of a gothic novel can be witnessed very clearly in the character of Ferdinando Falkland in the novel *Caleb Williams*.

Another important quality of gothic fiction is that its plot contains elements of vengeful persecution, murder, imprisonment etc. This can be applied to almost all the major characters of the novel – Caleb Williams, Ferdinando Falkland, Barnabas Tyrrel, Emily Melville and even Benjamin and Leonard Hawkins, the last two being falsely accused of a murder and eventually hanged because of it.

Sometimes gothic fiction also serves as a means of social and political satire as it deals with different social classes and keeps moving between ‘high culture’ and ‘low culture’, as and when demanded by the characters of the novel. It is even said that it was the political upheaval caused by the English Civil War that influenced and ultimately gave birth to the genre that we know as gothic fiction today.



*The Castle of Otranto* written by Horace Walpole in 1764 is said to be that first novel which has the term 'gothic' attributed to it. Other famous examples of this type of fiction are – *Frankenstein, Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, Beloved, Northanger Abbey, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Dracula, Vilette*, etc.

Although the gothic novel derived its name from its namesake in the field of architecture, in the modern and contemporary times the settings of the novels have moved away from that style of architecture. Modern authors often use contemporary settings to base their stories in. Still they are labeled as gothic fiction because of the general atmosphere created by the setting, plot and narration. One example of this is the novel *The Haunting of Hill House* written by Shirley Jackson in 1959.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q3. Name the first gothic novel and its author? When was it published?

Q4. When did the gothic novel become popular as a genre?

Q5. Where does gothic novel/fiction get its name from?

### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. Write a note on 'gothic novels'.

Q2. What are the main characteristics of a gothic novel?

Q3. Is *Caleb Williams* a gothic novel? If yes, why? Justify your answer with examples from the text.

## **6.5 CALEB WILLIAMS: MAJOR THEMES**

A theme is an idea that keeps recurring in or present throughout a work of art or literature. It can be also described as a subject or topic of a talk or piece of writing. Any and every type of story described in a novel deals with many themes in its course. The themes make the story more enjoyable and meaningful. The choice of themes that are used in a text is completely dependent on the author. The author makes the choice on the basis of his/her ideologies, likings, and point-of-view. But that does not mean that an author can use any and every theme they can think of and want to use in his/ her creation. The theme should also match and be appropriate for the storyline and the plot.

Some of the major themes used in the novel Caleb Williams are discussed below:-

### **6.5.1 CLASS/SOCIAL DIVISION**

The concept of class/social division is rampant throughout the entire novel. Examples of how people from the upper section of the society abuse and torture those beneath them is evident throughout the text. The poor and helpless people are falsely accused, imprisoned, beaten, murdered or their livelihoods are destroyed. But even after committing such crimes the aristocratic section of the society goes mostly unpunished. Caleb Williams, the protagonist of the story is unjustly imprisoned and later on forced to flee in fear of his life for many years only because he discovers a dark and deep secret of his master, Ferdinando Falkland; but Falkland himself dies unpunished even though he is a murderer. Tyrrel is a very evil individual and his crimes are known to all. But he is never punished or charged for his crimes because he is a squire, a person belonging to the aristocratic class while on the other atrocities ultimately takes the life of the innocent Emily. It was Falkland who killed Tyrrel but nothing happens to him. He successfully clears his name while at the same time putting the blame on Benjamin and Leonard Hawkins who lose their lives for a crime they never committed.

The presence of class divide becomes one of the strongest and most prominent themes that contributes a lot to the story. It will not be wrong to say that story will not have been what it is if the theme of class division was not included in it.

### **6.5.2 POWER STRUGGLE**

Where there is the presence of different classes and sections of the society there will be the presence of power struggle. Power struggle is found not only between the different classes, but also within the same class. When one is powerful they get certain freedoms and benefits in the society. Inter- class power struggle can be seen in the case of Caleb and Falkland. Caleb discovers Falkland's well guarded secret which means that he discovers a weakness of Falkland. Caleb's battle to punish Falkland and make him accountable for his crimes and Falkland's endless efforts to stop Caleb from doing that is a prime example of power struggle. Whoever gets the last laugh will prove himself to be dominant and powerful in front of the other.

Intra-class power struggle can be seen in the cases of Tyrrel and Falkland, Caleb and Mr Raymond, and Caleb and Gines. Tyrrel used to be the most popular bachelor of the aristocratic class of their town until Falkland came to the scene. Falkland's increasing popularity and him being favored by people over him made him extremely jealous. This jealousy ultimately led to Tyrrel's death in the hands of Falkland and Falkland becoming a murderer.

In the case of Caleb and Mr Raymond, both of them belong to the same class – one a fugitive of the law and the other a leader of a robbers' gang. But a mild power struggle is present between them too. Caleb often debated with Mr Raymond about his actions and advised him to return to the right path. Even though Caleb was a runaway and the gang was giving him refuge, he never participated in their work. This shows that Caleb thought of himself to be of a higher class by the virtue of his education and thought himself to be powerful or capable enough to seek help without giving anything in return.

Caleb and Gines also had a struggle for power between them. Gines haunted Caleb through a majority of the novel to seek revenge from him. He spent a lot of effort to get Caleb caught and imprisoned because he once got kicked out of the robbers' gang because of Caleb. Therefore, only by creating trouble for Caleb can he prove his dominance once again.

### **6.5.3 THE GOTHIC OUTSIDER**

The protagonist, Caleb Williams is a perfect example of a gothic outsider. Although he is the hero of the story, he is forced to flee for his life and freedom for a majority of the novel. His curiosity becomes his vice which ultimately leads to his downfall. Him being an outsider, i.e, a person who did not belong to the rich and powerful section of the society, added more worries and troubles in his life. Even after he spends a lot of effort in educating himself and working to make his life better he always remains an outsider;’ never accepted by in in the affluent society.

### **6.5.4 PHILOSOPHICAL ANARCHISM**

All the institutions of the society that are built to safeguard a person, their freedom and their lives fail Caleb one after the other. Caleb is forced to flee from the law and struggle while living the life of a fugitive even though he was guilt free. Through the type of conversations and monologues that Caleb holds we can get an insight into his stream of thoughts. His ideas are in line with that of philosophical anarchism. But even though Caleb is the speaker of those lines, in reality those thoughts belong to the author of the novel, William Godwin. According to this, if the system does not work and fails to protect a person’s basic rights and need then there is no need for such a system. Such systems needs to be broken down and rebuilt anew. Godwin, as well as Caleb, were not advocates of violent anarchism. They just stood by the idea that a society can make progress only when the flaws of its system are exposed and the lines of discourse and re-development are opened.

### **6.5.4 BROKEN JUSTICE SYSTEM**

A community or society has a justice system, a court of law in place for the protection of its citizens and safeguarding their basic rights and needs. The justice system is supposed to be free of any external influence and equal for every human being irrespective of their class, caste, race or gender. Everyone is equal in the eyes of the law. But the justice system that we come across in the novel is damaged. The aristocrats take undue advantage of it for their personal and

sometimes professional benefits. The poor and powerless are left to suffer. A system that is supposed to protect them becomes a source of prolonged sufferings and tragedy.

In this novel we come across people like Caleb and the Hawkins father and son. Their lives and struggles become the some of the best examples to show that the justice system present in the novel was completely damaged. All of them suffer because of unjust charges brought upon them by those in power where the law sides towards them. Caleb is at first unjustly put into jail and then he is forced to live in hiding as a fugitive for many years of his life. But the case is even worse for the Hawkins'. At first Leonard is falsely accused and imprisoned and later on both due to a charge of murderer they never committed.

While the mentioned characters received the short end of the stick due to the unjust justice system, people like Falkland and Tyrrel openly exploit it for their benefit. They twist and use the law to punish anyone that they see fair by virtue of their power and position in the society.

#### **6.5.6 REVENGE**

Revenge becomes one of the most important themes in this novel. Tyrrel is killed by Falkland to seek revenge for his humiliation for the beating he received from him during Emily's funeral. Although many other factors contributed to this murder, the physical abuse of Falkland by Tyrrel can be said to be the final nail in the coffin in this case.

The old hag at the robbers' headquarters tries to kill Caleb and later on reports him to the authorities because she hated him for being a catalyst that played a major role in Gines being kicked out of the group. This was her way of seeking revenge from Caleb for Gines.

After being kicked out of the group, Gines' hatred towards Caleb intensifies. He promises to seek revenge from Caleb which he eventually does. He becomes a shadow to Caleb as he tries to escape from the hands of Falkland. Gines uses his tricks to discover Caleb's whereabouts again and again, thus ruining his plans. It is he who finally captures Caleb and presents him in front of Falkland.

A lot of action in the novel has been driven by the motive of revenge. It plays an important role in the development of the storyline.

### **6.5.7 MASTERY AND IMPRISONMENT**

The concept of mastery and imprisonment is related to the concept of power struggle. Those in power use it to show their power on the poor and disadvantaged. Whereas, the lower class people suffer due to unjust imprisonment. Many characters of the novel are unlawfully imprisoned.

Emily is imprisoned by Tyrrel in their family estate only because she refuses to obey his command to get married to Grimes. His role as a master is threatened due to her denial and he resorts to making her a prisoner in her home.

Leonard Hawkins is also falsely accused and put into prison by Tyrrel due to the same reason. He too refuses to bow down to his wishes and become his servant which results in him being falsely accused and then imprisonment.

Caleb too becomes a victim of illegal imprisonment because of Falkland. He is imprisoned not once but multiple times. The original or alternate ending to the novel also shows him to be in prison. But this time the role of his master is played by Gines and not Falkland because she is portrayed as the warden of the prison Caleb is kept in.

### **6.5.8 MADNESS**

The presence of a character who suffers from madness or conditions similar to madness is a characteristic of gothic fiction. This madness can also be due to the psychological impact of past events that keep haunting the characters. In this novel there are two characters who suffer from this condition.

Ferdinando Falkland suffers from paroxysms, a mental condition which makes an individual prone to sudden and violent outbursts of anger. His condition is a result of his guilt and perhaps trauma due to the murder of Tyrrel and the unjust execution of the Hawkins'.

Although Caleb does not suffer from madness in the actual story, the alternate or original ending shows him as a psychotic person. Being unable to prove Falkland's crime and then imprisoned once again without any reason makes him go bad. His guilt due to the thought that Falkland suffered an untimely death because of him also added to his stress and psychological condition. His condition deteriorated to such a length that he even forgets who Falkland actually is and keeps on speaking useless things to himself.

### **6.5.9 VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

The novel is abundant with examples of different types of violence and abuse. Examples of physical violence, sexual violence as well as mental abuse can be found in the text. Emily suffers from both sexual and mental abuse. Caleb suffers mentally because of his seemingly never ending fight for freedom. He is also once badly beaten by Gines, which is an example of physical violence. Falkland's sudden outbursts are also very violent in nature. He also suffers from physical violence when he is beaten up by Tyrrel during Emily's funeral. The scene where Tyrrel is found beaten to death on the street is also violent in nature.

Apart from the examples cited above there are several other instances when violence and abuse comes to the foreground of the story making it a dominant theme of the novel.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q6. What do you understand by the word 'theme'? Mention five major themes of the novel *Caleb Williams*?

#### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. What is the importance of themes in a text?

Q2. Write elaborately about the different themes that can be found in the prescribed novel.

Q3. The theme of violence and abuse is very important and central to the whole novel. Explain citing examples from the text.

## **6.6 TECHNIQUES CALEB WILLIAMS: MAJOR TECHNIQUES**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary a technique is “a way of carrying out a particular task, especially the execution or performance of an artistic work or a scientific procedure.” It is also define as “a skilful or efficient way of doing or achieving something.” Writes also use different techniques in their texts to make them more appealing and attractive to the readers. Techniques also play an important role in the narration of the text and the way the story unfolds infront of us. The details of the different techniques used by William Godwin in Caleb Williams is discussed below :-

### **6.6.1 FIRST PERSON NARRATOR**

A narrator is the person who narrates describes the story. The given novel follows an autobiographical style where the story is narrated by the protagonist himself. Therefore, we find a first person narrator in this novel. The narrator gives us a first hand information of all his experiences and observations. He speaks for himself and all the other characters of the novel too. Caleb Williams, the protagonist of the story, is also the first person narrator of this story.

### **6.6.2 TONE OF THE NOVEL**

The tone of this novel is philosophical. Everything that the characters do, especially the protagonist Caleb, is driven by their philosophical ideas. This is an important aspect because Caleb is believed to express the philosophical ide4as of the author Godwin himself.



### **6.6.3 MOOD OF THE NOVEL**

Caleb Williams is a gothic fiction. Therefore the tone of the novel is mostly gloomy and depressing. Nothing good happens to any of the character. Every character has his/her own story of suffering and struggle of life.

### **6.6.4 FORESHADOWING**

Hints regarding what is going to happen to some of the characters can be found before the action actually takes place. This is especially true in the case of Caleb. Caleb from the very beginning is a very curious person, always looking for an adventure to take upon himself. Falkland, his master, also notices this personality trait and tells him that his curious nature will someday lead him to great trouble. And that actually comes true. All the misfortune and tragedy that befalls Caleb is mainly because of his inexhaustible curiosity.

### **6.6.5 MEDIEVAL IMAGERY**

The text is full of different types of imageries related to the medieval times. Falkland openly declares that he is a fan of the medieval times, its stories, way of living, etc. Many of the characters of the novel also exhibit medieval values in their behavior. Caleb too confirms this as he chooses to side with morality and justice over his own freedom.

### **6.6.6 DRAMATIC IRONY**

There are several instances in the story where the misdeeds of the guilty goes unnoticed or unpunished while the innocent people are held accountable and punished for something they did not even do. Those instances are example of dramatic irony. Two glaring example of this narrative technique are – firstly, Caleb is forced to become a fugitive and wanted criminal only because he becomes aware of a crime committed by his master whereas his master remains unscratched even his crime is brought in front of the masses. Secondly, the Hawkins' were

hanged as a punishment for the murder of Tyrrel while in reality they had no had in the crime. They became innocent victims of power.

### **6.6.7 PARALLELISM**

Parallelism occurs when something in the narrative is of the similar nature with something that has happened, is happening or is going to happen in the later course of the text. Parallelism occurs in this novel when Caleb, Emily and the Hawkins' are all accused and imprisoned because of crimes they never committed. Those accusations were only means used by those in power to show their dominance and mastery over them.

There are also many parallels between the characters of Caleb and Emily. Both of them are orphans who are dependent on others to continue with their life. Both meet Falkland when they are eighteen years old and somehow or the other Falkland plays a leading role in their downfall and misery. Both of them unsuccessfully tries to run away from their respective prisons only to be recaptured and put back into the prisons.

### **6.6.8 SATIRE AND SARCASM**

Satire is an artistic form that is chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform. Satires are common elements found in gothic fiction. Add to that the fact that this novel is also a medium of political and social criticism means that examples of satires and sarcasm are abundant in the text. The author takes a satiric dig at the justice system, human relationships, human morality and many other aspects in this novel.

### **6.6.9 POINT – OF – VIEW**

Point-of-view refers to a position or attitude from which something or someone is observed and described. In *Caleb Williams* we have a first person narrator who is also the protagonist of the story. Therefore, the whole story is from the protagonist's point-of-view. The story depends on the narrator's observations as well as understanding. If we want to understand the story or look for any explanation from the perspective of a different character we will have to deduce it by ourselves based on our understanding of the character and the story.

### **6.6.10 SYMBOLISM**

Symbolism refers to the use of symbols to represent ideas and qualities. In *Caleb Williams* the author makes extensive use of symbolism to enhance the beauty of the text. The meaning behind the symbols can be associated either with an individual, an institution or a concept or idea itself. For example, in this text the court becomes a symbol of the injustice that goes on in the society, the gothic style architecture of the setting is symbolic of the darkness and gloom that surrounds the whole story, the prison is symbolic of both physical and mental imprisonment. In addition to this, Emily is the only major character of the novel, she is there in the story only for a short while and is not as significant as the other male characters of the story. This can also be a symbol for the prevailing patriarchy and its very strong hold on the society of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q7. Define 'technique' in context of its usage in literature. Give example of some techniques used in the given novel.

#### **SELF ASKING QUESTIONS**

Q1. What are the similarities between the characters of Emily Melville and Caleb Williams?

Q2. “Curiosity kills the cat”. Justify this statement in the case of the character Caleb Williams.

## 6.7 SUMMING UP

A novel gets its final form not only because of its story but also because of different themes and techniques the writer uses to give the story its form. The choice of language to the names of the characters, almost everything has a purpose to serve towards the novel. Nothing that is included in the text is useless. It takes a lot of effort and thoughts on the part of the author to select the themes and techniques that he/she finally uses in the creative process. The themes and techniques aid in making the text more beautiful, attractive and attention grabbing.

In Caleb Williams the author William Godwin uses a diverse array of themes and techniques to make the story more effective. These themes and techniques plays a very important role the popularization of the novel and its acceptance by the masses.

## 6.8 FURTHER READINGS

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