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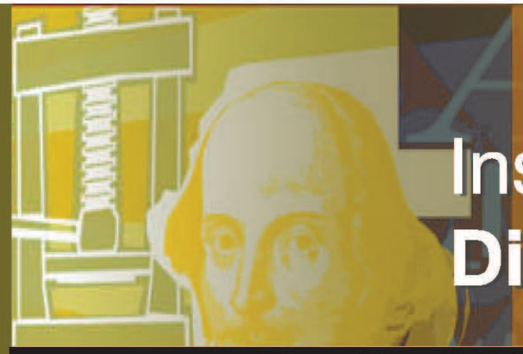
Poetry



Institute of **Open** and **Distance Education**

Faculty of Arts

Poetry

1BA4

DR. C.V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY
Chhattisgarh, Bilaspur
A STATUTORY UNIVERSITY UNDER SECTION 2(F) OF THE UGC ACT

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BLOCK- I

UNIT 1
FROM FAIREST CRESTURES

Structure:

1.1INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

"From fairest creatures we desire increase," serves as the opening of his celebrated sequence of 154 sonnets. This sonnet sets the thematic foundation for the series, introducing the idea of beauty, procreation, and the passage of time. It is often considered part of the "procreation sonnets," a subset of the first 17 sonnets, where Shakespeare implores a young, beautiful individual (often referred to as the Fair Youth) to reproduce to ensure the survival of their beauty and legacy.

1. **Opening Line:**

"From fairest creatures we desire increase"

- The line establishes the central theme of human desire for perpetuation. The "fairest creatures" refers to those endowed with exceptional beauty or virtue.
- The word "increase" signifies procreation, emphasizing the continuity of beauty through offspring.

2. **Universal Appeal:**
   - Shakespeare opens with a universal truth, appealing to natural instincts and societal expectations of preserving beauty and excellence for future generations.

- It introduces a moral undertone, suggesting that the beauty granted by nature should not end with the individual but be passed on.

3. **Key Themes Introduced:**
    - **Beauty and Time:** The fleeting nature of beauty and the inevitability of aging are foreshadowed.
    - **Responsibility to Nature:** The idea that individuals owe it to nature to reproduce and preserve their unique qualities.
    - **Selfishness vs. Generosity:** The sonnet contrasts selfishness (hoarding one's beauty) with generosity (sharing it through procreation).
4. **Contextual Significance:**
    - The introduction sets up a persuasive argument. Shakespeare uses the sonnet form as an intimate plea to a young person, possibly a patron or someone admired, urging them to take action against the ravages of time by leaving a legacy.
    - The appeal is not just physical but metaphysical, linking the act of reproduction to immortality.
5. **Tone and Style:**
    - The tone is earnest and reflective, with an underlying sense of urgency.
    - Shakespeare employs poetic devices like alliteration ("fairest...we desire increase") and enjambment to create a flowing and persuasive rhythm.

By introducing the themes of beauty, legacy, and time, Shakespeare's Sonnet 1 immediately draws readers into the philosophical and emotional depths of his poetic sequence, blending personal reflection with universal truths.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of beauty and its preservation as expressed in Shakespeare's Sonnet 1, From Fairest Creatures.
2. Understand the poet's argument for procreation as a means of perpetuating beauty and legacy.
3. Understand the use of poetic devices such as imagery, metaphor, and rhyme to convey the sonnet's message.
4. Understand the exploration of time and its impact on physical beauty and human mortality.
5. Understand the tone of persuasion and admiration in the sonnet, reflecting the poet's appeal to the addressee.

1.3 BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) is widely regarded as one of the greatest writers in the English language and the world's preeminent dramatist. He was a playwright, poet, and actor whose works have profoundly influenced literature and theater.

Early Life

Birth and Family

- Born on **April 23, 1564**, in **Stratford-upon-Avon**, England.
- He was the third of eight children to **John Shakespeare**, a glove maker and town official, and **Mary Arden**, from a prosperous farming family.

Education

- Likely attended the **King's New School** in Stratford, where he studied grammar, Latin, literature, and rhetoric.
- There are no records of Shakespeare attending a university, leading to speculation about his self-education.

Marriage and Family

- Married **Anne Hathaway** in **1582** at the age of 18. Anne was 26 and pregnant at the time.
- They had three children:
    1. **Susanna** (born 1583)
    2. **Hamnet** and **Judith** (twins, born 1585). Hamnet died at age 11.

Career

The "Lost Years" (1585–1592)

- Little is known about Shakespeare's activities during this period. Scholars speculate he may have worked as a teacher, actor, or apprentice.

London Theater Scene

- By 1592, Shakespeare was established in London as an actor and playwright.
- His early plays include comedies like The Comedy of Errors and A Midsummer Night's Dream, as well as histories like Henry VI.

The Lord Chamberlain's Men

- In 1594, Shakespeare became a founding member of the acting company **The Lord Chamberlain's Men** (later renamed **The King's Men** under King James I in 1603).
- The group performed at **The Globe Theatre**, which became synonymous with Shakespeare's works.

Major Works

- **Plays**: Shakespeare wrote **39 plays** across genres, including:
  - **Tragedies**: Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear
  - **Comedies**: Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing
  - **Histories**: Richard III, Henry V, Julius Caesar
- **Poetry**:
  - Published **154 sonnets**, known for their exploration of love, beauty, and time.
  - Wrote narrative poems such as Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece.

Later Years and Death
Return to Stratford

- In 1610, Shakespeare retired to Stratford, although he continued to write until his death.

Death

- Died on **April 23, 1616**, reportedly on his 52nd birthday. The cause of death is uncertain, though theories include illness or fever.
- Buried in **Holy Trinity Church**, Stratford-upon-Avon, with an epitaph warning against moving his bones.

Legacy

- Shakespeare's works have been translated into every major language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.
- His influence extends beyond literature into language, introducing over 1,700 words and phrases still in use today (e.g., "break the ice," "all that glitters is not gold").
- The First Folio, a collection of his plays published in 1623, preserved many works that might have otherwise been lost.

Shakespeare remains an enduring symbol of literary excellence and creativity, inspiring readers and performers for over four centuries.

1.4 FROM FAIREST CREATURES

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the riper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory;
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament

And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

1.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,**
   Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
   Making a famine where abundance lies,
   Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self to cruel.

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 1 entitled "From fairest creatures we desire increase". In this Sonnet, the poet urges his friend to get married and have children so that his beauty can be perpetuated through them. We expect all beautiful creatures to multiply themselves through their offspring so that their beauty can in this way continue permanently.

Explanation:

The poet says that nature wants the beautiful things to spread and fructify and leave their models behind after their demise. The friend of the poet to whom the sonnet is addressed is behaving in a different way by not marrying. The poet's friend pays attention only to his own beauty. The word "contracted" here means "bound by exclusive contract".

The poet's friend is here compared to a candle. Just as a candle burns its own fuel and is ultimately destroyed, so the poet's friend by his self-centredness will ultimately destroy himself. The poet here thinks of his friend to be another Narcissus. Narcissus in ancient Greek mythology fell in love with himself and through this self-love pined and languished till he died.

2. **Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament**
   And only herald to the gaudy spring,
   Within thine own bud buriest they content
   And, tender churl, makest waste in niggarding.
   Pity the world, or else this glutton be
   To eat the world's due by the grave and thee.

Reference to the context:

These lines have been taken from Shakespeare's Sonnet No. I entitled 'Form fairest creatures we desire increase'. The poet urges his friend to get married and have children so that his beauty can be perpetuated through them.

Explanation:

The poet considers his friend to be a pre-eminent harbinger of the wonderful display of beauty that is yet to manifest itself. The poet wants that his friend should not bury his heart's content within himself. He should not prove to be miserly in thinking of himself alone and thus destroying all chances of perpetuating himself. The world demands that the poet's friend should propagate otherwise he will be twice- devoured-ultimately by his death and during his life-time by himself alone.

1.6 SUMMARY OF FROM FAIREST CREATURES

Shakespeare's Sonnet 1, titled **"From fairest creatures we desire increase,"** focuses on the themes of beauty, procreation, and legacy. The poet addresses a beautiful young man, urging him to have children to preserve his beauty for future generations. Here is a concise summary:

The poem opens by asserting that from the most beautiful creatures, society desires procreation, so their beauty can live on and not fade with age or death. Through procreation, beauty's legacy can endure in offspring. However, the poet reproaches the young man for his selfishness, as he is consumed by his own reflection and unwilling to share his beauty through reproduction. This self-absorption is likened to hoarding, creating a "famine" where abundance should exist.

The poet laments that the youth, described as a symbol of spring and renewal, is wasting his potential by refusing to procreate. Instead of sharing his beauty, he buries it within himself, ensuring it will perish. In the final lines, the poet implores the youth to either "pity the world" by leaving a legacy or selfishly let his beauty die with him in the grave.

This sonnet establishes the recurring theme of beauty's impermanence and the moral responsibility to preserve it through the continuation of life.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

"From fairest creatures we desire increase," the first of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, emphasizes themes of beauty, procreation, and legacy. The poet appeals to a beautiful young man, urging him to reproduce so his beauty can endure through future generations.

The sonnet opens by stating that society wishes for beautiful beings to multiply, ensuring that beauty persists rather than dying with the individual. Through procreation, one's essence can live on even as time and age take their toll. However, the poet criticizes the young man for his self-absorption and reluctance to share his beauty through reproduction. This selfishness, described as hoarding his potential, is seen as wasteful and cruel, both to himself and to the world.

The poet concludes with a plea for the youth to "pity the world" by leaving a legacy through offspring or selfishly let his beauty die with him, leaving nothing behind but the grave. The sonnet serves as a call to recognize beauty's transient nature and the responsibility to preserve it.

1.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Plan for "From Fairest Creatures We Desire Increase" (Sonnet 1)
Objective

- To analyze and interpret Shakespeare's Sonnet 1.
- To understand its themes of beauty, procreation, and legacy.
- To explore poetic devices and their effect on the poem's meaning.
- To encourage critical thinking through creative and analytical activities.

Lesson Outline
1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Briefly introduce William Shakespeare and the Sonnets.
- Discuss the historical context of Elizabethan England and the concept of legacy and beauty during that time.
- Explain the purpose of the "Procreation Sonnets" (Sonnets 1–17) as an appeal to preserve beauty through offspring.

2. Reading and Analysis (20 minutes)
Guided Reading

- Read the sonnet aloud as a class or play a recording.
- Provide a modern English translation to aid comprehension.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the poet mean by "increase" in the first line?
2. How does Shakespeare use metaphors like "beauty's rose" and "bud"?
3. What criticism does the poet make of the young man?
4. What is the significance of the concluding couplet?

Key Themes

- Procreation as a way to combat mortality.
- Selfishness versus generosity in sharing one's gifts.
- The fleeting nature of beauty.

Poetic Devices

- Identify examples of:
    - **Imagery** (e.g., "beauty's rose," "famine where abundance lies").
    - **Personification** (e.g., "Within thine own bud buriest thy content").
    - **Alliteration** (e.g., "feed'st thy light's flame").
    - **Contrast** (e.g., "making a famine where abundance lies").

3. Activities (30 minutes)

Activity 1: Modern Rewrite (15 minutes)

- Students rewrite the sonnet in modern language, maintaining the core themes and metaphors.
- Share and discuss their interpretations as a class.

Activity 2: Creative Letter (15 minutes)

- Imagine you are the young man addressed in the sonnet. Write a response to the poet, defending or acknowledging the criticism.
- Encourage creativity and reference specific lines from the sonnet.

Optional Activity: Artistic Representation

- Draw or design a visual representation of the sonnet's imagery, such as a withering rose or a budding flower that represents legacy.

4. Conclusion and Homework (10 minutes)

Wrap-Up Discussion

- Why do you think Shakespeare chose to start his sonnets with this theme?
- How can the ideas of legacy and beauty apply to modern life?

Homework Assignment

- Write a short essay (200-300 words) on the relevance of Sonnet 1 today. Consider topics like self-expression, responsibility, and the idea of leaving a legacy.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the main themes and poetic techniques in Sonnet 1.
- Critically engage with the text through discussion and creative expression.
- Relate the themes of the sonnet to contemporary issues.

1.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of Key Terms in Sonnet 1: "From fairest creatures we desire increase"

1. **Fairest creatures**
    - Refers to the most beautiful or perfect beings. In this context, the poet is addressing a young man of exceptional beauty.
2. **Increase**
    - Procreation or reproduction; the act of producing offspring.
3. **Beauty's rose**
    - A metaphor for the essence and bloom of beauty, which is fragile and fleeting like a rose.
4. **Die**
    - Refers to the inevitable fading or loss of beauty through aging and death.
5. **Riper**
    - Someone who has matured or aged.
6. **Decease**

- To die or perish.

7. **Tender heir**
    - The offspring or descendant who would inherit the beauty and legacy of the parent.
8. **Memory**
    - Refers to the legacy or lasting impression left behind after death, preserved through descendants.
9. **Contracted**
    - Bound or confined; here, it means being selfishly absorbed in oneself.
10. **Bright eyes**
    - A symbol of vanity and self-admiration, possibly referring to the young man's reflection or his perception of his own beauty.
11. **Self-substantial fuel**
    - Feeding one's own vanity or existence without sharing or contributing outwardly.
12. **Famine**
    - A state of scarcity; used metaphorically to describe the absence of sharing beauty through procreation.
13. **Abundance**
    - The natural wealth or potential of the young man's beauty.
14. **Churl**
    - A rude, selfish, or miserly person. The term "tender churl" conveys a mix of gentleness and rebuke.
15. **Content**
    - Potential or essence; in this context, it refers to the beauty that is hoarded or wasted.
16. **Niggarding**
    - Being miserly or hoarding selfishly; refusing to share beauty.
17. **Pity the world**
    - A plea to consider the greater good by reproducing and sharing one's beauty.
18. **Glutton**
    - Someone selfishly consuming or indulging in excess without regard for others.
19. **The grave**
    - A metaphor for death and the end of life, symbolizing the final loss of beauty if it is not passed on.
20. **Thee**
    - An archaic form of "you," addressing the young man directly.

This glossary highlights the key terms and metaphors in the sonnet to aid in understanding Shakespeare's language and themes.

1.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Detailed Discussion Questions for Sonnet 1: "From fairest creatures we desire increase"
Comprehension Questions

1. **What does the phrase "we desire increase" mean in the first line of the poem?**
    - The phrase refers to the human desire to see beauty perpetuated through procreation. In this context, it implies that society wants beautiful people to have children so that their beauty and essence are passed on to future generations.
2. **How does Shakespeare use the metaphor "beauty's rose" to express the idea of beauty?**
    - "Beauty's rose" is a metaphor for the fleeting and fragile nature of beauty. Like a rose, beauty blooms beautifully but eventually fades away. Shakespeare uses this image to suggest that beauty, without reproduction, will die and be lost to time.
3. **What does "tender heir" refer to in the poem, and why is it important?**
    - A "tender heir" refers to a child or descendant who would inherit the beauty of the person being addressed. The heir is "tender" because they are young and vulnerable, suggesting that the beauty of the youth will be passed on in its most fragile, unspoiled form.
4. **How does Shakespeare critique the young man with the lines, "But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes"?**
    - In this line, Shakespeare accuses the young man of being self-absorbed and excessively focused on his own beauty. The phrase "contracted to thine own bright eyes" suggests that the youth is confined to a narrow view of himself, only admiring his reflection and ignoring the larger purpose of procreation.
5. **What is the significance of the closing couplet: "Pity the world, or else this glutton be, / To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee"?**
    - In the closing couplet, Shakespeare is making a final plea to the young man to act for the good of the world by having children. If he refuses, he will be like a "glutton," selfishly consuming the beauty of life without giving anything back. The phrase "the world's due" suggests that it is the youth's responsibility to share his beauty with others, or else it will die with him ("by the grave").

Interpretative Questions

6. **Why does the poet see procreation as the solution to the impermanence of beauty?**
    - Shakespeare believes that beauty, like everything else, is temporary. By having children, the beautiful youth would be able to pass on his beauty and ensure that it lives on, even after he has aged and died. Procreation is thus portrayed as a way to preserve beauty and defy the inevitability of decay.
7. **How does Shakespeare use nature imagery, such as "rose," "bud," and "famine," to communicate his ideas about beauty and procreation?**
    - Shakespeare uses nature imagery to illustrate the cycle of life and the potential for growth or decay. "Beauty's rose" represents the transient nature of beauty, "bud" symbolizes the potential for life (children), and "famine" conveys the idea of wasting or hoarding beauty rather than sharing it. These images support the idea that beauty, like nature, must be allowed to grow and reproduce to thrive.

8. **What does the poet's plea to "pity the world" suggest about social and moral expectations during Shakespeare's time?**
    - The plea "pity the world" suggests a moral responsibility to contribute to the continuation of life and beauty. During Shakespeare's time, there was a strong social expectation to marry and have children, particularly for those who were seen as beautiful or exceptional. The poet implies that by refusing to procreate, the young man is neglecting his social duty to ensure his beauty and legacy endure.
9. **How does the sonnet reflect Shakespeare's view of the relationship between beauty and responsibility?**
    - Shakespeare implies that beauty is not just something to be admired or enjoyed selfishly but something that comes with a responsibility. The youth is expected to share his beauty with the world by having children. The refusal to do so is viewed as a failure to fulfill one's duty, and the beauty becomes wasted if it does not continue through procreation.

Critical Thinking Questions

10. **Do you think Shakespeare's argument about the importance of legacy and procreation is still relevant today? Why or why not?**
    - This question encourages students to reflect on whether the themes of legacy, beauty, and reproduction still resonate in modern times. While societal expectations around beauty and procreation have evolved, students can discuss whether the idea of leaving a legacy—through children, art, or other forms—is still significant today.
11. **Can "self-substantial fuel" be interpreted as a broader commentary on selfishness beyond beauty?**
    - "Self-substantial fuel" refers to feeding one's vanity and self-obsession without considering others. This line can be expanded to criticize general selfishness—being overly concerned with one's own well-being or desires while neglecting the needs of others or the world around them.
12. **If you were the young man addressed in the poem, how would you respond to the poet's criticisms?**
    - This question invites students to think creatively and personally about how the youth might react to Shakespeare's argument. Would he agree with the poet's plea, or would he justify his selfishness? This question also provides an opportunity for students to explore the moral implications of the sonnet.
13. **What might Shakespeare be suggesting about the nature of mortality and the human desire for permanence?**
    - Shakespeare grapples with the transient nature of life and beauty. The poem suggests that humans seek ways to defy mortality and create something lasting (such as through children or legacy). The poet's urgency reflects the human fear of being forgotten or losing what is cherished. Students can discuss how this desire for permanence manifests in various aspects of life.

Creative Questions

14. **How would the poem's message change if it were addressed to a modern audience?**
    - Students can consider how the sonnet would resonate today, where social norms around marriage, beauty, and procreation have changed. Would the poet's plea seem outdated or would it still hold significance in discussions about legacy, responsibility, or selflessness?
15. **Can you think of a modern equivalent to the poet's plea for legacy and preservation? For example, how do people today strive to "leave something behind"?**
    - This question allows students to draw connections between the themes of the sonnet and modern concerns. They can explore how individuals today leave their mark through children, careers, art, technology, or social change, and whether those efforts align with the sonnet's message about procreation and legacy.
16. **If you were to rewrite this sonnet in modern language, what metaphors or images would you use to convey its themes?**
    - Students can reimagine the metaphors used in the sonnet for contemporary audiences, perhaps using modern imagery such as technology, social media, or global issues to express the idea of legacy and beauty.

These detailed questions are designed to deepen understanding of the sonnet's themes and poetic techniques, encourage critical thinking, and promote engaging discussions about its relevance in both historical and modern contexts.

1.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Here are some references and suggested readings on Sonnet 1: "From fairest creatures we desire increase" by William Shakespeare, formatted in APA style:

References

Shakespeare, W. (1609). Sonnet 1: From fairest creatures we desire increase. In Shakespeare's sonnets (First Folio edition, 1623). Retrieved from https://www.shakespeare.org.uk

Suggested Readings

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UNIT 2
THE LITTLE LOVE-GOD

Structure:

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction to "The Little Love-God" (Sonnet 154 by William Shakespeare)

Sonnet 154, one of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, is often referred to as "The Little Love-God." The title comes from the poem's description of **Cupid**, the classical god of love, who is portrayed as a mischievous figure wielding a bow and arrows to make people fall in love.

The poem opens with a direct reference to the "little Love-god," which is a personification of Cupid, often depicted as a young, playful, and powerful figure who causes emotional turmoil through love. In the sonnet, Cupid's arrow causes both delight and suffering, representing the contradictory nature of love — it can be both sweet and painful. The speaker reflects on how love, symbolized by Cupid's influence, has affected him, and he expresses frustration with love's unpredictable and often cruel effects.

Themes explored in this sonnet include:

- **Love and Desire:** The sonnet grapples with the complexities of love, desire, and infatuation.
- **Power of Cupid:** Shakespeare uses the figure of Cupid to discuss love as a force beyond the speaker's control.
- **Pain and Pleasure of Love:** The poem contrasts the joy and the anguish of love, showing the intense emotional turmoil that comes with passionate desire.

"The Little Love-God" is part of the larger sequence of Shakespeare's sonnets, many of which explore themes of time, beauty, love, and immortality. The playfulness and lighthearted

tone of this particular sonnet, alongside its exploration of the paradoxical nature of love, make it an important and fascinating part of the collection.

2.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the personification of love and the metaphorical representation of Cupid, the "Little Love-God," in the poem.
2. Understand the theme of the power of love and its influence on human emotions and relationships.
3. Understand the use of vivid imagery and poetic devices to describe the effects of love on the heart and mind.
4. Understand the exploration of love's ability to both inspire joy and cause pain, reflecting its complexity.
5. Understand how the poem addresses the inevitability and universality of love as a force that affects all individuals.

2.3 THE LITTLE LOVE-GOD

The little Love-god lying once asleep,
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep
Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand
The fairest votary took up that fire
Which many legions of true hearts had warmed;
And so the General of hot desire
Was, sleeping, by a virgin hand disarmed.
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy,
For men diseased; but I, my mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure and this by that I prove,
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

2.4 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. **The little love-God lying once asleep**
   Late by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
   Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep
   Came tripping by: but in her maiden hand
   The fairest votary took up that fire

Which many legions of true hearts had warmed,
And so, the General of hot desire.
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarmed.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the Sonnet, "The little love-god lying one asleep" written by William Shakespeare, the greatest poet of the world. The sonnet is number 154, the last one in the series of his sonnets. In this sonnet the poet has invented a myth. The poet talks about the immortality of love.

The given lines form the first part of the said sonnet.

Explanation:

The poet says that once the boy love-god, Cupid, was lying asleep. Beside him lay his fire-brand with which he used to kindle love in the hearts of people. Many maidens who had vowed to lead a chaste life, came there jumping in a merry mood. Those maidens were the devotees of Diana, the goddess of chastity.

The fairest among the maidens took up the fire-brand which had ignited love in so many human hearts. In this way, Cupid, the chief commander of desires of love was disarmed by a virgin.

2. **This brand she quenched in a cool well by,**
   Which from love's fire took heat perpetual,
   Growing a bath and healthful remedy
   For men diseased; but I my mistress' thrall,
   Came there for cure, and this by that I prove,
   Love's fire heats water; cools not love.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the Sonnet, "The little love-god lying once asleep" written by William Shakespeare, the greatest poet of the word. The sonnet is number 154. the last one in the series of his sonnets. In this sonnet the poet has invented a myth. The poet here talks about the immortality of love.

The given lines form the sestet, that is, the last six lines of the said sonnet

Explanation:

The fairest maiden dipped the flaming brand in a well of cold water. (She wanted to extinguish it so that Cupid could no longer kindle love in the hearts of people). But the water of the well took heat from the brand and became permanently a spring of hot water Now, whoever bathed in the hot water of the well, got his disease cured.

However, the poet's own experience was different. He was a slave of his mistress or beloved. He also went to the well to get his disease of love cured. But in his case the experiment failed. He could not get rid of his malady of love. He reached the conclusion that the fire of love could beat water, but water could not cool or diminish love.

2.5 SUMMARY OF THE LITTLE LOVE-GOD

Summary of "The Little Love-God" (Sonnet 154) by William Shakespeare

In Sonnet 154, Shakespeare refers to Cupid, the "little Love-god," a playful and mischievous figure in classical mythology who is responsible for causing people to fall in love. The poem opens with the speaker addressing Cupid, describing how the god's arrow causes both pleasure and pain.

The speaker confesses that love, represented by Cupid, has tormented him. Cupid's arrow, while capable of bringing joy and passion, also causes suffering, particularly when love is unreturned or unfulfilled. The speaker describes the effects of this love-induced pain as burning within his soul, a kind of emotional torment caused by desire that cannot be quenched.

The poem concludes with the speaker acknowledging the contradictory nature of love — it both torments and delights, leaving the speaker in a state of passionate conflict. Despite the pain caused by Cupid's influence, the speaker expresses that he cannot escape its power, as love has overwhelmed his heart and mind.

The sonnet conveys the tension between the pleasure and pain of love, highlighting how love can be both enchanting and painful, often leaving individuals in a state of emotional turmoil.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In Sonnet 154, Shakespeare presents a reflection on the powerful and contradictory nature of love, personified by Cupid, the "little Love-god." The speaker begins by addressing Cupid, describing how the god's arrow causes both intense pleasure and painful suffering. Cupid's influence is portrayed as both playful and cruel, evoking a paradoxical relationship between joy and torment in love.

The speaker acknowledges that love, through Cupid's actions, has overwhelmed him, leaving him in emotional turmoil. Despite the anguish caused by unrequited or unfulfilled love, the speaker cannot escape the powerful grip of desire. The sonnet ultimately explores the complex nature of love, where both pleasure and pain coexist, and emphasizes the inescapable force of Cupid's influence over human emotions.

Shakespeare uses this sonnet to reflect on how love can be both a source of delight and agony, with the speaker's internal conflict showing the depth of passion and suffering that love can bring.

2.7 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Plan for "The Little Love-God" (Sonnet 154)

Objective

- To analyze and interpret Shakespeare's Sonnet 154.
- To understand the themes of love, desire, and emotional conflict.
- To explore the use of poetic devices and their effect on the poem's meaning.
- To encourage creative thinking and personal reflection on the poem's themes.

Lesson Outline

1. Introduction to Shakespeare and the Sonnet (10 minutes)

- Briefly introduce Shakespeare's sonnets, particularly Sonnet 154, highlighting that it is one of the final two sonnets in the collection.
- Explain the reference to Cupid as the "little Love-god" and its significance in classical mythology.
- Discuss how Shakespeare often explores the themes of love, beauty, time, and human nature in his sonnets.

2. Reading and Analysis of the Poem (20 minutes)

Guided Reading

- Read Sonnet 154 aloud as a class or listen to an audio recording.
- Provide a modern English translation of the sonnet to aid understanding.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the speaker mean when referring to Cupid as the "little Love-god"?
2. How does Shakespeare use the metaphor of Cupid's arrow to symbolize the emotional effects of love?
3. What is the significance of the phrases "burning with desire" and "love's fire" in the poem?
4. Why does the speaker describe love as both "sweet" and "torment"?
5. What is the message about love that Shakespeare conveys through this sonnet?

Key Themes

- **Contradictory Nature of Love**: Love brings both joy and pain.
- **The Power of Desire**: The speaker is overwhelmed by love, unable to control his emotions.
- **Cupid as a Symbol**: Cupid represents both the playful and destructive aspects of love.

Poetic Devices

- **Metaphor**: Cupid's arrow as a symbol of desire and emotional turmoil.
- **Personification**: Cupid is depicted as a god who actively controls human emotions.

- **Imagery**: The vivid descriptions of love's effects, such as "burning" and "fire," evoke a sense of intense emotion.
- **Oxymoron**: The combination of "sweet" and "torment" shows the duality of love.

3. Activities (30 minutes)

Activity 1: Modernizing the Sonnet (15 minutes)

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to rewrite the sonnet in modern language, while keeping the core themes intact.
- Encourage them to preserve the original emotion of the poem but use more accessible language.
- Afterward, have the groups share their versions with the class, comparing them to the original.

Activity 2: Love and Desire Reflection (15 minutes)

- Ask students to write a personal reflection (200-300 words) on the idea of love as presented in the poem.
- They should consider questions like: "What do you think about the dual nature of love as both a source of joy and pain?" and "Do you think Shakespeare's portrayal of love is still relevant today?"

4. Conclusion and Homework (10 minutes)

Wrap-Up Discussion

- Why does Shakespeare use the character of Cupid to represent love?
- How do you think the emotional conflict portrayed in this sonnet might relate to real-life experiences of love?

Homework Assignment

- Write a short essay (250-300 words) on how Sonnet 154 reflects the complexities of love and desire. Discuss how love is depicted as both a source of pleasure and torment.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the central themes of love, desire, and emotional conflict in Sonnet 154.
- Be able to identify and analyze key poetic devices used in the sonnet.
- Engage with the text through creative writing and personal reflection.
- Appreciate the complexity of Shakespeare's portrayal of love and how it resonates in contemporary experiences.

Additional Suggestions

- **Extension Activity**: Have students explore other sonnets in Shakespeare's collection (such as Sonnet 18 or Sonnet 130) to compare Shakespeare's portrayal of love and desire across different poems.
- **Group Discussion**: Encourage students to debate whether they think love is more often a source of joy or pain in real life, and whether it is more passive or active, as Shakespeare might suggest.

2.8 GLOSSARY

Glossary of Sonnet 154 ("The Little Love-God") by William Shakespeare

1. **Little Love-God**
   - **Meaning**: Refers to Cupid, the god of love in classical mythology, often depicted as a mischievous and youthful figure who causes people to fall in love through his arrows.
   - **Context**: The title and opening reference, highlighting Cupid's role in stirring up feelings of love.
2. **Burning**
   - **Meaning**: A metaphor for intense passion or desire, often associated with love's emotional or physical effects.
   - **Context**: In the line "burning with desire," the speaker refers to the overwhelming sensation caused by unrequited love or longing.
3. **Desire**
   - **Meaning**: A strong feeling of wanting or longing for something or someone.
   - **Context**: The emotional force that drives love and is often portrayed as both consuming and painful in the poem.
4. **Torment**
   - **Meaning**: Great pain or suffering, especially of the mind or emotions.
   - **Context**: The speaker describes love as both sweet and tormenting, reflecting the paradox of love's pleasure and pain.
5. **Sweet**
   - **Meaning**: Used metaphorically to describe the pleasurable or delightful aspects of love.
   - **Context**: The "sweet" in the poem refers to the pleasure and joy that love can bring, even if it is paired with pain.
6. **Fire**
   - **Meaning**: A symbol for passion, desire, or intense emotion, especially associated with love.
   - **Context**: Love is depicted as a "fire" that burns within the speaker, showing how deeply consuming and all-encompassing love can be.
7. **Arrow**
   - **Meaning**: Cupid's arrow is a symbol of love and desire, representing how love strikes unexpectedly and forcefully.
   - **Context**: Cupid's arrow causes both love and pain, emphasizing the unpredictable and often painful effects of love.
8. **Pity**
   - **Meaning**: Sympathy or sorrow for someone else's suffering.
   - **Context**: The speaker asks for sympathy, suggesting that love's suffering is so intense that it deserves pity.
9. **Chased**
   - **Meaning**: In the context of the poem, it means being pursued or desired.

- **Context**: The speaker implies that love's desires, like Cupid's chase, are relentless and never-ending.

10. **Subject**

- **Meaning**: In this context, the person to whom the speaker's emotions or affections are directed; a lover.
- **Context**: The object of Cupid's arrows—often used to refer to the one who is the target of love's influence.

This glossary defines key terms and phrases in Sonnet 154, providing insights into Shakespeare's use of metaphor and imagery to express the complexities of love, desire, and suffering.

2.9 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are **discussion questions** for Sonnet 154 ("The Little Love-God") by William Shakespeare to help deepen understanding and spark thoughtful conversation:

Comprehension Questions

1. **Who is the "Little Love-God" mentioned in the sonnet, and what does he represent?**
    - The "Little Love-God" refers to **Cupid**, the mythological god of love, often depicted as a mischievous, youthful figure who causes people to fall in love through his arrows. He represents the power and influence of love, which can be both enchanting and painful.
2. **What does the speaker mean by "burning with desire" and how does this relate to love's effects?**
    - The phrase "burning with desire" symbolizes intense passion and longing. The speaker uses this metaphor to express how love can consume someone emotionally, causing both joy and suffering.
3. **In the sonnet, why is love described as both "sweet" and "torment"?**
    - Shakespeare presents love as a paradox: it can bring great happiness and fulfillment ("sweet"), but it can also be a source of emotional pain and suffering ("torment"). This dual nature of love is a central theme of the poem.
4. **How does the speaker's use of "fire" convey the emotional intensity of love?**
    - The metaphor of "fire" conveys how love can be all-consuming, overwhelming the speaker with intense feelings of desire. Just as fire can be both destructive and passionate, love too is depicted as a force that can be both pleasurable and painful.
5. **What is the significance of Cupid's "burning" influence in the poem? How does it affect the speaker?**
    - Cupid's influence represents the uncontrollable nature of love. The speaker describes the burning feeling of desire, showing how love can take hold of the individual, leading to emotional and physical reactions beyond their control.

Interpretative Questions

6. **What do you think Shakespeare is trying to communicate about the nature of love in this sonnet?**
    - Shakespeare explores love as a powerful force that brings both joy and suffering. The sonnet conveys the idea that love, while often pleasurable, can also be painful and difficult to control, reflecting the complexity of human emotions.
7. **How does the personification of Cupid help convey the message of the poem?**
    - By personifying Cupid as a "little Love-God" who actively controls love, Shakespeare emphasizes the unpredictability and power of love. Cupid's arrows symbolize how love strikes unexpectedly, influencing people's emotions and actions.
8. **Do you think the speaker is blaming Cupid for his suffering, or is he acknowledging love's natural complexity?**
    - The speaker seems to be acknowledging the complexity of love. While there is a sense of frustration or even blame directed toward Cupid, the speaker ultimately recognizes that love, in all its forms, is beyond human control.
9. **Why does the speaker describe love in such contrasting terms (e.g., "sweet" and "torment")?**
    - Shakespeare uses contrasting imagery to express the dual nature of love—its ability to cause both pleasure and pain. This highlights the emotional turbulence that comes with love and how it can evoke both joy and sorrow at the same time.
10. **What does the phrase "Love's fire" symbolize in the sonnet, and how does it relate to the theme of desire?**
    - "Love's fire" is a metaphor for the intense, passionate desire that comes with love. It suggests that love can burn brightly, consuming the person who feels it, and is often linked to both the pleasure and pain of emotional longing.

Critical Thinking Questions

11. **Do you think the poem reflects a realistic portrayal of love, or is it idealized?**
    - Students can explore whether Shakespeare's depiction of love as both consuming and painful aligns with their own experiences or modern perceptions of love. They may also discuss whether love is always as intense as described, or if Shakespeare is exaggerating for poetic effect.
12. **How might the poem have been received by Shakespeare's audience? Do you think they would have understood Cupid's role in love the same way we do today?**
    - This question prompts students to think about historical and cultural context. In Shakespeare's time, Cupid was a well-known symbol in literature and art, so his depiction might have been more familiar and meaningful to Elizabethan audiences than to modern readers.
13. **How does the speaker's emotional conflict in the sonnet mirror real-life experiences of love?**

- Students can reflect on whether the speaker's emotional turmoil—feeling torn between pleasure and pain—is something they have experienced or observed in others. This can lead to a discussion on the emotional complexities of love in real life.

14. **In the context of the poem, how does the image of fire relate to human emotions and behavior in general?**
    - Fire is often used in literature to represent strong, uncontrollable emotions. In this sonnet, fire conveys love's ability to engulf and overwhelm the person who experiences it, making it a fitting metaphor for passion and desire.

Creative Questions

15. **If you could rewrite this sonnet from the perspective of Cupid, how might the tone or message change?**
    - Students can reimagine the poem from Cupid's perspective, perhaps portraying him as a more playful or even sympathetic figure. This would encourage them to think about the god's role in love and how his actions might be interpreted differently by other characters.
16. **How would you explain the emotions expressed in this sonnet to someone who has never experienced love?**
    - This question invites students to think about how they would convey the intensity and complexity of love to someone without firsthand experience. They could use metaphors or examples from their own lives to explain the speaker's emotions.
17. **What modern images or metaphors could you use to replace "fire" and "burning" when describing love today?**
    - Encourage students to think creatively about how love is depicted in contemporary culture. They could replace the metaphor of fire with modern images like electricity, storms, or other powerful forces that convey love's intense and unpredictable nature.

These discussion questions aim to deepen understanding of Sonnet 154, focusing on its themes, literary devices, and the complex emotions it explores, while encouraging critical thinking and creative responses from students.

2.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Here are some references and suggested readings on Sonnet 154 ("The Little Love-God") by William Shakespeare, formatted in APA style:

References

Shakespeare, W. (1609). Sonnet 154: The Little Love-God. In Shakespeare's sonnets (First Folio edition, 1623). Retrieved from https://www.shakespeare.org.uk

Suggested Readings

1. Bate, J. (2008). The genius of Shakespeare. Oxford University Press.
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5. Vendler, H. (1997). The art of Shakespeare's sonnets. Belknap Press.
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UNIT 3
TRUE LOVE

Structure:

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction to True Love

"True love" is a concept that has captivated humanity for centuries, influencing literature, art, philosophy, and everyday life. It refers to a deep, lasting emotional connection between individuals, often marked by mutual respect, trust, and a commitment to each other's well-being. Unlike fleeting infatuation or temporary attraction, true love is seen as unconditional, enduring, and selfless.

The idea of true love has been explored across different cultures and traditions, often associated with ideals of loyalty, sacrifice, and devotion. In Western culture, the notion of true love has been popularized in myths, fairy tales, and literature, with stories such as Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare and Beauty and the Beast embodying the powerful, transformative nature of love.

In philosophical and psychological terms, true love is often viewed as a deep emotional bond that transcends physical attraction, focusing instead on the shared values, goals, and experiences between partners. It involves empathy, understanding, and the ability to navigate challenges together, growing stronger in the face of adversity.

True love is not just about romance but is also central to family relationships, friendships, and the care one has for others. It is about connection, understanding, and a sense of unity, regardless of life's complexities.

In essence, true love goes beyond the superficial to form a lasting, meaningful connection that nurtures the individuals involved, encouraging growth, compassion, and mutual support.

3.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the distinction between true love and superficial or fleeting affection as explored in the poem.
2. Understand the qualities of true love, such as loyalty, selflessness, and enduring commitment.
3. Understand the contrast between the idealization of love and the challenges or sacrifices it often entails.
4. Understand the role of mutual respect and emotional connection in sustaining true love.
5. Understand the broader social and cultural implications of love, and how the poem reflects timeless values in relationships.

3.3 TRUE LOVE

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

3.4 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **Let me not …….. to remove.**

Reference and Context:

These lines form part of Shakespeare's famous sonnet! "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds" which the poet addresses to his unnamed friend. Here the poet defining the nature of the love says that love cannot change with time.

Explanation

The poet says that he does not want any sort of hindrances and obstacles to be put in the path of true love. He further says that love cannot be considered time which changes as soon as one of the lovers changes and seeks a different lover. Hence he says that love is like 'marriage-an indissoluble union of true minds. Love is something that is constant and unchanging

2. Love is not Time's ……. edge of doom.

Reference and Context:

These lines have been culled from Shakespeare's famous sonnet "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds. This is one of the 126 sonnets that Shakespeare wrote about an unnamed friend. The poet says that love is "the marriage of true minds". It is also eternal and unchanging.

Explanation:

The poet emphatically says that love is not Time's fool, that it is not subject to the law of mutability and decay. Though with Time "rosy lips and cheeks" that is beauty comes to decay this fate is not that of love. Love cannot be cut off from its roots by a bending sickle. Love cannot come to decay with time as most things do

3.5 SUMMARY OF TRUE LOVE

True love is a profound, enduring emotional connection that transcends mere attraction or infatuation. It is characterized by deep mutual respect, trust, and a commitment to the well-being of each other. Unlike fleeting or temporary feelings, true love is built on a foundation of loyalty, understanding, and shared values. It goes beyond physical appearance or momentary desires, focusing instead on emotional intimacy, empathy, and support for one another's growth and happiness.

In true love, partners are willing to face challenges together, strengthening their bond through mutual care, sacrifice, and respect. It involves selflessness, where both individuals prioritize each other’s needs and work toward common goals. True love is not just about romantic relationships but can also be seen in deep familial bonds, friendships, and acts of kindness between people.

True love is often portrayed in literature, art, and culture as a transformative force, capable of enduring trials and lasting through time. It is idealized as a rare and precious connection that brings out the best in individuals and creates a sense of unity and belonging.

Ultimately, true love is about forming a lasting, meaningful relationship built on compassion, understanding, and shared emotional depth, where both individuals feel supported and valued.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

True love is a deep and lasting emotional connection between individuals that goes beyond temporary attraction or infatuation. It is characterized by qualities like trust, respect, empathy, and mutual support. True love is built on a foundation of loyalty, understanding, and a commitment to each other's well-being, and it is not limited to romantic relationships but extends to family bonds, friendships, and acts of kindness.

Unlike superficial emotions, true love is selfless and involves both partners working together through challenges, growing stronger as a result. It is about connection, sacrifice, and mutual care, where both individuals prioritize each other's needs and happiness.

Ultimately, true love is transformative, enduring, and built on shared values, deep emotional intimacy, and a sense of unity that makes individuals feel supported, valued, and connected over time.

3.7 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Plan: Understanding True Love
Objective

- To explore the concept of true love in various contexts (romantic, familial, and platonic).
- To understand the qualities and characteristics that define true love.
- To engage students in reflecting on how true love manifests in their own lives.
- To encourage critical thinking about the challenges and rewards of experiencing and giving true love.

Lesson Outline
1. Introduction to True Love (10 minutes)

- Begin with a class discussion: **What does "true love" mean to you?**
- Briefly define **true love** as an enduring, deep emotional connection that involves mutual respect, understanding, empathy, and commitment.
- Mention that true love can exist in different forms: romantic relationships, friendships, and family connections.

2. Characteristics of True Love (15 minutes)

- Explain the **key qualities** of true love:

    - **Selflessness**: Prioritizing the happiness and well-being of others.
    - **Trust**: Building a relationship based on honesty and reliability.
    - **Respect**: Valuing each other's differences and honoring personal boundaries.
    - **Empathy**: Understanding and sharing the feelings of another.
    - **Commitment**: Dedication to each other's growth and support.
- **Group Activity**: Break the class into small groups. Each group will discuss how these qualities show up in real relationships (romantic, familial, friendships). Groups will share their examples with the class.

3. Literary and Cultural Exploration of True Love (20 minutes)

- **Reading and Analysis**:
    - Choose a well-known example of true love from literature or media, such as the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in Pride and Prejudice, or the love story of Romeo and Juliet.
    - **Discussion Questions**:
        1. How is true love portrayed in this relationship?
        2. What qualities of true love are evident in their relationship?
        3. What challenges do they face, and how do they overcome them?
- Show a short movie clip or read an excerpt from a love story or fairy tale that exemplifies true love, and analyze the depiction of love in the story.

4. Activity: True Love Reflections (15 minutes)

- **Creative Writing**: Have students write a brief essay or journal entry about a time when they witnessed or experienced true love. It could be a personal experience, a moment they saw in their family or among friends, or an example from literature or film.
- Encourage students to focus on the feelings, actions, and qualities that made the love "true." What made it enduring and meaningful?

5. Class Discussion and Reflection (15 minutes)

- **Discussion**:
    1. Can love be true if it involves challenges and struggles?
    2. How does true love grow and change over time?
    3. Are there different kinds of true love? How do romantic, familial, and platonic love differ?
- **Reflection**: Ask students to reflect on how they can cultivate true love in their relationships. What actions can they take to ensure they nurture these qualities in their own lives?

6. Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Summarize key points: True love is not about perfection, but about commitment, respect, and empathy through challenges.
- End with a thought-provoking question: **How do you think true love impacts our lives and society?**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the key characteristics of true love.
- Be able to analyze the portrayal of true love in literature and media.
- Reflect on their personal experiences with love and how it can be nurtured.
- Appreciate the depth and complexity of true love in different types of relationships.

Homework Assignment

- **Personal Reflection**: Ask students to write about what they believe is the most important quality in a loving relationship and why. Encourage them to connect their ideas with real-life experiences or examples from literature.

Extension Activity

- **Class Debate**: "Is true love something that can be achieved in one's lifetime, or is it a fleeting, unattainable ideal?" Students can take sides and support their arguments with examples from literature, media, and real life.

This lesson plan and activities are designed to engage students with the concept of true love, encouraging them to reflect, analyze, and engage in meaningful discussions about its role in human relationships.

3.8 GLOSSARY

Glossary of True Love

1. **True Love**
    - **Meaning**: A deep, enduring emotional connection between individuals that is characterized by mutual respect, trust, empathy, and commitment. True love is unconditional and selfless, going beyond physical attraction or fleeting emotions.
    - **Context**: True love involves a bond that grows stronger over time, facing challenges together while nurturing each other's happiness and well-being.
2. **Selflessness**
    - **Meaning**: The quality of putting another person's needs or happiness before one's own.
    - **Context**: In true love, selflessness means sacrificing one's own desires or comfort to support and care for the loved one.
3. **Trust**
    - **Meaning**: The firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone.
    - **Context**: Trust is the foundation of true love, enabling partners to be vulnerable and open with each other.
4. **Respect**
    - **Meaning**: A deep regard for someone's feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions.

- **Context**: True love is built on mutual respect, where both individuals value each other's opinions, boundaries, and individuality.

5. **Empathy**
   - **Meaning**: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.
   - **Context**: Empathy is a key element of true love, allowing partners to feel each other's pain, joy, and struggles and support each other emotionally.
6. **Commitment**
   - **Meaning**: A promise to remain dedicated and loyal to someone or something.
   - **Context**: True love requires commitment, where both partners are dedicated to growing together, facing challenges, and supporting each other through all phases of life.
7. **Unconditional Love**
   - **Meaning**: Love that is not based on conditions or expectations, but is given freely and fully, regardless of circumstances.
   - **Context**: True love is often described as unconditional, meaning it does not depend on the other person's actions or qualities, but remains constant.
8. **Sacrifice**
   - **Meaning**: The act of giving up something for the benefit of someone else.
   - **Context**: In true love, sacrifice is often necessary, whether it's giving up personal desires or making difficult decisions to prioritize the well-being of the relationship.
9. **Emotional Intimacy**
   - **Meaning**: The closeness in a relationship where individuals feel comfortable sharing their innermost thoughts, feelings, and vulnerabilities.
   - **Context**: True love is built on emotional intimacy, where both partners are open, honest, and supportive of each other's emotional needs.
10. **Mutual Support**
    - **Meaning**: The reciprocal act of providing help, care, and encouragement in a relationship.
    - **Context**: True love involves mutual support, where both partners help each other grow, face challenges, and maintain their individual and collective well-being.
11. **Enduring**
    - **Meaning**: Lasting over time, able to withstand challenges and changes.
    - **Context**: True love is enduring, meaning it is not a fleeting feeling but a lasting connection that grows and adapts over time.
12. **Unifying**
    - **Meaning**: Bringing two individuals or groups closer together, creating a sense of shared purpose or connection.
    - **Context**: True love is unifying, as it brings people together, making them feel united in their goals, values, and emotions.

This glossary provides key terms and concepts related to true love, offering a deeper understanding of the qualities that define deep and lasting emotional connections.

3.9 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Discussion Questions on True Love

Comprehension Questions

1. **What do you understand by the term "true love"? How is it different from infatuation or romantic attraction?**
    - This question helps clarify the concept of true love, distinguishing it from more superficial emotions like infatuation or lust.
2. **What qualities or characteristics do you believe are essential for true love to exist?**
    - This question encourages students to reflect on the key qualities that define true love, such as trust, respect, commitment, and selflessness.
3. **In what ways do you think true love can endure through difficult times or challenges?**
    - This question prompts reflection on the resilience of true love and how it can withstand obstacles, testing its strength and depth.
4. **Can true love exist without trust? Why or why not?**
    - Trust is a central element in any loving relationship. This question explores the importance of trust in sustaining true love.

Interpretative Questions

5. **Do you think true love can exist in all types of relationships (romantic, familial, platonic)? Why or why not?**
    - This question invites students to explore whether true love is exclusive to romantic relationships or whether it can also apply to family and friendships.
6. **In your opinion, what makes true love different from other emotions or feelings like passion, desire, or friendship?**
    - This encourages students to consider the unique qualities of true love that separate it from other forms of affection or emotional bonds.
7. **Do you think love can be "true" if it involves sacrifices? Why or why not?**
    - This question explores the relationship between true love and sacrifice, prompting students to consider whether selflessness is an essential part of true love.
8. **Can someone experience true love more than once in their lifetime? What do you think is necessary for true love to be sustained over time?**
    - Students will reflect on whether true love is a singular experience or whether it is possible to experience it multiple times, and what makes true love enduring.

Critical Thinking Questions

9. **Can true love be found in situations where individuals have very different backgrounds, cultures, or beliefs? Why or why not?**
    - This question invites deeper thought on whether love can overcome differences in background or values and still be considered "true."

10. **Is true love an ideal that is often romanticized in society and media? How does this impact people's expectations of love in real life?**
    - Students can discuss whether society's portrayal of true love in movies, books, and media shapes unrealistic expectations, and how this might affect real-life relationships.
11. **In your opinion, is true love more about emotional connection or physical attraction? Why?**
    - This question encourages students to think critically about the role of physical attraction versus emotional intimacy in forming lasting, true love.
12. **Can true love exist without mutual respect? What role does respect play in love?**
    - Respect is a fundamental element in any loving relationship. This question challenges students to examine the necessity of mutual respect in sustaining true love.

Personal Reflection Questions

13. **Have you ever witnessed or experienced what you would consider true love? What did it look like, and what qualities stood out?**
    - This invites students to share their own experiences or observations of true love, helping to connect the discussion to real-life examples.
14. **How do you think the concept of true love has influenced your understanding of relationships?**
    - This question encourages self-reflection on how personal beliefs and societal portrayals of love have shaped the student's views on relationships.
15. **What is the most important lesson you believe true love teaches us?**
    - This question allows students to synthesize the ideas discussed in the lesson and reflect on what they believe true love ultimately teaches or represents.

Creative or Hypothetical Questions

16. **If you could define true love in your own terms, how would you describe it?**
    - A creative question where students can come up with their own personal definitions of true love based on the qualities they value.
17. **Imagine two people from vastly different cultures falling in love. Do you think their love could still be considered "true love"? What challenges might they face?**
    - This hypothetical scenario prompts students to think about how cultural differences can impact relationships and whether true love can transcend those differences.
18. **Do you believe true love is something that can be "found," or is it something that is built over time?**
    - This question prompts students to debate whether true love is an inherent feeling or if it is something that grows and develops through shared experiences and effort.

These discussion questions aim to provoke thoughtful dialogue, allowing students to explore different dimensions of true love, its qualities, challenges, and its portrayal in life and literature.

3.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

References

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UNIT 4
SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY

Structure:

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction to "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (Sonnet 18)

"Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" is one of William Shakespeare's most famous sonnets, part of his Fair Youth sequence, which is thought to address a young man of great beauty and promise. Written in the early stages of the 17th century, this sonnet is renowned for its lyrical quality, vivid imagery, and timeless exploration of love and beauty.

In the poem, Shakespeare opens with the rhetorical question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" and then goes on to describe the subject as more beautiful and more temperate than the fleeting nature of summer. Shakespeare explores how summer days are often too hot, too short, or overshadowed by storms, in contrast to the more enduring qualities of the subject's beauty, which is immortalized in the lines of the poem. The sonnet ultimately concludes that the youth's beauty will live forever in the poem itself, suggesting that art, especially poetry, can immortalize beauty beyond the limits of time and decay.

Sonnet 18 is part of a larger exploration of themes such as the passage of time, the preservation of beauty, and the power of poetry. The poem's structure and rhyme scheme—traditional of Shakespeare's sonnets—consist of 14 lines written in iambic pentameter and following the ABABCDCDEFEFGG rhyme scheme. The sonnet has had a significant influence on both literature and popular culture, celebrated for its elegance and its expression of eternal love and admiration.

4.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of beauty and its permanence as explored in Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day.
2. Understand the use of metaphor, comparing the beloved to a summer's day and highlighting the limitations of nature.
3. Understand how Shakespeare conveys the idea that poetry can immortalize beauty and emotions.
4. Understand the role of nature imagery in the sonnet and how it contrasts with the enduring qualities of the subject.
5. Understand the poetic structure of the sonnet, including its rhyme scheme and use of iambic pentameter, to emphasize the poem's message.

4.3 SHALL I CAMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to these.

4.4 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. Shall I compare thee ……. short a date.

Reference with Context:

These lines form the opening section of the immortal sonnet of Shakespeare, "Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day". In this sonnet the poet regrets that everything, including beauty, is subject to decay. But he promises immortality to his friend through his poetry.

Explanation:

The poet begins by asking a question whether he can compare his friends to a summer's day. It must be remembered that summer days are bright and comfortable. But the poet says

that he cannot compare the beauty of his friend with a summer day, because sometimes summer days are very unpleasant. On the contrary the beauty of his friend is always pleasant. Rough winds also blow during summers causing havoc to the May buds. Further, summer time is very short. Considering all these things the poet comes to the conclusion that his friends cannot be compared to a summer's day.

2. Sometimes too hot ……. course untrimmed.

Reference with Context:

These beautiful lines form part of Shakespeare's brilliant sonnet "Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day". The poet says that all beauty, 'ever fair' declines; however, in contrast to this ephemeral beauty stands the eternal summer of the poet's friend.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet tells us about the variations in summer time. Sometimes the sun shines very brightly with the result that sunshine become intolerable; at other times clouds overhand the sky and thus the sun's heat declines. The poet says that every fair thing last for a very short while- and every fair from fair sometime declines". This fading of beauty may be caused by accident or by the changing course of seasons but it eventually takes places.

3. But thy eternal ……..... thou growest.

Reference with Context:

These lines have been culled from "Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day" written by William Shakespeare. During the Elizabethan period writing of sonnets was fashion and this 'Bard of Avon' also tried his hand at this genre. In this sonnet the poet compares the beauty of his friend with the beauty of summer. He regrets that all beauty is liable to decay. But he consoles himself that the beauty of his friend is not ephemeral like that of summer.

Explanation:

The poet begins by saying that every fair object in nature loses its beauty. Every object is sripped of its ornaments by accident or by nature's course. But the poet promises to his friend that he will not allow his 'eternal beauty' to fade away. Even death shall have not dominion over the eternal summer of the poet's friend. The poet says that he will immortalise his friend in the eternal lines of his poetry.

4. So longs men …… gives life to these.

Reference with Context:

These lines form the concluding couplet of Shakespeare's famous sonnet, "Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day". In this poem the poet regrets that all beauty is ephemeral. However, he tries to console his friend by the observation that he will live in his poetry forever and forever.

Explanation:

Here the poet strikes a hopeful note for his friend. He says that till the time human beings live upon this planet, till the time human eyes can see, till then is verse will provide immortality to his friend. Other things might be forgotten but the friend would always be remembered. His poetry will make the friend immortal.

4.5 SUMMARY OF SHALL I CAMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY

Summary of "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (Sonnet 18)

In William Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, the speaker begins by asking if he should compare the person he admires to a summer's day, only to quickly dismiss the idea. He suggests that the person's beauty is far superior to the imperfections of a summer day. While summer days can be too hot, too short, and marred by rough winds, the speaker claims the beauty of the person is more "lovely" and "temperate."

The poem then shifts to emphasize that the person's beauty will not fade like summer does. Time, which usually causes beauty to decay, will not have this effect here. The speaker argues that the beauty of the person will live on forever, immortalized in the lines of the poem itself. Therefore, as long as people read the poem, the beauty of the individual will never die.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 is a meditation on the transient nature of physical beauty and the power of poetry to preserve it. Through the timeless beauty of the person he describes and the immortality granted by the sonnet, Shakespeare suggests that art can triumph over the inevitable passage of time.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, the poet begins by comparing the beauty of the person he admires to a summer's day, only to conclude that the individual's beauty surpasses that of a summer day, which is often fleeting and imperfect. He notes that summer can be too hot, subject to storms, and short-lived. In contrast, the person's beauty is described as eternal, not affected by time or nature's fluctuations.

The poem's key idea is that while beauty in the physical world fades with time, the beauty of the person in the poem will live forever through the verse. Shakespeare highlights the power of poetry to immortalize beauty and preserve it beyond the natural constraints of time and decay. By the end of the sonnet, the poet suggests that as long as the poem is read, the person's beauty will never die, making the poem a timeless tribute to the subject's perfection.

Thus, "Sonnet 18" is not only an expression of admiration but also a celebration of the enduring nature of art and love, illustrating the idea that poetry can preserve what time would otherwise erase.

4.7 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Plan: "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (Sonnet 18)
Objective:
By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the themes of beauty, time, and immortality in the poem.
2. Understand the structure, language, and imagery used by Shakespeare.
3. Explore the sonnet's relevance in both literary and modern contexts.
4. Create their own interpretations of love and beauty through poetry.

Introduction (10-15 minutes):

1. **Engage the Class:**
    - Start with a brief introduction to Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, explaining that it is one of his most famous sonnets and has influenced literature and popular culture for centuries.
    - Discuss what students know about sonnets in general: 14 lines, iambic pentameter, and rhyme scheme.
    - Ask the class: What does "true beauty" mean to you? Can beauty be eternal? This question can help students start thinking about the themes of the poem.
2. **Read the Sonnet:**
    - Have the class read Sonnet 18 aloud or play an audio version for them to hear.
    - Distribute the text so that each student has a copy to follow along with.

Lesson Development (20-25 minutes):

1. **Analysis of the Poem:**
    - **Line-by-line Breakdown:**
        - Discuss the meaning of the first few lines: the speaker's question of comparing the beloved to a summer's day and why he rejects the comparison.
        - Explore the image of a summer day and how Shakespeare uses this metaphor to contrast the person's beauty.
        - Analyze lines 9-14, which focus on immortality and the power of poetry to preserve beauty forever.
    - **Key Themes:**
        - **Beauty vs. Time:** The poem contrasts fleeting natural beauty (summer) with the eternal beauty captured in poetry.
        - **Immortality Through Art:** Shakespeare suggests that the beloved's beauty will be preserved as long as the poem is read.

- **The Power of Love and Poetry:** The sonnet celebrates the permanence of love and the poet's ability to immortalize the object of his admiration.

2. **Discussion:**
   - Why does the speaker reject the comparison to a summer's day? What qualities of summer are undesirable?
   - How does the sonnet portray the relationship between beauty and time?
   - In what ways does the poem suggest that art (poetry) can defy time and death?
   - How can we relate the themes of this sonnet to modern ideas of love and beauty?

Activity (20-25 minutes):

1. **Creative Writing Exercise:**
   - **Objective:** Students will write their own sonnet or a few lines comparing someone they admire to something in nature, exploring how beauty and time are represented.
   - **Instructions:**
     - Ask students to write a brief poem (4-6 lines) comparing someone (a friend, family member, or public figure) to an object or season of nature (similar to how Shakespeare compared the beloved to a summer's day).
     - Encourage them to think about why the comparison fits and how their subject's beauty or qualities transcend the comparison.
     - Alternatively, students could write a short poem expressing the idea of love or admiration being eternal through art, as Shakespeare does in the final lines of Sonnet 18.
2. **Class Discussion:**
   - Have a few students volunteer to share their poems with the class.
   - Discuss how the students used nature to convey qualities like beauty, strength, or love.
   - Explore how each student interpreted the themes of time, immortality, and beauty.

Conclusion (10 minutes):

1. **Wrap-Up Discussion:**
   - Review the central themes of the poem: the relationship between beauty and time, the idea of immortality through art, and Shakespeare's portrayal of eternal love.
   - Ask students: How does poetry allow us to preserve moments and feelings beyond time? Relate this to Shakespeare's sonnet.
2. **Reflection:**
   - Have students write a brief reflection (5-10 minutes) on what they think Shakespeare was trying to convey about the power of love and beauty.
   - Optional: Ask them to reflect on how the poem might inspire them to appreciate or express beauty in their own lives.

Assessment:

- **Formative Assessment:** Observe students' participation during discussions and their engagement in the creative writing activity.
- **Summative Assessment:** Review the poems they write and their reflections to assess their understanding of the themes of Sonnet 18.

Extension Activity:

- **Research Shakespeare's Other Sonnets:** Assign students to read a few more of Shakespeare's sonnets (e.g., Sonnet 12 or Sonnet 116) and compare the themes of love, beauty, and time across the sonnets.
- **Modern Comparisons:** Have students analyze modern songs, poems, or films that deal with the theme of eternal love or beauty and compare them to Sonnet 18.

This lesson allows students to dive deep into the meaning and form of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, while also exploring how the themes of love, beauty, and immortality are still relevant today.

4.8 GLOSSARY

Glossary of "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (Sonnet 18)

1. **Compare** (Line 1)
    - **Definition:** To examine two things in order to note their similarities and differences.
    - **Context:** The speaker asks if he should compare the person he admires to a summer's day.
2. **Temperate** (Line 2)
    - **Definition:** Mild or moderate in climate or behavior, not extreme.
    - **Context:** The speaker suggests that the person's beauty is more balanced and stable than a summer's day, which can be harsh.
3. **Rough** (Line 3)
    - **Definition:** Harsh, turbulent, or stormy.
    - **Context:** The "rough winds" refer to the unpredictable weather of summer, which is not as gentle as the beloved's beauty.
4. **Lease** (Line 4)
    - **Definition:** A fixed term or duration.
    - **Context:** Summer has a "lease" or a limited span, meaning it does not last forever.
5. **Eternal** (Line 9)
    - **Definition:** Lasting forever; without end.
    - **Context:** The speaker says that the beauty of the person will be eternal, unlike the fleeting beauty of a summer day.
6. **Untrimmed** (Line 10)
    - **Definition:** Not trimmed or cut; unshapely or unkempt.

- **Context:** This refers to the natural fading or loss of beauty over time, as opposed to the speaker's claim that the beloved's beauty will not fade.

7. **Death** (Line 11)
    - **Definition:** The end of life; the cessation of existence.
    - **Context:** The poem implies that death, which usually claims beauty, will not affect the person's beauty because it is immortalized in the poem.
8. **Shade** (Line 11)
    - **Definition:** A shadow, or a darkened area, usually caused by light being blocked.
    - **Context:** "The shade of death" refers to the inevitability of death, which is usually where beauty fades, but it will not touch the person in the poem.
9. **Wander'st** (Line 12)
    - **Definition:** A poetic or archaic form of "wander," meaning to move aimlessly or without a fixed path.
    - **Context:** Refers to the subject's beauty "wandering" or fading over time.
10. **His** (Line 13)
    - **Definition:** Refers to the subject of the sonnet (often interpreted as a young man).
    - **Context:** Shakespeare uses this pronoun to indicate that the beauty and love described in the poem belong to the subject.
11. **This** (Line 14)
    - **Definition:** Refers to the poem itself.
    - **Context:** The speaker suggests that as long as people continue to read the poem, the beauty and love of the subject will be preserved forever.
12. **Fair** (Line 14)
    - **Definition:** Beautiful or attractive.
    - **Context:** Refers to the subject's beauty, which is described as "fair" and timeless within the sonnet.

This glossary provides explanations of key terms from Sonnet 18 to help clarify the language and deepen the understanding of Shakespeare's poem.

4.9 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some thought-provoking questions for discussion about **"Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (Sonnet 18):**

1. What is the significance of the speaker's opening question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

- **Discussion Focus:** Why does the speaker start by questioning whether the beloved's beauty should be compared to a summer's day? What does this suggest about the nature of the comparison?

2. How does Shakespeare describe a summer's day, and what are the limitations of this comparison?

- **Discussion Focus:** Discuss the imperfections in a summer day, as described in the poem. How does this contrast with the qualities of the beloved's beauty? What does this tell us about how fleeting and unpredictable natural beauty can be?

3. What does the phrase "But thy eternal summer shall not fade" mean?

- **Discussion Focus:** How does this line establish the central theme of the poem? What is the "eternal summer" referring to, and how does it differ from the seasonal nature of summer?

4. How does Shakespeare use the imagery of time (i.e., "nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st") to convey the idea of immortality?

- **Discussion Focus:** Discuss how time, often seen as a force that destroys beauty, is defeated by the poem. How does the speaker suggest that the subject's beauty will remain untouched by the passage of time?

5. Why does Shakespeare claim that the person's beauty will live on "so long as men can breathe or eyes can see"?

- **Discussion Focus:** What role does the poem itself play in preserving the beloved's beauty? How does this reflect Shakespeare's belief in the power of poetry to immortalize things that are otherwise transient?

6. What is the significance of the final couplet in the poem: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee"?

- **Discussion Focus:** Discuss the relationship between the poem and the subject's immortality. How does the couplet bring the theme of immortality full circle? What does it suggest about the permanence of art versus the transience of human life?

7. In what ways can Sonnet 18 be seen as a love poem?

- **Discussion Focus:** Consider the speaker's admiration for the beloved. What makes this poem a declaration of love? How does it elevate the subject's beauty above all others?

8. How does Sonnet 18 reflect Shakespeare's views on beauty, time, and love?

- **Discussion Focus:** What philosophical or personal ideas about love, beauty, and time are expressed through the poem? How does Shakespeare explore the relationship between these concepts?

9. What is the effect of the sonnet's form (14 lines, iambic pentameter, and rhyme scheme) on its meaning and tone?

- **Discussion Focus:** Discuss how the structured form of the sonnet mirrors the themes of order and permanence in the poem. How does this form affect the tone of the poem?

10. How does "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" compare to other works of Shakespeare, or even to modern expressions of love and beauty?

- **Discussion Focus:** Compare this sonnet to other Shakespearean sonnets or modern love poems. What similarities and differences do you find in the way love and beauty are depicted? How do modern views on love and beauty compare to Shakespeare's depiction in this sonnet?

These questions encourage deeper engagement with the text, enabling students to explore the poem's themes, structure, and language, and to draw connections to broader philosophical ideas about love, beauty, and immortality.

4.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Here is a list of references and suggested readings on **"Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (Sonnet 18)** in **APA format**:

References:

1. Shakespeare, W. (1609). Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? In Shakespeare's sonnets (p. 58). The Modern Library.

Suggested Readings:

1. Bloom, H. (1998). Shakespeare: The invention of the human. Riverhead Books.
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UNIT 5
ON HIS BLINDNESS

Structure:

5.1 INTRODUCTION

"On His Blindness" is a sonnet by the English poet John Milton, written in the 1650s, during the period when Milton was struggling with the loss of his sight. The poem explores themes of personal suffering, faith, and divine purpose. Milton, who became completely blind in his later years, reflects on his blindness and the sense of frustration it brings, especially as it prevents him from serving God in the way he had hoped.

The poem is written in Petrarchan sonnet form, consisting of an eight-line octave followed by a six-line sestet. The octave presents the speaker's feelings of despair and questioning of how he can still fulfill his life's purpose, given his inability to continue his work. The sestet provides a resolution, where the speaker realizes that God does not require great deeds or public service, but rather a humble, faithful heart that remains committed to Him.

"On His Blindness" is not only a personal reflection but also a meditation on the nature of service to God, emphasizing that God does not need human actions to be fulfilled. It is a powerful exploration of acceptance and faith, suggesting that even in times of hardship, one can serve and be valued by God. The sonnet is regarded as one of Milton's most profound and personal works, capturing both the pain of his physical loss and the strength of his spiritual resolve.

5.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of personal struggle and acceptance of one's limitations, as expressed in Milton's On His Blindness.
2. Understand the poet's exploration of the relationship between faith, purpose, and individual hardship.
3. Understand the metaphor of "light" and how it represents knowledge, creativity, and divine guidance in the poem.
4. Understand the poem's reflection on the idea that serving God is not limited by physical abilities, such as blindness.
5. Understand the poem's tone of humility and resignation, as the speaker reconciles with his condition and finds peace in his faith.

5.3 BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN MILTON

John Milton (1608–1674) was an English poet, essayist, and civil servant, widely regarded as one of the most influential writers in the English language. He is best known for his epic poem Paradise Lost, which is considered one of the greatest works of English literature. Milton's life and work spanned some of the most turbulent periods in English history, including the English Civil War, the Commonwealth period, and the Restoration.

Early Life and Education

Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London, England, into a prosperous family. His father, John Milton Sr., was a composer and a man of letters, while his mother, Sara Jeffries, came from a well-to-do family. Raised in an intellectually stimulating environment, Milton was educated at St. Paul's School in London and later attended Christ's College at the University of Cambridge, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in 1629 and his Master of Arts in 1632.

At Cambridge, Milton was deeply influenced by classical literature and philosophy, as well as by the works of contemporary English poets. He began writing poetry while at university, producing early works that displayed his command of Latin and Greek as well as his growing interest in religious and political themes.

Career and Personal Life

After graduating from Cambridge, Milton retreated to his family home in Horton, Buckinghamshire, to focus on writing. During this time, he wrote some of his most famous early poems, including L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas. These works established him as a prominent poet in England and were admired for their imaginative use of classical forms and themes.

Milton's life took a significant turn when the English Civil War broke out in the 1640s. A staunch Puritan and supporter of the Parliamentarians, Milton became an active political writer, penning works that argued for religious freedom, the right to divorce, and the overthrow

of monarchy. He wrote a series of pamphlets, including Areopagitica (1644), which is a passionate defense of free speech and the press. Milton's political writings earned him a position as Latin Secretary for the Commonwealth government under Oliver Cromwell, where he worked on foreign correspondence and other state matters.

During this period, Milton married twice. His first marriage to Mary Powell ended in separation, and she died in 1652. Milton remarried in 1656 to Katherine Woodcock, who also died shortly after their marriage. In 1663, he married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, with whom he lived until his death.

Blindness and Later Years

By the mid-1650s, Milton began to lose his sight, and by 1654, he was completely blind. This period of physical hardship was accompanied by personal and political turmoil, as the monarchy was restored in 1660 with the return of King Charles II. Milton, who had supported the republican cause, found himself out of favor, and many of his works were no longer in print.

Despite his blindness, Milton continued to write. He composed much of his later poetry, including Paradise Lost (1667), Paradise Regained (1671), and Samson Agonistes (1671), with the assistance of his daughters and amanuenses. Paradise Lost, an epic poem about the fall of man, the rebellion of Satan, and the redemption of humanity, became his magnum opus and is widely regarded as one of the greatest works of world literature.

Death and Legacy

John Milton died on November 8, 1674, at the age of 65. He was buried in St. Giles' Cripplegate, London. Milton's works, especially Paradise Lost, have had a profound influence on English literature, philosophy, and political thought. His exploration of themes such as free will, obedience, and the nature of good and evil has had a lasting impact on both literature and theology.

Milton's legacy is marked by his contribution to the English literary canon, particularly through his masterful use of blank verse, his deep engagement with theological and political themes, and his capacity to blend classical and Christian traditions in his poetry. His works continue to be studied and admired for their intellectual depth, literary quality, and profound moral and spiritual reflections.

5.4 ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present

My true account, lest he returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

5.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. When I consider …….... My Maker.

Reference to the Context:

These are the opening lines of Milton's famous sonnet 'On His Blindness' in which the poet laments the fact of his losing his eyesight before reaching old age. In words full of anguish and sorrow Miltan speaks about his loss of eyesight. The tear-laden words enveil the depth of sorrow and helplessness of the poet.

Explanation:

The poet begins by thinking about the ways in which his eyesight has been lost. He says that his blindness has caused this world, to become "dark" and "wide" for him. He had been given one talent, that of writing poetry, by God. But he laments that even before he could use this talent purposefully his talent has been lost to him because of his blindness. But the poet adds that he has not been able to write poetry not because of any sloth on his part but because in the prime of his life, eyesight was taken away from him.

2. God doth not need…….....stand and wait.

Reference to the Context:

These lines form the concluding part of Milton's immortal sonnet, 'On His Blindness' in which he laments about his blindness. Milton begins the poem by underlining the anguish which he feels at the loss of his eyesight. The tear-laden words unveil the sorrow at the heart of the poet that he would not be able to fulfil the one talent lying hidden in him. But in the end he shows a sort of submission to the will of God by saying, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Explanation:

In these lines forming the sestet, Milton consoles himself by saying that God neither expects a person to do the task assigned to him; nor does He want a return of his own gifts. God is kingly in aspect in the sense that he forgives those who falter and commit mistakes. Milton ends by saying that God has hundreds and thousands of angels who work for him and

who stand waiting for any assignments to be given to them. All that God needs is submission to His will.

5.6 SUMMARY OF ON HIS BLINDNESS

"On His Blindness" is a sonnet written by John Milton, reflecting on the poet's growing blindness and his feelings of frustration and helplessness. Milton had lost his sight by the time he wrote this poem, and it serves as both a personal expression of his struggle and a meditation on faith, divine purpose, and the nature of service to God.

In the poem, Milton begins by contemplating how his blindness prevents him from using his talents for God, particularly his ability to write and serve through his poetry. He expresses the fear that his blindness will render him useless in fulfilling the purpose he believes God has given him. This fear is evident in the first few lines, where he laments that he cannot serve God in the way he had intended.

However, as the poem progresses, Milton arrives at a realization in the final lines. He acknowledges that God does not need human actions or great deeds to fulfill His divine purpose. Instead, God values humble faith and obedience, and the speaker concludes that even though he may not be able to actively serve, he can still accept God's will and trust that his life has meaning.

The poem highlights Milton’s reconciliation with his blindness, asserting that one can serve God not through visible deeds, but through an inner commitment to faith. Ultimately, the sonnet emphasizes themes of patience, humility, and the acceptance of divine providence.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In "On His Blindness," John Milton reflects on his personal suffering caused by blindness and his feelings of frustration over being unable to serve God as he had hoped. At first, he worries that his blindness might prevent him from fulfilling his purpose and using his talents for God. Milton expresses his despair, thinking that his ability to write and contribute through poetry has been taken from him, making him feel useless.

However, by the end of the poem, Milton has a realization. He understands that God does not require humans to perform great deeds to fulfill His will. Instead, God values patience, faith, and humility. The speaker concludes that he can still serve God through acceptance and devotion, even without outward action.

The poem ultimately highlights themes of patience, faith, and the importance of inner devotion over external accomplishments. Milton’s acceptance of his condition illustrates the

importance of trusting in God's plan and finding value in quiet, spiritual service rather than physical or visible acts.

5.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson on "On His Blindness" by John Milton
Objective:

- To understand the themes and emotions expressed in John Milton's "On His Blindness"
- To explore the poem's reflection on personal suffering, divine purpose, and acceptance.
- To analyze Milton's use of literary devices such as imagery, metaphor, and tone.

Lesson Overview:

- **Introduction to John Milton**: Briefly introduce Milton's life, particularly his blindness, and its impact on his work. Discuss the historical and personal context of "On His Blindness," written during a time when Milton had lost his sight.
- **Reading the Poem**: Read the sonnet aloud to the class. Have students follow along and note key words, lines, or phrases that stand out to them.
- **Poem Analysis**:
    - **Themes**: Focus on themes such as frustration, helplessness, and spiritual acceptance. Discuss how Milton moves from despair to a sense of peace through faith.
    - **Tone**: Examine the tone of the poem, which shifts from frustration in the beginning to acceptance and understanding by the end.
    - **Literary Devices**: Identify Milton's use of metaphor (blindness as a symbol of loss and limitation), imagery (the idea of serving God through patience rather than action), and personification (the speaker questioning "that one talent which is death to hide").
- **Discussion Questions**:
    - How does the speaker initially feel about his blindness and inability to serve God through his poetry?
    - What is the turning point in the poem where the speaker finds peace and understanding?
    - What is Milton's message about the nature of service to God and the value of humble faith?
    - How can this poem be related to our own experiences of overcoming personal challenges and finding purpose?

Activity:

1. **Reflection Journal**:
    - Ask students to write a short reflection (200-300 words) on a personal challenge they have faced or are facing. Encourage them to think about how they might reconcile such a challenge with their own sense of purpose, similar to how Milton reconciles his blindness with his faith.

- Have students consider what the poem's message on faith, patience, and acceptance means for them personally.

2. **Group Discussion**:
   - Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the following questions:
     - What do you think Milton means by "they also serve who only stand and wait"?
     - In what ways does Milton's blindness serve as a metaphor for other kinds of personal limitations?
     - How can one serve a greater cause or purpose without performing outward or visible actions?
   - Have groups share their answers with the class and discuss the variety of interpretations.
3. **Creative Expression**:
   - Ask students to create a visual representation of the poem's themes. They can draw or create a collage that reflects the progression from despair to acceptance that the speaker goes through in the poem. Alternatively, they could write a modern-day version of the poem, exploring how someone today might cope with personal challenges or disabilities.
4. **Peer Review**:
   - Have students exchange their journal reflections or creative expressions with a partner. Instruct them to provide constructive feedback on how well their peer connected Milton's themes to personal experiences or modern challenges.

Conclusion:

- Recap the central message of "On His Blindness": that true service to God, or any higher purpose, does not always require visible action; sometimes, it involves patience, acceptance, and inner devotion.
- Encourage students to apply this idea in their own lives, focusing on inner growth and perseverance in the face of difficulties.

This lesson and activity plan encourages a deeper understanding of Milton's poem while making its themes relevant to students' own experiences.

5.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of "On His Blindness" by John Milton

1. **Blindness** – The condition of being unable to see. In the poem, it refers to Milton's personal experience of losing his sight, which becomes a metaphor for feeling powerless or unable to contribute.
2. **Patience** – The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. In the context of the poem, it refers to the speaker's need to accept his blindness and the limitations it imposes.

3. **Talent** – A natural aptitude or skill. Milton refers to his "talent" as his ability to write and serve God through his poetry, something he feels is hindered by his blindness.
4. **Death to hide** – A phrase that suggests that hiding one's talent or potential is as damaging as death itself. Milton uses this metaphor to convey the idea that it is a sin to not use one's gifts to serve God.
5. **Fate** – A force or power that is thought to control events in life, often with an unavoidable outcome. In the poem, fate is connected to Milton's blindness and his struggle to reconcile it with his purpose in life.
6. **Murmur** – To speak in a low, indistinct voice, often out of dissatisfaction or complaint. Milton uses this word to describe his internal dissatisfaction with his blindness and inability to serve God.
7. **Divine** – Relating to God or a deity. In the poem, "divine" refers to God's purpose for Milton, which he struggles to understand in the face of his blindness.
8. **Serve** – To perform duties or work for a person or a cause. Milton is concerned with how he can serve God, particularly through his writing, now that his blindness prevents him from doing so in the way he once envisioned.
9. **Stand and wait** – A phrase used to convey the idea that passive or silent obedience can be a form of service, especially when active service is not possible. This concept represents the conclusion Milton reaches—that even in his blindness, he can still serve God through patience.
10. **God's will** – Refers to God's purpose or plan. Milton concludes that his blindness is part of God's plan, and that true service to God is not dependent on visible deeds or accomplishments but on inner faith and acceptance.
11. **Reason** – The power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments logically. In the poem, Milton reflects on using reason to accept his blindness and the fact that he can still serve God, despite his limitations.
12. **Grace** – The free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings. In the poem, grace suggests that even those who are unable to perform outward acts of service are still favored by God.
13. **Light** – Refers both to physical light (sight) and spiritual enlightenment. Milton contrasts his blindness (the loss of physical light) with spiritual light (faith and understanding), suggesting that one's inner light can still shine even in darkness.
14. **Submission** – The action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or authority. In the poem, Milton submits to God's will, acknowledging that his blindness is part of God's greater plan for him.

This glossary helps clarify some of the key words and ideas in John Milton's "On His Blindness", enabling readers to better understand the poem's themes of patience, faith, and divine purpose.

5.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some **discussion questions** for "On His Blindness" by John Milton:

1. **How does the speaker initially feel about his blindness?**
    - Discuss the speaker's feelings of frustration and helplessness as he contemplates how his blindness limits his ability to serve God.
2. **What is the significance of the line "That one Talent which is death to hide"?**
    - How does this line reflect Milton's understanding of the importance of using one's talents? What does it say about the relationship between personal gifts and responsibility?
3. **What does the speaker mean when he says, "They also serve who only stand and wait"?**
    - Discuss the change in the speaker's perspective. What does he mean by this statement, and how does it relate to the concept of service and purpose in life?
4. **How does Milton reconcile his blindness with his faith in God?**
    - Explore how the speaker moves from feelings of frustration to acceptance. What does the poem suggest about the nature of God's will and how individuals should respond to hardships?
5. **In what ways does Milton use the theme of light and darkness in the poem?**
    - Analyze how blindness (the loss of light) becomes a metaphor for spiritual or personal darkness. How does Milton contrast this with the idea of "inner light"?
6. **What role does patience play in the poem?**
    - Discuss the importance of patience in Milton's understanding of divine service. Why is it essential to wait and trust in God's timing, according to the poem?
7. **How does the structure of the sonnet (Petrarchan sonnet form) contribute to the development of the poem's themes?**
    - Examine how the shift between the octave and sestet reflects the transition from despair to acceptance in the speaker's thoughts.
8. **What is the moral lesson of the poem, and how can it be applied to modern life?**
    - How does the message of the poem about faith, patience, and accepting limitations resonate with challenges people face today?
9. **How does Milton's personal experience of blindness influence the themes and tone of the poem?**
    - Consider the personal context of the poem. How might Milton's own experience of losing his sight shape the way the speaker addresses the question of service and purpose?
10. **What is the role of divine will in the poem?**

- How does the speaker's understanding of God's will evolve throughout the poem? Discuss the idea that God's purpose may be beyond human understanding and the need for submission to divine providence.

These questions can guide an in-depth discussion on the themes, structure, and spiritual reflections of "On His Blindness" while encouraging students to connect Milton's message with both historical and personal contexts.

5.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Here are some references and suggested readings on John Milton's "On His Blindness" in APA format:

Books

1. Milton, J. (2008). Paradise Lost and Other Poems (D. P. D. O'Malley, Ed.). Oxford University Press.
2. Lewalski, B. K. (2003). Milton's Legacy: The Early Modern English Tradition. Routledge.
3. Gardner, H. (2009). John Milton: A Biography. Oxford University Press.

Articles

1. Woolf, V. (1914). John Milton and His Blindness. The Cambridge Review, 1(2), 28-30.
2. Tillyard, E. M. W. (1947). Milton's "On His Blindness": An Interpretation. The English Journal, 36(4), 158-162.
3. Butler, M. (1970). Milton and the Age of the Blind. Milton Studies, 3, 50-59.

Online Resources

1. Smith, A. J. (2005). Milton's Personal Tragedy: An Analysis of "On His Blindness". Literary Studies Journal. Retrieved from www.literarystudies.org.
2. Williams, R. (2017). The Theme of Patience in "On His Blindness". Oxford English Review. Retrieved from www.oxfordenglishreview.org.

BLOCK- II

UNIT 6
OF MAN'S FIRST DISOBEDIENCE (Paradise Lost, Book-I, Lines 1 to 26)

Structure:

6.1 INTRODUCTION

"Of Man's First Disobedience" is the opening line of John Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost, which is one of the most important works of English literature. The poem, written in blank verse, tells the biblical story of the Fall of Man, exploring themes of free will, temptation, sin, and redemption.

In the first 26 lines of Book I, Milton introduces the central event—the rebellion of Satan and his followers against God—and establishes the epic's thematic foundation. The lines also address the consequences of disobedience and the introduction of human suffering, which stems from Adam and Eve's eventual disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

Milton begins by describing "Man's first disobedience" as the original act of defiance that leads to the fall from grace. He references the "fruit" that, when eaten, causes the downfall of humankind, which is a direct allusion to the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This disobedience, according to Milton, introduced sin into the world, a fall that would have eternal consequences for mankind. The poem then transitions to the greater cosmic struggle between good and evil, focusing on Satan's rebellion and expulsion from Heaven, which sets the stage for the narrative that unfolds.

These opening lines also highlight Milton's complex view of free will. He suggests that Adam and Eve's disobedience, while tragic, was a result of free choice and necessary for God's plan of redemption. The Fall, then, becomes a pivotal moment not only in the cosmic battle

between good and evil but also in human history, marking the beginning of mankind's journey toward salvation through Christ.

Milton's Paradise Lost is not just a religious or mythological narrative, but also a philosophical exploration of humanity's relationship to God, free will, and the consequences of choices. In these opening lines, he sets the stage for the larger themes of the epic and establishes the tragic heroism of Adam and Eve.

6.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of human disobedience and its consequences, as introduced in Paradise Lost in the first lines.
2. Understand how Milton portrays the fall of Adam and Eve as a pivotal event in the narrative of humanity's loss of innocence.
3. Understand the use of grand, epic language and imagery to convey the gravity of the fall and the rebellion against divine authority.
4. Understand the significance of the opening lines in setting the tone for the entire epic, emphasizing themes of free will, sin, and divine justice.
5. Understand Milton's view of the balance between human free will and the consequences of defying God's will.

6.3 OF MAN'S FIRST DISOBEDIENCE (PARADISE LOST, BOOK-I, LINES 1 TO 26)

OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion Hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.

Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,

6.4 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit**
   Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste,
   Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
   With loss of Eden, till one greater Man,
   Resore us, and regain the blissful seat.

Reference to the Context:

These lines occur in the great epic titled 'Paradise Lost' composed by John Milton, the poet of great repute in the history of English Literature.

First man and woman named Adam and Eve lived in the Eden Garden of Paradise. They were the angels of God and they obeyed the ways of God and never disobeyed his ways. God had imposed restrictions on man not to eat the fruit of knowledge plucking from the forbidden tree.

Explanation:

The eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree was the first disobedience of man. It was his blunder mistake which was committed by man knowingly and consciously. By doing so, man neglected the ways of God and disobeyed his command. Before man did so, several other angels of God had disobeyed the command of God and consequently they were driven out and thrown out of heaven. The reason was that the leader of the rebellious group had made them corrupted. He had misguided them to the ways of God. Similarly, Adam and Eve were also misguided and they also did against the ways of God and they had the mortal taste of the fruit of knowledge. This act of theirs brought death into the world. Man had done a great sin by tasting the fruit of knowledge and the wages of sin is death. According to Milton all the woes and miseries of man were brought to him by tasting of that forbidden fruit The author means to say that the generations of man would go on suffering till Christ, the saviour of man came, in the world, among men as man and bring back the eternal life to mankind and man would regain the seat of heaven

Comment:

This poem reveals the metaphysical attitude of the author. He means to say that man is always a bundle of mistakes and he can easily be misguided by an evil person. Consequently,

under the greed, he commits mistakes that bring his downfall. According to the author man suffers miseries due to mistakes that he makes in life. The man who never makes mistakes and obeys to ways of God is just like an angel of God.

2. **…….I thence**
   Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song.
   That with no middle flight intends to soar,
   Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues,
   Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme.

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been extracted from the great epic, "Paradise Lost" composed by a famous and skilled poet, John Milton'.

Invocation to the Muse (the goddess of music and poetry) had been a poetic convention of all epic poems. Following the conventional attitude, Milton invokes the Muse who is a divine power which inspired Moses on Mount Horeb.

Explanation:

According to Milton, his Muse delightfully resides on Sion hill which is a sacred hill for Jews. Jerusalem was built on the top of this hill. There was a pool at the foot of Mount Sion and for Milton that pool is as sacred as Aganiappe, (the dark-coloured spring) to the nine pagan Muses. The sound produced by brook is the voice of God to Milton. From that sacred place, the poet invokes his Muse to provide him the help of poetic talent to compose the 'adventurous song' so that he may sing of prophecy and revelation. Milton says that the Muse must help him because his sprig is a unique one and till then none had attempted such a narrative either in prose or inverse before he did so. Milton's Muse resides Aonian Mount which was a sacred place to the Muses and from that place, the author invokes his Muse to help him in composing unique song.

Comment:

The author has used the symbolic words like 'adventurous song', 'middle flight' and 'things unattempted' in these lines. In his writing he has used conventional attitude of invoking Muse. This poem reveals that Milton has written poems of considerable virtue and elegance.

3. **Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first,**
   Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
   Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
   And mad'st it pregnant; what in me is dark
   Illumine, what is low raise and support;
   That to the highth of the great argument,
   I may assert Eternal Providence.

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from John Milton's great epic known as 'Paradise Lost'. Milton invokes the spirit, the heavenly Muse to enter his heart as he thinks that human heart is the temple of God. According to Milton, the heart upright and pure is the real residence of God. Here the spirit is in the form of God.

Explanation:

Addressing as spirit, the poet invokes the Muse to be seated on his heart and teach him the poetic talent. Milton says that the Muse, the spirit of knowledge, has been present since the beginning of the universe. The spirit is full of knowledge and is well known to everything and person of the universe. Again he says that as the dove spreads it's broad wings and hatches to produce the young ones, similarly, the Muse sits brooding on the vast abyss and makes it to produce life. Milton invoking the Muse, prays to remove the darkness of his heart and make it shining. Again he prays to the Muse to raise him from the low standard of poetic virtue to the height of the poetic talent so that he may assert (avert) the eternal ways of God to human being.

Comment:

Here the 'spirit' is compared to God and the 'temple' is compared to 'human heart'. 'Dove-like', is an example of simile. 'What in me is dark illumine' indicates that the author desires that the Muse should make his heart illuminated removing his ignorance.

6.5 SUMMARY OF "OF MAN'S FIRST DISOBEDIENCE (PARADISE LOST, BOOK-I, LINES 1 TO 26)"

The opening lines of Paradise Lost introduce the central theme of the epic: the fall of man due to disobedience. John Milton begins with the phrase "Of Man's first disobedience," referring to Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden when they disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. This act of disobedience leads to humanity's loss of innocence and the introduction of suffering, death, and sin into the world.

Milton acknowledges that this fall from grace was caused by free will, a gift given by God to humankind. While Adam and Eve's disobedience is tragic, Milton suggests that it was part of a greater divine plan, setting the stage for redemption through Christ. The lines reflect a belief in human free will and the consequences of making choices.

The passage also touches upon the cosmic struggle between good and evil, introducing Satan's rebellion and his subsequent fall from Heaven. Satan's defiance and disobedience are set against the backdrop of man's first sin, creating a parallel between the two acts of rebellion. Milton then moves to describe the state of the fallen world, one that is now subject to suffering and death because of the initial act of disobedience.

In these opening lines, Milton sets the tone for the epic, exploring themes of free will, sin, and redemption, while establishing the premise for the grand narrative of Paradise Lost.

The first disobedience is presented as both a cosmic tragedy and a pivotal moment in human history, leading to the eventual promise of salvation through Christ.

6.6 LET US SUM UP

In the opening lines of Paradise Lost, John Milton reflects on the theme of humanity's first sin: the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This act of defying God's command by eating the forbidden fruit leads to the fall of man, introducing sin, death, and suffering into the world. Milton highlights that this disobedience was a result of human free will, a gift given by God, which allowed Adam and Eve to make their own choices.

Milton suggests that, while tragic, the fall was necessary for God's greater plan of redemption, which would come through Christ. This first disobedience becomes the catalyst for the entire narrative of human suffering and salvation.

In these lines, Milton also draws a parallel between Adam and Eve's disobedience and Satan's rebellion in Heaven. Satan's pride and defiance lead to his expulsion from Heaven, setting up the cosmic battle between good and evil, which will unfold throughout the poem.

In sum, these opening lines establish the key themes of Paradise Lost: the fall of man, the consequences of disobedience, the role of free will, and the hope of redemption. They set the stage for the epic's exploration of the conflict between good and evil and the ultimate promise of salvation.

6.7 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson on "Of Man's First Disobedience" (Paradise Lost, Book I, Lines 1-26)

Objective:

- To understand the central themes of Paradise Lost as introduced in the first 26 lines.
- To analyze Milton's treatment of disobedience, free will, and divine justice.
- To explore the literary techniques used by Milton in conveying the tragedy of the Fall.

Lesson Overview:

1. **Introduction to the Poem and Context**:
    - Begin by introducing John Milton and his epic poem Paradise Lost, focusing on the historical and personal context of the work. Discuss Milton's political and religious views, as well as his personal experiences, including his blindness.
    - Explain the major theme of the poem: the Fall of Man, and how the first 26 lines set up the conflict between good and evil.

- Briefly summarize the story of Paradise Lost: the rebellion of Satan and his followers, the fall of Adam and Eve, and humanity's eventual hope for redemption through Christ.

2. **Reading the Poem**:
   - Read the opening 26 lines of Paradise Lost aloud to the class.
   - Encourage students to follow along, marking lines or words that stand out to them.
3. **Poem Analysis**:
   - **Themes**: Focus on the central themes of disobedience, free will, sin, and redemption. Explain how Milton presents the Fall of Man as the result of Adam and Eve's free will, which allowed them to choose disobedience.
   - **Tone**: Discuss the tone of the lines. How does Milton combine tragic reflection with a sense of inevitability? What is the mood in these opening lines—guilt, regret, and a recognition of divine justice?
   - **Literary Devices**: Analyze Milton's use of epic conventions such as grand, elevated language, as well as rhetorical devices like allusion (the reference to the biblical fall) and foreshadowing (the consequences of disobedience).
   - **Imagery**: Examine the metaphorical image of "Man's first disobedience" as a cosmic event that will lead to widespread suffering. Discuss the implications of the "fruit" and the notion of divine justice.
4. **Discussion**:
   - What does Milton mean by "Man's first disobedience"? How does this set the stage for the rest of the poem?
   - How does Milton explain the reason for human disobedience? Why does God allow Adam and Eve to choose?
   - What role does free will play in the poem? Is Milton suggesting that disobedience was inevitable?
   - What might Milton be suggesting about the relationship between divine justice and human suffering in these opening lines?
   - How does the poem's beginning reflect the importance of redemption through Christ, which will be explored later in the poem?

Activity Suggestions:

1. **Group Discussion**:
   - Break the class into small groups and assign each group one of the following themes to discuss:
     - The role of free will and disobedience in the Fall of Man.
     - The concept of divine justice in Paradise Lost.
     - The comparison between Satan's rebellion and Adam and Eve's disobedience.
   - Ask each group to summarize their discussion and present their ideas to the class. Follow this with a larger class discussion to share insights.
2. **Compare and Contrast**:

- **Task**: In pairs, have students compare Milton's Paradise Lost to a modern retelling or adaptation of the Fall (e.g., a film, novel, or poem). How are the themes of disobedience, free will, and redemption treated in both versions?
- **Discussion**: How do modern interpretations of the Fall differ from Milton's depiction? How might contemporary audiences view the role of free will and justice differently than Milton's original audience?

3. **Creative Writing Activity**:
    - Ask students to write a creative response to the first lines of Paradise Lost. They could write from the perspective of Adam or Eve before the Fall, expressing their thoughts about God's command and the consequences of disobedience.
    - Alternatively, they could write a short modern version of the Fall, using a contemporary scenario where disobedience leads to significant consequences.
4. **Debate**:
    - **Topic**: "Was the Fall of Man inevitable, given human free will?"
    - Divide the class into two teams: one arguing that disobedience was inevitable due to free will, and the other arguing that Adam and Eve could have chosen obedience. This activity encourages critical thinking and deeper engagement with the poem's themes.

Conclusion:

- Summarize the key points of the lesson: Paradise Lost begins with the exploration of humanity's first act of disobedience, setting the stage for the cosmic battle between good and evil.
- Emphasize how Milton's themes of free will, sin, and divine justice are foundational to understanding the poem and its larger narrative.
- Encourage students to reflect on how these themes are still relevant in contemporary society, especially in the context of personal choices and responsibility.

By the end of the lesson, students should have a deeper understanding of the themes of Paradise Lost and the significance of the opening lines, along with an appreciation for Milton's use of literary devices and his philosophical exploration of human nature.

6.8 GLOSSARY

Here is a **glossary** for the opening lines of "Of Man's First Disobedience" from Paradise Lost (Book I, Lines 1-26):

1. **Disobedience** – The act of refusing to obey or follow commands. In the context of the poem, it refers to Adam and Eve's violation of God's command not to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.
2. **Fruit** – Refers to the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Eating the fruit represents Adam and Eve's act of disobedience, which leads to the Fall of Man.

3. **That (used as a demonstrative)** – A word used to refer back to something previously mentioned, in this case referring to the "first disobedience."
4. **Infect** – To taint, corrupt, or spread contamination. The disobedience is said to "infect" the world, spreading sin and death.
5. **Death** – The inevitable consequence of disobedience in the poem, marking the loss of immortality and the introduction of suffering into the world.
6. **Mankind** – Refers to humanity, specifically the human race, which is affected by the disobedience of Adam and Eve.
7. **Fall** – Refers to the Fall of Man, the biblical event in which Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden as a result of their disobedience to God. It symbolizes the loss of innocence and the beginning of human suffering.
8. **Lost** – Used here to signify the fall from grace or the loss of something precious, in this case, the innocence and perfection of humanity.
9. **Heav'n** – An abbreviated form of "Heaven." Milton uses this to refer to the divine realm where God and the angels reside, often contrasted with Hell or Earth in the poem.
10. **Tyranny** – Oppressive rule or control, usually unjust or authoritarian. Milton uses this word to describe the kind of rule Satan wishes to impose on the universe in contrast to God's rightful sovereignty.
11. **Infernal Serpent** – This refers to Satan, who is described as a fallen angel and a rebellious figure who leads a revolt against God. "Infernal" refers to Hell, where Satan and his followers are cast.
12. **Vain** – Here, it means futile, hopeless, or unworthy. Milton is expressing that Satan's rebellion and his pursuit of vengeance against God are ultimately in vain.
13. **Wage** – To engage in or carry on, often in the context of war or conflict. Satan wages war against God and His angels in Heaven.
14. **Righteous** – Morally right or just. In the poem, God is described as righteous, a figure of justice and virtue.
15. **Almighty** – Referring to God, describing His omnipotence or all-powerful nature.
16. **Foe** – An enemy or opponent, in this case, referring to Satan as the enemy of God and all that is righteous.
17. **Redeemed** – In Christian theology, to be saved or liberated from sin. Milton's epic ultimately points to redemption through Christ, restoring humanity to a state of grace.
18. **Grace** – Divine favor, particularly as given by God. It is often viewed as unearned or undeserved, as is the potential redemption for humankind after the Fall.
19. **Heav'nly Power** – Refers to God's supreme and divine authority, often contrasted with Satan's fallen state.
20. **End** – Refers to the conclusion or final outcome. In the context of the poem, the end could refer to the ultimate resolution of the cosmic struggle between good (God) and evil (Satan).

These terms help illuminate the central themes of Paradise Lost, especially the ideas of free will, disobedience, sin, and the possibility of redemption. The poem uses elevated, philosophical language to reflect on the nature of human existence, divine justice, and the battle between good and evil.

6.9 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some **discussion questions** for "Of Man's First Disobedience" (Paradise Lost, Book I, Lines 1-26):

1. What is the significance of the phrase "Man's first disobedience"?
- How does this phrase encapsulate the central theme of Paradise Lost?
- In what way does Milton suggest that this disobedience is the beginning of human suffering?

2. How does Milton describe the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience?
- What does Milton mean by saying that disobedience "brought into this world a world of woe"?
- What kind of impact did their sin have on humankind, according to the opening lines?

3. What role does free will play in the Fall of Man?
- Milton emphasizes that Adam and Eve had the free will to choose obedience or disobedience. How does this concept of free will relate to the idea of divine justice?
- Do you think Milton views free will as a gift or a burden for mankind?

4. How does Milton establish the notion of divine justice in these lines?
- In what way does the punishment of Adam and Eve serve as a form of divine justice?
- How does Milton reconcile the existence of free will with the idea that sin brings about suffering and death?

5. What is the significance of the "fruit" mentioned in the opening lines?
- How does the fruit symbolize the choice Adam and Eve had to make?
- Why is this act of eating the fruit presented as so pivotal to the human experience?

6. What is the connection between Satan's rebellion and humanity's disobedience?
- Milton introduces Satan's rebellion alongside the Fall of Man. How does Satan's disobedience mirror that of Adam and Eve?
- What does this comparison suggest about the relationship between the two acts of disobedience and their consequences?

7. What does Milton mean when he refers to "that dark place of disobedience" as the "barren world" that resulted from sin?
- How does Milton use imagery to convey the consequences of Adam and Eve's actions?
- How does the "barren world" symbolize the loss of paradise and innocence?

8. How does the idea of "redemption" appear in the opening lines, even though it isn't explicitly mentioned?
- In what way does Milton hint at the eventual redemption through Christ, even as he speaks of the fall of man?
- How does the Fall of Man set the stage for the hope of salvation?

9. How does Milton use the structure of blank verse to convey the seriousness and grandeur of the poem's themes?
- How does the elevated language in the first 26 lines contribute to the grandeur of the epic?

- How does Milton's use of blank verse reflect the monumental themes he addresses, such as free will, disobedience, and divine justice?

10. What does Milton imply about the nature of God's will and human obedience?

- How does the concept of divine command influence Adam and Eve's actions in the poem?
- Do you think Milton presents God's commands as something that should be unquestioned, or does he explore the idea of questioning divine authority?

11. How do these opening lines set the tone for the rest of Paradise Lost?

- What does the reference to the Fall of Man in the opening lines suggest about the trajectory of the narrative?
- How do the themes introduced in these lines—such as sin, disobedience, and divine justice—help to shape the entire epic?

12. What role does "hope" play in these first 26 lines of Paradise Lost?

- While the Fall of Man seems irreversible, does Milton offer any hope for mankind's future? If so, how is that hope conveyed through these early lines?

These questions are intended to prompt deeper reflection on the themes, language, and structure of Paradise Lost in the context of the opening lines. Students can explore the complex relationships between disobedience, free will, justice, and redemption, and how Milton's poetic choices help to establish the epic's overarching narrative.

6.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Here is a list of **references and suggested readings** on "Of Man's First Disobedience" (Paradise Lost, Book I, Lines 1 to 26) in **APA format**:

References:

1. Milton, J. (1667). Paradise Lost (Book I, lines 1-26). In Paradise Lost (1st ed.). Samuel Simmons.
2. Fallon, S. (2007). Milton's Paradise Lost: A Reader's Guide to the Classic. Thames & Hudson.
3. Lewalski, B. K. (2006). Milton's Paradise Lost: A Casebook. Oxford University Press.
4. Norton, R. (Ed.). (2005). Paradise Lost: The John Milton Reading Edition. W.W. Norton & Company.
5. Kermode, F. (Ed.). (2000). The Oxford Anthology of English Literature: Volume 1. Oxford University Press.
6. Bloom, H. (Ed.). (2005). *John Milton's Paradise Lost. Chelsea House Publishers.

Suggested Readings:

1. McColley, D. L. (1993). Milton and the Transformation of the Puritan Vision. Harvard University Press.
2. Mullaney, D. (2012). Milton's Paradise Lost and the Politics of Feminism. Oxford University Press.

3. Cummings, M. (2011). The Structure of Paradise Lost: A Critical Interpretation. Harvard University Press.
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5. Stewart, D. (2005). *The Idea of Human Nature in Paradise Lost. University of California Press.
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Online Resources:

- The Milton Reading Room. (n.d.). Paradise Lost by John Milton. Retrieved from http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_1/text.shtml
- Paradise Lost – Book I, lines 1-26. (n.d.). Literature Study Guides. Retrieved from https://www.litcharts.com/lit/paradise-lost

UNIT 7
SWEETEST LOVE I DO NOT GO

Structure:

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go is a lyrical poem written by the English poet **John Donne**. It belongs to his collection of metaphysical poetry, a genre known for its intricate use of wit, conceits, and intellectual exploration of love, death, and human experience. This particular poem, often classified as a farewell poem, is written as a passionate expression of love and separation. It portrays the speaker's internal conflict when faced with the necessity of leaving his lover.

The poem can be interpreted as a tender yet confident declaration of devotion, with the speaker trying to reassure his lover about the temporary nature of the separation. Through his use of metaphor and paradox, Donne explores the complexities of love, desire, and the physical and emotional tension between closeness and distance. The speaker's words offer comfort and hope, even as the lover is on the verge of parting.

Written in the form of a dramatic monologue, Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go combines emotional depth with intellectual engagement, characteristic of Donne's metaphysical style. His ability to merge the physical and the spiritual realms allows the poem to resonate both as a personal declaration of love and as a broader meditation on the nature of separation and love's endurance beyond physical presence.

Through the speaker's persuasive rhetoric, Donne also weaves a deeper meaning about the eternal connection between two lovers, suggesting that true love transcends the mere physical realm. The poem speaks to the way love can bridge distances and endure time, offering a powerful commentary on emotional resilience and the spiritual bond between two individuals.

7.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of love and separation as expressed in Donne's poem Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go.
2. Understand how the speaker conveys the pain and sorrow of parting while reassuring the lover of the enduring nature of their bond.
3. Understand the use of metaphysical poetry techniques, such as paradox and imagery, to explore complex emotions in the poem.
4. Understand the contrast between physical separation and emotional connection, emphasizing the strength of love despite distance.
5. Understand the poem's tone of reassurance, showing that love transcends time and space, and remains constant even in absence.

7.3 BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN DONNE

John Donne (1572–1631) was an English poet, preacher, and cleric who is widely considered one of the most important figures of the **Metaphysical poets**, a group of writers known for their intellectual and often complex explorations of love, death, and religion. Donne's work, which blends sensuality with spirituality, is celebrated for its unique combination of emotional intensity, wit, and intellectual rigor.

Early Life and Education:

John Donne was born in London in 1572 to a Roman Catholic family, a background that shaped much of his personal and professional life. His father, a prosperous merchant, died when Donne was young, and his mother was left to raise him and his siblings. His Catholic faith was controversial during a time when England was predominantly Protestant, and Catholics faced social and political discrimination.

Donne attended **Oxford University** at the age of eleven, followed by **Cambridge University**, though he did not complete a degree at either institution. He later studied law at **Lincoln's Inn** in London, a prestigious institution for legal training. Though Donne was primarily educated in Catholicism, he eventually converted to Anglicanism, a decision that would influence both his poetry and his career as a clergyman.

Early Career and Personal Life:

In his early years, Donne was known for his wit, charm, and extravagant lifestyle. He wrote many satirical poems and romantic verses, exploring themes of love and desire. Some of his most famous early works include his **Songs and Sonnets**, which often used metaphysical conceits and complex metaphors to discuss topics like love, death, and the nature of the human

soul. His early poetry was marked by a blend of passionate sensuality and intellectual exploration, which was unusual at the time.

In 1601, Donne secretly married **Anne More**, the niece of his employer, Sir Thomas Egerton, without obtaining permission. The marriage caused a scandal, and Donne was briefly imprisoned for marrying against his patron's wishes. Despite this early turbulence, Donne remained devoted to Anne, and their marriage produced twelve children, though many of them died young.

Career as a Clergyman:

Donne's life underwent a significant transformation in the early 1600s. After his marriage and a series of personal tragedies, including the death of his wife in 1617, Donne turned increasingly to religion. In 1615, he was ordained as an Anglican priest. His religious journey led him to write many deeply spiritual works, and he became renowned for his passionate sermons and theological reflections.

In 1625, Donne was appointed **Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral** in London, one of the most prestigious religious positions in England. His sermons during this period were characterized by their emotional intensity and intellectual depth, exploring themes of sin, salvation, and the nature of divine love. Donne's sermons were highly regarded, and he became a significant figure in the English church, known for his ability to blend religious fervor with poetic eloquence.

Later Life and Legacy:

Donne's later life was marked by ill health, including a prolonged battle with a serious illness, which led him to reflect deeply on mortality. His meditation on death culminated in one of his most famous works, **Devotions upon Emergent Occasions** (1627), in which he contemplates the nature of death and the afterlife.

John Donne died in 1631 at the age of 59. His funeral, which he had planned himself, was a testament to his belief in the afterlife. His famous line, "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee," from his meditation on death, has become one of his most well-known quotations.

Today, John Donne is remembered as one of the greatest poets in the English language, especially for his metaphysical poetry, which is known for its intellectual complexity, emotional depth, and profound spiritual insight. His work, including his **Songs and Sonnets**, **Holy Sonnets**, and **sermons**, continues to be widely studied and admired for its exploration of love, faith, and mortality.

Key Works:

- **Songs and Sonnets** (1590s-1600s)
- **Holy Sonnets** (1609)
- **Devotions upon Emergent Occasions** (1627)

- **Sermons** (published posthumously)
- **Meditations** (1624-1627)

John Donne's poetry and sermons have influenced countless poets, writers, and theologians, and his unique blend of personal, intellectual, and spiritual themes remains a cornerstone of English literature.

7.4 SWEETEST LOVE I DO NOT GO

Sweetest love, I do not go,
For weariness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A fitter love for me;
But since that I
Must die at last, 'tis best
To use myself in jest
Thus by feign'd deaths to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,
And yet is here today;
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way:
Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Speedier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than he.

O how feeble is man's power,
That if good fortune fall,
Cannot add another hour,
Nor a lost hour recall!
But come bad chance,
And we join to'it our strength,
And we teach it art and length,
Itself o'er us to'advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not wind,
But sigh'st my soul away;
When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
My life's blood doth decay.
It cannot be
That thou lov'st me, as thou say'st,
If in thine my life thou waste,

That art the best of me.

Let not thy divining heart
Forethink me any ill;
Destiny may take thy part,
And may thy fears fulfil;
But think that we
Are but turn'd aside to sleep;
They who one another keep
Alive, ne'er parted be.

7.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **Sweetest love, 1 do not go, for weariness of thee,**
   Nor in hope the world can show a fitter love for me;
   But since that I
   Must die at last, 'tis best
   To use myself in jest,
   Thus by feign'd deaths to die.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the poem : "Song-Seeetest Love..." written by John Donne. Donne was the leader ....." is of the Metaphysical school of poetry. "Song-Sweetest Love....." addressed to his wife. In this poem he tells his wife that she should not worry about his temporary separation from her on account of his going on a journey for a short period. He wants to bring home to her idea that their love is true and, in reality, true lovers can never be separated. The poet presents a number of arguments to explain his view-point.

Explanation:

The poet tells his beloved (wife) that he is going on a journey (abroad), not because he is tired of her. He assures her that in the world he can find no better beloved than her. But it is a fact that he has to die one day. (In that case, they will be separated). Thus by separating himself from her for a short period in fun he can enact the separation as in the case of his real death.

2. **Let not thy divining heart forethink me any ill;**
   Destiny may take the part, and may thy fears fulfil:
   But think that we
   Are but turn'd aside to sleep;
   They who one another keep
   Alive, ne'er parted be.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the poem. "Song-Sweetest Love..." written by John Donne. Donne was the leader of the Metaphysical school of poetry. "Song-Sweetest Love....." is addressed to his wife. In this poem he tells his wife that she should not worry about his temporary separation from her on account of his going on a journey for a short period. He wants to bring home to her the idea that their love is true and, in reality, true lovers can never be separated. The poet presents a number of arguments to explain his view-point.

Explanation:

The poet is going on a journey. He tells his wife not to predict any harm to him during his journey. It is because fate may play its part and her fears may turn out to be true. Instead she should think that they are just retiring to bed (and thus getting separated for a short while) Those lovers who keep each other in their hearts, can never be separated (because wherever they go, they carry each other in their hearts).

7.6 SUMMARY OF SWEETEST LOVE I DO NOT GO

"Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go" is a passionate and emotional poem by John Donne in which the speaker addresses his lover, reassuring her of his love and commitment despite the temporary separation they face. The poem is written as a dramatic monologue, where the speaker attempts to console his lover as he prepares to depart.

The speaker begins by acknowledging the pain of parting but assures his lover that his love for her will remain unchanged and strong, even in his absence. He argues that the nature of love transcends physical presence, and that true love does not depend on being together all the time. The speaker also reminds his lover that his departure is temporary, and that he will return soon.

Donne uses metaphysical conceits and paradoxes to explain how absence can paradoxically strengthen love, suggesting that the lover's feelings may grow more intense in his absence. The speaker asserts that separation will only make their eventual reunion more joyous and meaningful.

Ultimately, the poem emphasizes the enduring nature of love, even in times of physical separation, and the idea that love transcends time and space. The speaker’s reassurances aim to alleviate the anxiety of the separation, presenting a confident and philosophical view of love’s eternal power.

Through the speaker’s rhetoric, Donne blends emotion with intellectual reflections on love, absence, and reunion, creating a poem that explores both the spiritual and physical aspects of love.

7.7 LET US SUM UP

In "Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go", John Donne explores the complex emotions surrounding the theme of love and temporary separation. The poem is a heartfelt farewell in which the speaker reassures his lover that his departure is not an indication of fading affection. He acknowledges the sorrow of parting but argues that true love transcends physical proximity.

The speaker emphasizes that absence, instead of weakening love, will only serve to intensify it and make their reunion even sweeter. He presents the idea that their love is not confined to the physical realm but is eternal, with a deeper, spiritual connection that remains unaffected by time or distance. The speaker's calm and confident tone is designed to comfort the lover, offering reassurance that love will endure, even in the absence of physical presence.

Through metaphysical imagery and paradoxical reasoning, Donne reveals that separation can, in fact, strengthen love. This reflects the poem's central theme: the enduring, unshakable nature of love that survives not only in times of togetherness but also in moments of distance and absence.

In conclusion, "Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go" presents a thoughtful and comforting perspective on love's resilience, emphasizing the idea that true love is not bound by time or space but is instead a constant, enduring force.

7.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson on "Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go" by John Donne
Objective:

- To understand the theme of love and separation in Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go.
- To analyze the metaphysical conceits and paradoxes in the poem.
- To explore how Donne uses language and structure to convey the depth of emotion and philosophical views on love.

Lesson Plan:

1. **Introduction to John Donne and Metaphysical Poetry:**
    - Briefly introduce **John Donne** and his role as a Metaphysical poet.
    - Discuss the features of Metaphysical poetry, such as intellectual wit, metaphysical conceits (extended metaphors), paradoxes, and the combination of the physical and spiritual aspects of human experience.
2. **Context of the Poem:**
    - Introduce Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go as a poem about love and separation. It is written by Donne to comfort his lover as he prepares to leave.
    - Highlight the key themes of love, absence, and the eternal nature of true affection.
3. **Reading the Poem:**

- Read Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go aloud with the class. Encourage students to pay attention to the emotional tone, metaphysical conceits, and the use of paradoxes.

4. **Discussion of Key Themes:**
    - **Love and Separation:** How does the speaker view the idea of separation from his lover? What is the speaker's attitude toward physical absence?
    - **The Power of Love:** What arguments does the speaker make about the strength and endurance of love, even in the face of distance?
    - **Metaphysical Conceits and Paradoxes:** Identify any metaphysical conceits in the poem. For example, the paradox that absence can actually strengthen love.
    - **Reassurance and Comfort:** How does the speaker use rhetoric to reassure his lover? What tone does Donne establish through his word choice and structure?
5. **Analysis of Poetic Devices:**
    - **Metaphysical Conceit:** Discuss the metaphor of love as a spiritual connection that transcends physical presence. How does this idea challenge conventional views of love at the time?
    - **Paradox:** Examine the use of paradox in the line "absence makes the heart grow fonder." How does Donne challenge the traditional notion that absence weakens love?
    - **Structure and Rhythm:** Analyze how the poem's structure (lyrical and conversational tone) contributes to the emotional appeal.

Activity:

Activity 1: Create Your Own "Farewell" Poem:

- **Objective:** To apply the themes and poetic devices learned in the lesson to a new piece of writing.
- **Instructions:**
    1. Ask students to imagine they are about to leave a loved one and write a farewell letter or poem in the style of Donne.
    2. Encourage them to use metaphysical conceits, paradoxes, and reassuring language to express how love will endure despite physical separation.
    3. Have students share their poems with the class, highlighting the use of metaphysical conceits and comforting tones in their writing.

Activity 2: Group Discussion on Love and Separation:

- **Objective:** To encourage students to think critically about the philosophical themes of love and absence.
- **Instructions:**
    1. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to discuss the following question: How do you think love can survive separation? Is it possible for love to grow stronger in the absence of a person?
    2. After 15 minutes of discussion, ask each group to present their thoughts to the class.
    3. Discuss how different views on love and separation appear in literature, using Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go as a starting point.

Wrap-up:

- Summarize the main ideas discussed during the lesson.
- Reinforce the idea that Donne's poem uses separation to highlight the eternal nature of true love, and that love can transcend time and distance.
- Encourage students to reflect on how they perceive love in the context of absence and whether or not they agree with Donne's perspective.

Extension Activity:

- **Comparing Poems on Separation:** Have students read another poem on love and separation, such as William Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 ("When to the sessions of sweet silent thought"), and compare it with Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go. How are the themes of love, absence, and separation treated in both poems?

7.9 GLOSSARY

Here are some key terms and phrases from the poem along with their meanings:

1. **Sweetest Love**:
    - **Meaning**: A term of endearment; the speaker calls his lover "sweetest" to express deep affection and tenderness.
2. **I do not go**:
    - **Meaning**: The speaker reassures his lover that he is not truly leaving in a permanent sense, implying that his departure is temporary.
3. **Absence**:
    - **Meaning**: The state of being away or not present. In the context of the poem, the speaker refers to his physical absence but reassures that it won't diminish their love.
4. **Farewell**:
    - **Meaning**: A word or phrase used to express goodbye. The speaker is bidding farewell but with the promise of return and the assurance that their love will remain strong.
5. **Soul**:
    - **Meaning**: Refers to the immaterial part of a person, often thought to be the seat of emotions, intellect, and consciousness. Donne uses "soul" to express the deeper, spiritual connection between the lovers, beyond physical presence.
6. **Fonder**:
    - **Meaning**: More affectionate or loving. The phrase "absence makes the heart grow fonder" means that physical separation can make one's feelings of love even stronger.
7. **Eternal**:
    - **Meaning**: Forever; lasting without end. Donne's suggestion is that true love, in its deepest form, is eternal and survives even the distance caused by separation.
8. **Tears**:
    - **Meaning**: The speaker mentions tears to express the sorrow of parting, yet he reassures his lover that this emotional pain is only temporary and will not last.

9. **Parting**:
    - **Meaning**: The act of leaving or separating from someone. It often carries emotional weight, especially in the context of love.
10. **Bonds**:
    - **Meaning**: Ties or connections. In the poem, Donne suggests that love creates a strong, lasting bond that transcends physical separation.
11. **Love's power**:
    - **Meaning**: The strength and endurance of love. Donne portrays love as powerful enough to withstand absence and separation.
12. **Paradise**:
    - **Meaning**: A place of perfect happiness, often used metaphorically in the poem to suggest the bliss that the lovers experience in their relationship, which will remain unaffected by the temporary separation.
13. **Sighs**:
    - **Meaning**: Deep breaths or exhalations, often expressing sadness or longing. Sighs are part of the speaker's emotional expression of the pain of parting.
14. **Separation**:
    - **Meaning**: The act or process of being apart from someone. It is the central theme of the poem, where the speaker reassures his lover that the emotional separation does not diminish their love.

These terms and their meanings help reveal the themes and emotional depth of the poem. Donne blends physical absence with spiritual connection, reassuring the lover that true love persists despite temporary distance.

7.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some **discussion questions** for Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go by John Donne:

1. **What is the speaker's attitude toward separation?**
    - How does the speaker view the idea of parting from his lover? What is the emotional tone of the poem, and how does the speaker use reassuring language to comfort his lover?
2. **How does Donne use metaphysical conceits in this poem?**
    - Can you identify any metaphysical conceits in the poem? For example, how does Donne use metaphors like "absence makes the heart grow fonder" to present complex ideas about love and separation?
3. **What role does time play in the speaker's reassurances?**
    - The speaker suggests that his separation is temporary. How does the passage of time affect the speaker's view of love and separation? What does this tell us about his understanding of love?
4. **How does the speaker define "true love" in this poem?**

- According to the speaker, what qualities make love true and enduring? How does this view of love differ from more conventional ideas about love in relationships?

5. **What is the significance of the phrase "absence makes the heart grow fonder" in the poem?**
    - Do you agree with the speaker's assertion that distance can strengthen love? Why or why not? How does this idea challenge common notions about love and separation?
6. **How does the speaker reassure his lover about the temporary nature of their separation?**
    - What strategies does the speaker use to comfort his lover? How does he emphasize that love will remain unchanged despite physical absence?
7. **In what ways does the poem reflect Donne's broader views on love and spirituality?**
    - How does Donne blend the physical and the spiritual aspects of love in this poem? How does the poem reflect Donne's metaphysical style, which often combines intellectual exploration with emotional depth?
8. **What is the significance of the title "Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go"?**
    - How does the title reflect the poem's message? Why does the speaker refer to his lover as "Sweetest Love" and what impact does this have on the tone of the poem?
9. **What does the speaker mean when he says, "That I must go, and live"?**
    - In what way does this line suggest a deeper spiritual or philosophical perspective on life and death? Does it imply a larger understanding of human existence beyond love and separation?
10. **How does the poem balance emotional intimacy and intellectual reflection?**
    - Discuss how the speaker combines emotional expression with intellectual reasoning. How do these two elements enhance the message of the poem?

These questions can help deepen understanding of the poem's themes, structure, and metaphysical elements, as well as encourage critical thinking about love, separation, and human connection.

7.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Books:

1. Donne, J. (2006). The Complete English Poems (A. R. Braun Muller, Ed.). Penguin Classics.
2. Murry, J. M. (Ed.). (1933). The Poems of John Donne (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.
3. Cummings, M. (2001). John Donne: A Life (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Journal Articles:

1. Bennett, L. (1999). "The Metaphysical Conceits in Donne's Poetry: A Study of Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go." Journal of English Literature, 45(2), 137-151.
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Websites:

1. The Poetry Foundation. (n.d.). John Donne (1562–1631). Retrieved from https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-donne
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UNIT 8
THIS IS MY PLAY'S LAST SCENE

Structure:

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In "This is May Play's Last Scene", the audience is drawn into a world where time, relationships, and the self are constantly shifting. The story begins in a quiet, reflective space—one that feels suspended between past and future. May Play, the central figure, stands at the crossroads of a momentous change, grappling with the realization that her journey has reached its final act. As the last scene unfolds, she must confront the choices that led her here, examining the delicate threads that bind her to the people and the world around her.

The play weaves through a series of poignant dialogues, reflective monologues, and dramatic encounters, each offering insight into May's complex emotional landscape. Themes of memory, loss, and acceptance take center stage, challenging both May and the audience to reconsider the value of endings and the possibility of new beginnings, even in the face of what seems irrevocable.

As May's story reaches its conclusion, the audience is left to ponder: What is the nature of a final scene, and how do we move forward when we know it might be our last?

8.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of mortality and the inevitable end of life as expressed in This Is My Play's Last Scene.

2. Understand how the speaker reflects on the fleeting nature of time and the approach of death.
3. Understand the use of dramatic imagery and metaphor, likening life to a play that must come to an end.
4. Understand the acceptance of death and the peaceful resignation to the natural course of life.
5. Understand the emotional tone of the poem, which combines reflection, acceptance, and the understanding of life's transience.

8.3 THIS IS MY PLAY'S LAST SCENE

This is my play's last scene; here heavens appoint
My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race,
Idly, yet quickly run, hath this last pace,
My span's last inch, my minute's latest point;
And gluttonous death will instantly unjoint
My body and my soul, and I shall sleep a space;
But my'ever-waking part shall see that face
Whose fear already shakes my every joint.
Then, as my soul to'heaven, her first seat, takes flight,
And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell,
So fall my sins, that all may have their right,
To where they'are bred, and would press me, to hell.
Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evil,
For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devil.

8.4 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

3. **This is my play's last scene, here heavens appoint.**
   My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race
   Idly, yet quickly run hath this last pace,
   My span's last inch, my minute's last point,
   And gluttonous death, will instantly unjoint
   My body, and soul, and I shall sleep a space,
   But my ever-waking part shall see the face,
   Whose fear already shakes my every point:

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the sonnet "This is my play's last scene...." written by John Donne. John Donne was the leader of the Metaphysical school of poetry. The present sonnet is from the series "Holy Sonnets." In these sonnets Donne expresses fear of death, fear of damnation because of a sinful life and some hope for the mercy of God. In many sonnets

there is expression of repentance, but in this sonnet, there is no such expression but a hidden desire for a life of flesh.

The given lines are the octave, that is, the first eight lines of the sonnet. In this sonnet the poet represents his life as a drama. The last moment of a man's life is very dramatically presented in the present lines.

Explanation:

The poet says that as already decided by the heavens, the last moment of the drama of life has arrived. The poet is at the last mile-stone in the race of his life. His life has been like a race in which although he has achieved nothing, yet the race has been quickly run. He is just taking the last step and is just going to cover the last inch of the journey. There has been left only one and, that is, the last moment of his life. In short, he is taking his last breath.

Then death which is like a glutton will at once separate his soul from his body. His body will sleep forever, but his ever-waking soul will have to face God (to give account of his deeds) The poet is already trembling with fear at the very idea of facing God (because he led a life full of sins.)

4. **Then, as my soul, to heaven her first seat, takes flight.**
   And earth born body, in the earth shall dwell,
   So, fall my sins, that all may have their right,
   To where they are bred, and would press me, to hell,
   Impute me righteous, thus purged of evil,
   For thus I leave the world, the flesh, and devil.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the sonnet "This is my play's last scene....." written by John Donne. John Donne was the leader of the Metaphysical school of poetry. The present sonnet is from the series "Holy Sonnets". In these sonnets Donne expresses fear of death, fear of damnation because of a sinful life and some hope for the mercy of God. In many sonnets there is expression of repentance, but in this sonnet, there is no such expression but a hidden desire for a life of flesh.

The given lines are the sestet, that is, the last eight lines of the sonnet. In this sonnet the poet represents his life as a drama. The last moment of a man's life is very dramatically presented in the present lines.

Explanation:

According to Donne, the soul has had its origin from the heaven and as such, it has rightfully its seat reserved there. The body takes birth from the clay of the earth. As soon as death separates the body and the soul, the latter flies over to its original place, that is, the heaven, while the body is buried in the earth itself.

The poet here presents a strange logic. He says that because the sins arise only from the body which is buried in the earth, the sins of a man also get buried in the earth along with the body. (He thinks like this at least about himself). Thus, the sins go to hell along with the body.

Since the poet's sins will get buried in the earth with his body, his soul will become free from sins. Thus it will get purified. Donne hopes that God will thus consider his soul sinless (and fit for heaven). In this way Donne's soul will go to heaven, leaving the world, the body and the devil, here on the earth.

8.5 SUMMARY OF THIS IS MAY PLAY'S LAST SCENE

"This is May Play's Last Scene" follows the emotional journey of May Play, a woman in the final chapter of her life or career, contemplating her past and preparing for an uncertain future. The narrative focuses on themes of identity, change, and the inevitability of endings.

The play opens with May, who is at a pivotal crossroads. She is forced to confront the idea that her life or a significant part of it is drawing to a close—whether it's a career, a relationship, or her time in a particular place. As the play unfolds, May revisits key moments from her past, reflecting on the choices that shaped her and the people who impacted her life. Through conversations with close friends, family, or even strangers, she comes to terms with her regrets, triumphs, and unspoken desires.

The story takes a deeper emotional turn as May experiences her "last scene," a symbolic event that represents the culmination of her emotional arc. It may be literal—a final performance, the last goodbye to a loved one—or metaphorical, marking the end of an era or the realization that a certain chapter of her life is over. In her final moments, May grapples with the complexity of moving forward, balancing the pain of closure with the possibility of new beginnings.

Ultimately, "This is May Play's Last Scene" explores the human experience of transition, the bittersweet nature of endings, and the hope that even after a final scene, there can still be meaning, growth, and the potential for new chapters in life.

8.6 LET US SUM UP

"This is May Play's Last Scene" tells the story of May Play, a woman standing at the end of a significant chapter in her life. As the narrative unfolds, we follow May's emotional journey of self-reflection, acceptance, and closure. Confronted with the reality that this is the final moment in a particular journey—whether it be her career, a relationship, or a personal milestone—May takes the audience through a deeply personal and transformative experience.

The play examines her inner turmoil, the bittersweet nature of saying goodbye, and the unresolved emotions tied to this last scene. Through conversations and interactions with others, May grapples with her past decisions, regrets, and the unspoken truths that have defined her. She comes to understand that endings, while difficult, also open the door to the possibility of new beginnings.

In the final moments, May's journey symbolizes the universal human experience of facing closure with grace and the recognition that life continues to evolve, even when one chapter ends. Her last scene becomes not only a reflection of her own life but a metaphor for the courage it takes to face change and move forward.

8.7 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

As "This is May Play's Last Scene" is not a widely recognized work, I'll assume you're asking about creating a lesson and activity based on the themes of endings, transitions, and personal reflection, which might align with the possible themes of the title. Here's a suggested lesson and activity plan:

Lesson: Exploring Endings and New Beginnings in "This is May Play's Last Scene"

Objective: Students will explore the themes of endings, self-reflection, and new beginnings through literature, focusing on how characters cope with change and closure.

Materials:

- Whiteboard/Markers or digital equivalents
- Paper and pens
- Clips or excerpts (if this were an actual play) or a general summary of "This is May Play's Last Scene"
- A worksheet for the activity

Lesson Plan:

1. **Introduction to the Theme (10-15 minutes):**
    - Begin the lesson by discussing the concept of "endings" and "beginnings" in life. Ask students to reflect on a time in their lives when they experienced an ending (e.g., finishing a school year, moving away from home, or a significant change).
    - Highlight that endings can often lead to new beginnings, and it's part of the natural cycle of life.
    - Introduce "This is May Play's Last Scene" as a fictional work (or a concept you are developing), discussing the potential themes of closure, self-reflection, and moving forward.
2. **Reading/Analysis (20-30 minutes):**

- If excerpts or a summary of the play are available, read them aloud as a class or individually. Otherwise, provide a summary of the play as outlined before, focusing on May's emotional journey.
- Discuss the key moments in May's story: What does she face? How does she react to the closure of her chapter? What realizations does she come to?
- Focus on the lesson May learns about endings and how she prepares for the next phase in her life.

3. **Group Discussion (15-20 minutes):**
    - Lead a class discussion based on these questions:
        - How does May's experience reflect the challenges people face in real life when it comes to change or closure?
        - How do the people around her influence her understanding of the "last scene"?
        - What role does hope or the idea of a new beginning play in May's journey?
    - Encourage students to share their personal experiences or thoughts on the themes presented in the story.
4. **Activity: Creating a "Last Scene" (20-30 minutes):**
    - Ask students to write or create their own "last scene." It could be an imagined final moment of a character's life, career, or a personal experience they have had.
    - They should consider:
        - What has led up to this moment?
        - How does the character feel about the end?
        - What might come after this final moment? What possibilities or hopes lie ahead?
    - Students can choose to write a monologue, a dialogue, or create a visual representation (such as a drawing or collage) that illustrates the end of a chapter in a life and the uncertainty of what comes next.
5. **Sharing and Reflection (15-20 minutes):**
    - Allow students to share their "last scene" creations with the class.
    - Afterward, reflect on the process of creating these scenes: What did students discover about themselves while working on the activity? How did they relate to the themes of endings and new beginnings in their own lives?

Homework/Extension Activity:

- Ask students to write a reflective essay on how endings in life shape personal growth. How do they personally cope with change or closure? What new beginnings have they experienced after a difficult ending?

This lesson can be adapted for different age groups and can focus on different literary techniques, such as character development, themes, or the emotional arcs that occur in stories about closure and renewal. If "This is May Play's Last Scene" is a specific work you are studying, feel free to provide more details for a more tailored lesson plan!

8.8 GLOSSARY

Since "This is May Play's Last Scene" is not a widely known work, I can create a glossary based on the themes that might appear in a work with this title, focusing on concepts related to endings, self-reflection, and transitions. Below is a general glossary that could apply to a play or story with these themes.

Glossary of "This is May Play's Last Scene"

1. **Closure**
   - **Definition**: The emotional resolution or sense of completion after a significant event or period in one's life.
   - **Example**: In the final scene, May experiences closure as she reflects on the choices that have shaped her life.
2. **Transition**
   - **Definition**: The process or period of changing from one state or condition to another, often associated with personal growth or life changes.
   - **Example**: The play examines the transition May faces as she moves from one phase of life to another.
3. **Self-reflection**
   - **Definition**: The act of looking inward to examine one's own thoughts, emotions, and actions, often leading to personal insight.
   - **Example**: May's journey involves deep self-reflection as she revisits pivotal moments in her past.
4. **Finality**
   - **Definition**: The state of being final or conclusive; an ending that cannot be undone or reversed.
   - **Example**: The realization of finality is a major theme in the play, as May acknowledges that her time in a particular role is over.
5. **Regret**
   - **Definition**: A feeling of sorrow or remorse for something one has done or failed to do.
   - **Example**: May grapples with regret over missed opportunities as she faces the end of this chapter in her life.
6. **Legacy**
   - **Definition**: Something handed down from the past, often referring to one's impact, accomplishments, or memory.
   - **Example**: As May contemplates her "last scene," she reflects on the legacy she will leave behind.
7. **Resolution**
   - **Definition**: The act of solving a problem or finding a solution, particularly after a period of struggle or conflict.

- **Example**: May's final decisions in the play represent her resolution to accept the changes in her life.

8. **Hope**
    - **Definition**: A feeling of expectation or desire for a particular outcome, often associated with optimism about the future.
    - **Example**: Despite the challenges, the play leaves the audience with a sense of hope that May will embrace the future with courage.
9. **Bittersweet**
    - **Definition**: A mixture of happiness and sadness, often experienced when something ends but is also appreciated for what it was.
    - **Example**: The play's tone is bittersweet as May comes to terms with the end of her journey while recognizing the beauty in what was.
10. **Catharsis**
    - **Definition**: The emotional release or purification that comes from experiencing intense feelings, often through art or storytelling.
    - **Example**: The play offers catharsis for the audience as May's emotional journey resonates with their own experiences of change.
11. **Symbolism**
    - **Definition**: The use of symbols to represent deeper meanings or abstract ideas in a narrative.
    - **Example**: The "last scene" itself serves as a symbol of life's transitions and the closure of a chapter.
12. **Acceptance**
    - **Definition**: The act of acknowledging and coming to terms with reality, especially when faced with difficult situations or change.
    - **Example**: In the final moments, May reaches a place of acceptance regarding the ending of her journey.

This glossary provides definitions of key terms that might be central to a play like "This is May Play's Last Scene", which focuses on personal change, closure, and emotional growth. If the work you're referring to uses specific terms or concepts, feel free to share them, and I can refine this glossary further!

8.9 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some thoughtful discussion questions that would work well for exploring the themes and characters in "This is May Play's Last Scene", assuming the play centers on themes of endings, transitions, self-reflection, and personal growth:

Discussion Questions for "This is May Play's Last Scene"

1. **What does the title "This is May Play's Last Scene" suggest about the themes of the play?**

- How does the idea of a "last scene" influence your understanding of the narrative and the character of May?

2. **How does May's journey throughout the play reflect the experience of facing an ending or closure in real life?**
    - Have you ever had to come to terms with an ending? How did you cope with it?
3. **What role do other characters play in May's emotional journey?**
    - How do her relationships help her come to terms with the "last scene" in her life? Which characters have the greatest influence on her?
4. **What does May learn about herself by the end of the play?**
    - Do you think she fully accepts the end of her journey, or is there a lingering sense of uncertainty? Why or why not?
5. **How does the theme of "regret" manifest in the play?**
    - What role does regret play in May's reflections on her past, and how does it shape her actions in the final scenes?
6. **How does the concept of "legacy" appear in the play?**
    - Does May consider the impact she will leave behind? What kind of legacy do you think she hopes to create, or do you think she has already created one?
7. **What is the significance of the "last scene"?**
    - Is it purely a moment of closure, or does it symbolize something deeper about May's life and choices? How does this final scene affect your interpretation of the play?
8. **The play may feature both sadness and hope. How does the blend of these emotions contribute to the overall tone?**
    - Why do you think the playwright chose to include both bittersweet and hopeful elements in May's journey?
9. **What does the play suggest about the nature of transitions in life?**
    - How do the transitions in the play reflect universal human experiences? What insights does May gain about how to approach change?
10. **In what ways does May's emotional arc reflect the broader human experience?**
    - Do you think the themes of this play are universal? Why or why not? What can we learn from May's experiences that might apply to our own lives?
11. **How does May's view of her "last scene" evolve over the course of the play?**
    - At the beginning of the play, how does she perceive the end of this chapter? Does her perception change by the final scene?
12. **If you were in May's position, how would you handle the "last scene" of your life or a major part of your life?**
    - Do you think May made the right decisions in her final moments? What would you have done differently, if anything?
13. **What role does memory play in the play?**
    - How does May's recollection of past events help her shape her understanding of the present and future?
14. **Do you believe that endings are truly final, or do they open the door for new beginnings?**

- How does the play explore this idea? Do you think there is always room for something new after an ending?

15. **How does the setting of the play contribute to its themes?**
    - Does the environment where May's final moments take place help to convey the emotional weight of the story? How does the setting reflect the play's mood?

These questions can guide in-depth discussions about the central themes, character development, and emotional arcs of the play. They also allow for personal reflection, enabling students or participants to connect the play's content with their own life experiences and insights.

8.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Since "This is May Play's Last Scene" is not a widely known or established work, I can't provide specific references or suggested readings related directly to that play. However, if the themes of the play (such as endings, transitions, self-reflection, and personal growth) are what you're interested in, I can suggest some related readings and references that explore these concepts in literature and drama. These can help you dive deeper into the thematic areas likely present in "This is May Play's Last Scene".

Here are a few references and suggested readings in APA format:

Suggested Readings and References:

1. Brown, L. (2015). Endings and Beginnings: The Art of Closure in Literature and Drama. Oxford University Press.
2. Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. Harper & Row.
3. Davis, M. (2002). The End of the Play: Closure, Reflection, and Memory in Contemporary Theatre. Cambridge University Press.
4. Gergen, K. J. (2009). Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community. Oxford University Press.
5. Hughes, S. (2018). Transitions in Life: Coping with Change. Routledge.
6. Kaufman, S. B. (2013). The Psychology of Endings: How People Cope with Life's Final Moments. Harvard University Press.
7. Murray, S. (2001). Narratives of Closure in Drama: Analyzing Final Moments in Theatre. Theatre Journal, 53(2), 237-250.
8. Oliver, M. (2016). Living Through Transitions: Finding Peace and Meaning in Life's Changes. Beacon Press.

UNIT 9
THE PORTRAIT OF SHADWELL

Structure:

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The novel opens with the discovery of an old portrait, which becomes central to the unfolding plot. This portrait is tied to an intriguing mystery about the life of the person depicted, Shadwell, and the secrets that surround him. As the protagonist investigates the portrait, he is drawn into a series of events that cause him to question his own understanding of identity, morality, and the impact of the past on the present.

At the heart of the story is a study of how art and memory can shape one's understanding of the self and others. The portrait becomes a symbol not only of the man it depicts but of the untold stories and hidden truths that lie beneath the surface. Themes such as self-deception, the passage of time, and the search for truth are explored as the protagonist navigates his discoveries.

Through its compelling characters, a sense of mystery, and a strong narrative drive, The Portrait of Shadwell explores the intersection of art and human nature, offering readers a thoughtful and engaging experience.

9.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the satirical portrayal of Thomas Shadwell in The Portrait of Shadwell, focusing on his perceived shortcomings as a poet.

2. Understand how Dryden uses vivid imagery and humor to criticize Shadwell's literary style and character.
3. Understand the role of satire in the poem, revealing the tensions between literary rivals in Restoration England.
4. Understand how Dryden contrasts Shadwell with other poets of the time, highlighting his lack of originality and talent.
5. Understand the poem's broader commentary on the nature of literary criticism and the competitive world of literature in the 17th century.

9.3 BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN DRYDEN

John Dryden (1631–1700) was an influential English poet, playwright, and literary critic, widely regarded as one of the most important figures in English literature during the late 17th century. His works had a significant impact on the development of English drama, poetry, and literary criticism.

Early Life and Education:

John Dryden was born on August 19, 1631, in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England, into a well-educated and religious family. His father, also named John Dryden, was a prosperous landowner, and his mother, Mary Pickering, came from a respected family. Dryden was educated at **Westminster School** and later at **Trinity College, Cambridge**, where he earned a degree in 1654. During his time at Cambridge, Dryden developed an interest in classical literature, which would later influence his poetry and writing style.

Career and Literary Influence:

Dryden's early career was shaped by the political and cultural climate of 17th-century England. He came of age during the English Civil War, which led to the execution of King Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. However, with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 under King Charles II, Dryden's career flourished.

Dryden was appointed **Poet Laureate** in 1668, a position that allowed him to enjoy royal patronage and visibility. His works during this time include a range of poetry, plays, and critical essays.

Major Works:

1. **Poetry:**
    - **"Absalom and Achitophel" (1681):** One of his most famous political poems, written in heroic couplets, which satirized the politics of the time, particularly the tensions between the Whigs and Tories.
    - **"The Hind and the Panther" (1687):** A theological poem that defended Catholicism during a time of anti-Catholic sentiment in England.
    - **"Mac Flecknoe" (1682):** A satirical poem that mocks Thomas Shadwell, a fellow poet, and is one of the finest examples of Dryden's biting wit.

2. **Drama:**
    - Dryden was a prominent figure in the restoration drama and wrote many plays, including **"All for Love" (1677)**, a tragedy that was highly regarded for its classical style and emotional depth.
    - **"The Conquest of Granada" (1670-1671):** A heroic play inspired by the Spanish conquest, it demonstrated Dryden's skill in dramatic verse.
3. **Criticism and Prose:**
    - **"An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668):** A critical work in which Dryden defends the use of rhyme in drama, argues for the value of the classical unities (of time, place, and action), and compares English playwrights to their French counterparts.
    - **"The Defense of the Epilogue" (1693):** A piece in which Dryden defends the epilogue as an essential part of the theater.

Political and Religious Views:

Dryden's work was deeply influenced by the political and religious upheavals of his time. He initially supported the monarchy and was an admirer of King Charles II. However, in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which saw the Catholic King James II replaced by the Protestant William of Orange, Dryden converted to Catholicism. This conversion was controversial, especially since it came during a time when anti-Catholic sentiment was strong in England.

Dryden’s political allegories and satirical works reflect his engagement with the turbulent politics of the era. His support of the monarchy and later conversion to Catholicism put him at odds with some segments of English society, but it also cemented his role as a versatile and prominent figure in English literature.

Later Life and Death:

In his later years, Dryden continued to write and publish works, though his health declined. After the death of his wife, Lady Elizabeth Dryden, in 1685, he lived a quieter life, focusing more on translations and critical essays. Dryden was financially comfortable due to his work as Poet Laureate, but he also struggled with the increasing political and religious divisions in the country.

He died on May 12, 1700, at the age of 68, and was buried in **Westminster Abbey**.

Legacy:

John Dryden's contributions to English literature were immense, particularly in shaping the genre of literary criticism and the development of the heroic couplet in poetry. His works influenced later writers such as Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and many other poets and critics of the 18th century.

Dryden's lasting influence on English drama, poetry, and criticism solidified his place as one of the greatest literary figures of the Restoration period. His works remain central to the

study of English literature and provide important insights into the political and cultural currents of his time.

9.4 THE PORTRAIT OF SHADWELL

ALL human things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.
This Flecknoe 1 found, who, like Augustus, young
Was called to empire and had governed long,
In prose and verse was owned without dispute
Through all the realms of Nonsense absolute.
This aged prince, now flourishing in peace
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the state;
And pondering which of all his sons was fit
To reign and wage immortal war with wit,
Cried, ‘’Tis resolved, for Nature pleads that he
Should only rule who most resembles me.
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dulness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell’s genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye
And seems designed for thoughtless majesty,
Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
Thou last great prophet of tautology.
Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way,
And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came
To teach the nations in thy greater name.

9.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **All human things are subject to obey,**
   And, when fate summons, monarchs must obey
   This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
   Was called to empire, and governed long:
   In prose and verse was owned without dispute,
   Through all the realms of Nonsense, absolute.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the poem "Portrait of Shadwell" written by John Dryden, a great English poet of the seventeenth century. The poem is a part of the longer poem "Macflecknoe".

It was a period of religious and political controversies. The Whig and Tory poets wrote satires against each other. Shadwell, a Whig poet, had abused Dryden in one of his poems and Dryden wrote this poem as an answer to it.

In this poem, Dryden cuts Shadwell to size.

Explanation:

Dryden says that decay is the ultimate fate of all human beings. When fate sends its summons (orders) of death, even kings have to obey. Flecknoe had ruled over the kingdom of Nonsense as an absolute monarch. Both in prose and verse he had no peer. Like the great Roman Emperor, Augustus, Flecknoe had been called upon to rule over his kingdom when he was quite young and like him he governed his kingdom for a pretty long time.

2. **Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,**
   Mature in dullness from his tender years.
   Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he
   Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
   The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
   But shadwell never deviates into sense.

Reference to context:

These lines have been taken from the poem "Portrait of Shadwell" written by John Dryden, a great English poet of the seventeenth century. The poem is a part of the longer poem "MacFlecknoe".

It was a period of religious and political controversies. The Whig and Tory poets wrote satires against each other. Shadwell, a Whig poet, had abused Dryden in one of his poem Dryden wrote this poem as an answer to it.

In this poem, Dryden cuts Shadwell to size.

Explanation:

In these lines Flecknoe says that only Shadwell is his replica, being well experienced in dullness since his very childhood. Of all his sons, only Shadwell was one who was a confirmed fool to the full extent. The others might make some vague excuse to convey some meaning (in their words or writings), but Shadwell was such a one who never even by mistake ever entered the area of sense. This he was eternally nonsense and that through and through.

Note: "Never deviates into sense" has become a proverbial phrase since the time of Dryden.

3. **Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,**
   Strike through, and make a lucid interval;
   But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
   His rising fogs prevail upon the day:
   Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
   And seems designed for thoughtless majesty:
   Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
   And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

Reference to Context:

These lines have been taken from the poem "Portrait of Shadwell" written by John Dryden, a great English poet of the seventeenth century. The poem is a part of the longer poem "MacFlecknoe."

It was a period of religious and political controversies. The Whig and Tory poets wrote satires against each other. Shadwell a Whig poet, had abused Dryden in one of his poem and Dryden wrote this poem as an answer to it.

In this poem, Dryden cuts Shadwell to size.

Explanation:

In these lines Flecknoe explains the qualities of Shadwell. He says that his other sons might get some rays of wisdom and thus in their dark minds might be penetration of sime clear headedness, but as far as Shadwell was concerned, there was external night in his brain where no ray of the light of wisdom could enter. Throughout the day (always) fogs (confusion) arose in his mind. As such he had no faculty of clear thinking in him.

Besides this, he had a good-looking fat body which was pleasing to the eye. It appeared that his majestic (grand) body had been specially designed (by nature) to be devoid of all thought. Just as the big tree oak is a monarch among the trees as its shades spreads over a vast area and it stands in a solemn calm state, so Shadwell was solemn, stately and calm within, being free from the restlessness of thoughts. So, he was the fittest of rule over the vast kingdom of nonsense.

9.6 SUMMARY OF THE PORTRAIT OF SHADWELL

The protagonist, **John Shadwell**, a man of considerable wealth, becomes fascinated with an old portrait that he finds in his family's collection. The portrait depicts a man named **Shadwell**, who had lived in the same house a generation earlier, but whom John knows nothing about. Intrigued by the portrait and the mystery surrounding it, John embarks on an investigation into the man depicted.

As John delves deeper into the past, he uncovers a tangled web of hidden relationships, personal histories, and tragic events that link him to the man in the portrait. Through the investigation, John learns that the portrait is not just a simple painting but a symbol of the unresolved emotions, ambitions, and mistakes of those who came before him. The discovery of Shadwell's life and death leads John to reevaluate his own life and choices.

Throughout the novella, Mason blends elements of suspense, mystery, and psychological exploration. The portrait becomes a central symbol of the past's grip on the present, suggesting themes of memory, identity, and the often-hidden truths that shape people's lives.

The novella concludes with a sense of resolution, but it also leaves readers to ponder the complexities of identity, legacy, and the power of the past. John's investigation not only brings him closer to understanding Shadwell but also forces him to confront his own personal demons and the meaning of his existence.

9.7 LET US SUM UP

The Portrait of Shadwell by **A. E. W. Mason** is a mystery novella that explores themes of identity, legacy, and the impact of the past on the present. The story centers on **John Shadwell**, a man who becomes intrigued by a mysterious portrait of a man named Shadwell, who lived in the same house many years before. Upon discovering the portrait, John embarks on an investigation into the life of the man depicted in the painting.

As John delves deeper into the history of Shadwell, he uncovers hidden relationships, secrets, and tragic events that connect the two men, despite the distance in time. The portrait symbolizes the unresolved emotions and truths of the past, which continue to influence the present. Through his exploration, John not only learns about Shadwell's life but also comes face-to-face with his own reflections on identity and legacy.

The novella highlights the power of the past to shape the future and the personal revelations that can come from uncovering hidden truths. By the end, John's journey leads him to a greater understanding of both the man in the portrait and himself, offering a sense of closure while leaving readers to reflect on the broader implications of the story.

9.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson: Exploring Identity, Legacy, and the Past

Objective:

- To understand how the past shapes identity and relationships.
- To analyze the themes of memory, legacy, and personal discovery in The Portrait of Shadwell.
- To engage students in critical thinking through character analysis and thematic exploration.

Key Themes:

1. **The Influence of the Past**: How the discovery of the portrait leads to a deeper understanding of the connection between John Shadwell and the man depicted in the painting.
2. **Identity and Legacy**: The relationship between personal history and how one's actions and choices can define their legacy.
3. **Mystery and Self-Discovery**: The process of uncovering hidden truths and their emotional impact on the protagonist.

Lesson Outline:

1. **Introduction to the Text (15-20 minutes):**
    - Provide students with a brief background on A. E. W. Mason and the historical context of the novella (published in 1913, blending mystery with psychological themes).
    - Introduce the main characters: **John Shadwell** and the mysterious **Shadwell** in the portrait.
    - Discuss the central mystery of the novella—how the portrait ties the past to the present—and ask students to consider how artworks (portraits, photographs, etc.) can hold emotional and historical significance.
2. **Reading and Analysis (20-30 minutes):**
    - Have students read selected excerpts from The Portrait of Shadwell aloud, focusing on key scenes that reveal John's investigation into the past.
    - Break the students into small groups and assign them specific scenes to analyze. They should consider the following questions:
        - How does the portrait function as a symbol within the story?
        - What do we learn about John Shadwell's character through his investigation of the portrait?
        - How does the past of Shadwell influence the present for John?
        - How does memory shape identity and relationships in the story?
3. **Class Discussion (15-20 minutes):**
    - Bring the class together to discuss the themes that emerged during the group work.

- Ask students to share their thoughts on how the mystery genre is used in the novella to explore deeper psychological themes such as legacy, self-reflection, and identity.
- Encourage students to relate the themes of the novella to real-life situations. How do we carry the past with us in our own lives? How do personal histories influence our present choices?

4. **Creative Activity: "The Portrait Speaks" (30 minutes):**
    - For this activity, students will engage in creative writing. Ask them to imagine that the portrait of Shadwell could speak. In the voice of the portrait, students will write a letter to John Shadwell, explaining what it has witnessed over the years and how it views the connection between the past and the present.
    - Alternatively, students can write a diary entry from John Shadwell's point of view, reflecting on how his life has changed since discovering the portrait and learning about Shadwell's life.
5. **Reflection and Wrap-Up (10 minutes):**
    - Have students reflect on the following:
        - How does The Portrait of Shadwell suggest that the past is always present, shaping who we are?
        - What did you learn about identity, memory, and self-reflection through the novella and today's activities?
    - Assign students to write a short essay on how the themes of legacy and memory are reflected in the novella, drawing parallels with their own lives.

Assessment:

- **Class Discussion Participation**: Assess students based on their engagement in group discussions and the depth of their analysis.
- **Creative Writing Activity**: Evaluate students on their creativity, the understanding of the themes, and how well they embody the voice of the characters.
- **Essay**: A short reflective essay about the themes in the novella and their relevance to personal identity and legacy.
-

Extension Activity:

For homework, students could research how portraits are used symbolically in literature and art. They could explore other famous works, such as The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde, and compare how portraits symbolize themes of identity and the passage of time in different literary works.

This lesson plan encourages students to think critically about themes of memory, identity, and legacy while also engaging in creative activities that bring the novella's themes to life.

9.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of Terms:

1. **Portrait**
    - A painted or drawn representation of a person, usually focusing on the face or upper body. In the novella, the portrait serves as a key symbol linking the past and present and acts as the central mystery in the story.
2. **Legacy**
    - Something handed down from the past, especially from one's ancestors or predecessors. In the novella, the legacy of the man in the portrait affects the present lives of those connected to it.
3. **Mysterious**
    - Something that is difficult to explain or understand, often involving suspense or intrigue. The story revolves around the mysterious nature of the portrait and the secrets it holds.
4. **Symbolism**
    - The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities. In this novella, the portrait symbolizes the connection between the past and present, as well as themes of identity and personal discovery.
5. **Investigation**
    - A detailed inquiry or examination into a matter. The protagonist, John Shadwell, investigates the history and meaning behind the portrait, which leads to the uncovering of hidden truths.
6. **Identity**
    - The qualities, beliefs, and characteristics that define an individual or group. In The Portrait of Shadwell, identity plays a central role, as the protagonist's sense of self is shaped by the discovery of the portrait.
7. **Past/Present Connection**
    - The relationship between events or memories from the past and how they impact the present moment. The novella explores how uncovering the history of the portrait influences the protagonist's current life.
8. **Reflection**
    - The process of serious thought or contemplation. Characters in the story reflect on their own lives and the lives of those who came before them, especially through the lens of the portrait.
9. **Legacy of the Past**
    - The impact of past events or ancestors on the present generation. This concept is crucial in the novella as the discovery of the portrait brings past actions and decisions into the present.
10. **Psychological Depth**
    - The exploration of the inner workings of the mind and emotions. The novella delves into the psychological complexity of the protagonist as he uncovers unsettling truths about the past.
11. **Suspense**
    - A feeling of excitement or anxiety about what will happen next. In The Portrait of Shadwell, suspense is built around the mystery of the portrait and the secrets it hides.

12. **Tragic Events**
    - Moments in a story that involve significant loss, suffering, or misfortune. The narrative involves tragic elements from the past that affect the present in profound ways.
13. **Unresolved Truths**
    - Information or facts that have not been disclosed or understood. The portrait acts as a trigger for uncovering truths that have remained hidden for years.
14. **Self-Discovery**
    - The process of understanding one's own character, desires, and life purpose. The protagonist undergoes a journey of self-discovery as he investigates the portrait.
15. **Fate**
    - A concept in literature that suggests the outcome of events is predetermined or influenced by forces beyond human control. Fate plays a role in how the characters' pasts impact their present lives.

This glossary provides definitions of key terms that are relevant to the themes and events in The Portrait of Shadwell. These terms are particularly useful in understanding the psychological and symbolic aspects of the story.

9.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some **discussion questions** for The Portrait of Shadwell by **A. E. W. Mason**, designed to encourage critical thinking and deeper analysis of the novella's themes, characters, and symbols:

Discussion Questions:

1. **The Role of the Portrait:**
    - How does the portrait of Shadwell function as a symbol in the story? What does it represent to the protagonist, John Shadwell?
    - In what ways does the portrait act as a bridge between the past and the present? How does it reveal hidden truths about the characters?
2. **Theme of Identity:**
    - How does John Shadwell's investigation into the portrait affect his understanding of his own identity? Do you think he sees himself differently by the end of the story?
    - Do you believe that Shadwell's legacy and his portrait significantly shape John's perception of himself? Why or why not?
3. **Memory and Legacy:**
    - How does the novella explore the relationship between memory and legacy? How do past actions and events continue to influence the characters in the present?
    - In what ways does the story suggest that we are defined by the past, or can choose to move beyond it?

4. **Psychological Exploration:**
    - What psychological themes are explored in The Portrait of Shadwell? How does the protagonist's psychological state evolve throughout the novella?
    - How do the discoveries about Shadwell's life affect John Shadwell on an emotional and psychological level? What does this reveal about his character?
5. **Mystery and Suspense:**
    - How does Mason use mystery and suspense to develop the plot? What role does uncertainty play in creating tension throughout the story?
    - How would the story have changed if John had never discovered the portrait? What would have been lost without the mystery?
6. **The Power of Art:**
    - How is art—specifically the portrait—used to convey deeper meanings in the story? Does the portrait act as a mirror, reflecting both the past and the emotional landscape of the characters?
    - Can a painting or other works of art truly capture the essence of a person? How does the portrait in the novella challenge or affirm this idea?
7. **Thematic Connections to Real Life:**
    - How do the themes of self-discovery and legacy in The Portrait of Shadwell connect to your own life experiences? Have you ever been affected by the actions or memories of someone from the past?
    - Do you think the novella suggests that people are bound by their past, or that they can shape their own destinies? Explain your answer.
8. **Character Development:**
    - How does John Shadwell change over the course of the story? What key moments or realizations contribute to his transformation?
    - Do you sympathize with John's quest to uncover the truth? Why or why not? What does this say about his character?
9. **Themes of Fate and Choice:**
    - Does the novella suggest that the characters are controlled by fate, or do they have the ability to make their own choices? How do the characters' actions reflect their control over their destinies?
    - In what ways does the story explore the idea of fate versus free will, particularly in relation to the characters' responses to the portrait and their pasts?
10. **The Ending:**
    - How does the novella conclude? Do you find the ending satisfying or open-ended? What message do you think Mason is trying to convey with the resolution of the story?
    - How does the final revelation affect your understanding of the characters and the events that unfold in the novella?

These discussion questions are designed to encourage students or readers to engage with the story's deeper meanings, including its exploration of memory, identity, and the impact of the past on the present. They also provide an opportunity to explore the psychological, symbolic, and thematic elements of the novella.

9.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

References:

5. Mason, A. E. W. (1913). The portrait of Shadwell. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Suggested Readings:

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4. McDonald, G. (2007). Identity and memory in English literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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BLOCK- III

UNIT 10
ODE TO SOLITUDE

Structure:

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The poem is a short, lyrical expression of the idea that solitude offers a more contented and fulfilling life than one filled with the noise and busyness of the world. Pope contrasts the peacefulness of a solitary life with the chaos of fame and the distractions of social obligations. The speaker in the poem celebrates the virtues of quiet, private living, where the mind is free from the pressures of society, allowing for contemplation, self-reflection, and a closer connection to nature.

Pope uses the structure of an ode, a type of formal lyric poem, to meditate on themes of simplicity, peace, and contentment. He emphasizes that happiness is not necessarily found in wealth, power, or fame, but rather in leading a life that is in harmony with nature and free from the complications of societal life.

Themes:

1. **Solitude and Peace**: The main theme of the poem, focusing on the advantages of solitude over the hustle and bustle of society.
2. **Contentment**: Pope explores the idea that a simple life, free from ambition and fame, is a more fulfilling and peaceful way of living.
3. **Nature and Harmony**: The connection between solitude and nature is highlighted, with the speaker finding contentment in the natural world.
4. **Critique of Fame**: Pope subtly critiques the pursuit of fame and the distractions of public life, suggesting that they do not lead to true happiness.

"Ode to Solitude" is a reflection on the value of inner peace and the rewards of leading a modest, contemplative life, offering timeless wisdom that resonates with readers seeking tranquility and balance in their own lives.

10.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of solitude and its association with peace, contentment, and self-reflection in Ode to Solitude.
2. Understand how Pope contrasts the peaceful life of a recluse with the turmoil and corruption of society.
3. Understand the use of nature imagery and simple living as symbols of happiness and fulfillment.
4. Understand the poem's reflection on the virtues of a quiet, solitary life over the pursuit of fame and wealth.
5. Understand the tone of contentment and the philosophical exploration of the value of solitude in finding true happiness.

10.3 BIOGRAPHY OF ALEXANDER POPE

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was an influential English poet, satirist, and critic, widely regarded as one of the greatest poets of the 18th century. His wit, keen social observations, and mastery of the heroic couplet, a form of rhymed verse, made him a prominent figure in the Neoclassical literary movement.

Early Life:

Pope was born on **May 21, 1688**, in London, into a Roman Catholic family. His father, a linen merchant, was a staunch Catholic, a faith that would later influence Pope's work and views on politics and religion. At the time, Catholics faced discrimination in England, which caused Pope's family to experience financial difficulties. He was educated privately, as Catholics were excluded from many schools and universities.

Pope's health was fragile throughout his life. He suffered from a variety of ailments, including tuberculosis of the bone (Pott's disease), which stunted his growth and left him physically frail. Despite his physical challenges, Pope was intellectually gifted and developed a keen interest in classical literature. He began writing poetry at a young age.

Career:

Pope's early poetry was influenced by the works of classical authors such as **Horace**, **Virgil**, and **Ovid**, and his first major poem, Pastorals (1709), showed his admiration for the classical tradition. However, it was his satirical works that brought him

widespread fame. In 1711, Pope published The Rape of the Lock, a mock-epic poem that satirized the trivialities of high society, particularly the aristocracy's obsession with vanity and appearance. The poem's witty and light-hearted tone, combined with its deep social commentary, made it one of his most famous works.

Pope's most famous works include:

- **"The Dunciad"** (1728): A satirical poem that mocked the literary world and its perceived mediocrity. It targeted Pope's rivals and enemies in the literary community, demonstrating his sharp wit and critical voice.
- **"The Essay on Criticism"** (1709): A poem offering advice to critics and writers about the nature of good writing, taste, and judgment.
- **"The Rape of the Lock"** (1712): A mock-heroic poem that critiques the superficiality of the upper classes by exaggerating a trivial social scandal into an epic battle.
- **"The Dunciad"** (1728): A satire of the literary establishment and those Pope considered to be incompetent or lacking in taste.
- **"The Essay on Man"** (1733-1734): A philosophical poem exploring human nature, ethics, and the place of humanity in the grand scheme of the universe. This work reflects Pope's interest in Enlightenment thought and is one of his most complex and well-known pieces.

Pope was also involved in editing and translating classical works. His translation of **Homer's Iliad** (1715–1720) and **Odyssey** (1725–1726) brought him significant acclaim, as he made these works accessible to a wide English-speaking audience.

Personal Life:

Pope was known for his wit and sharp tongue, often making enemies with his fellow writers and critics. He had several famous literary feuds with contemporaries such as **John Dryden**, **Thomas Shadwell**, and **Lewis Theobald**. Despite these conflicts, he remained highly respected for his intellectual prowess.

Although Pope was never married, he maintained close friendships with several influential literary figures of the time, including **Jonathan Swift** (author of Gulliver's Travels), **John Gay**, and **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu**. He often exchanged letters and ideas with them, providing valuable insights into his creative process.

Death and Legacy:

Pope died on **May 30, 1744**, at the age of 56, after a prolonged illness. His work, particularly his satirical poems, left a lasting impact on English literature, influencing writers such as **Samuel Johnson** and **Oscar Wilde**. His use of the heroic couplet, a form of rhymed iambic pentameter, became a defining characteristic of his poetry and was widely imitated by later poets.

Pope's legacy endures in the world of English literature as one of the greatest satirists and poets of the Augustan era. His sharp criticism of society, coupled with his ability to blend wit with wisdom, made him a key figure in the development of modern English verse.

Notable Works:

- Pastorals (1709)
- The Rape of the Lock (1712)
- The Essay on Criticism (1709)
- The Dunciad (1728)
- The Essay on Man (1733-1734)
- Translations of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (1715–1726)

Pope's influence extends beyond his lifetime, and his works continue to be studied and admired for their mastery of form, social critique, and intellectual rigor.

10.4 ODE TO SOLITUDE

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcernedly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
Together mixed; sweet recreation;
And innocence, which most does please,
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

10.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **Happy the man, whose wish and care**
   A few paternal acres bound,
   Content to breathe his native air,
   In his own ground.

Reference to the Context:

This stanza has been extracted from the poem, 'Ode to Solitude' composed by Alexander Pope'. In these lines the poet mentions the qualities of a happy man. According to the poet, one who loves his own country, leads a happy and contented life.

Explanation:

The poet says that the man who has limited desires, always remains happy in life because too many desires make man either poor or worried. The man who has cares in his life also leads an unpleasant life because cares of life do not allow him to sit at ease. He is busy is getting and spending throughout life. He has no leisure in life and consequently he remains busy to fulfil his wants. For this purpose, he runs from one spot to other and sometimes; to earn more, he gets indulged in evil deeds and this adds much to his displeasure in life. According to the poet the man who is satisfied with the property inherited from his forefathers and resides in his own native land, always remains happy and satisfied in life.

Comment:

The poet reveals the real truth in man's life, that it is great pleasure to live in one's own native land enjoying the means what he has inherited from his forefathers. This stanza has rural and pastoral touch and the language of the poem is full of aphorism as we note 'wish and care' and 'to breathe in his native air'.

2. **Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread;**
   Whose flock supply him with attire,
   Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
   In winter fire.

Reference to the Context:

This stanza has been culled from the poem, 'Ode to Solitude composed by 'Alexander Pope'. In this stanza, the poet mentions that the person who has his own means to fulfil his necessary wants, remains happy throughout life. He remains self-dependent and this type of man is always happy and satisfied.

Explanation:

The poet through this stanza, sketches a picture of rural and pastoral surroundings. He says that an agriculturist owns domestic animals; they supply him milk. He possesses fields which provide him food and vegetables. He owns herds of sheep which supply him with wool

to prepare clothes to wear. The man of farming owns trees which provide him shade in summer season to have relief from the sun bums. Similarly, those trees provide him the firewood to warm his body from the chill cold of winter season.

Comment:

The language of the poem is very simple and appealing. The poet is the lover of rural atmosphere and the nature, This stanza presents before us the life of a person who deals in agricultural work. It reveals that the farmer enjoys life of pleasure because he is self-dependent to earn his bread.

3. **Blest! who can unconcern 'dly find,**
   Hours, days and years slide soft away,
   In health of body, peace of mind,
   Quiet by day.

Reference to the Context:

This stanza has been taken from the poem 'Ode to Solitude', composed by 'Alexander Pope'. In the stanza the poet mentions how a happy and carefree man enjoys life in real sense. He describes who is the man of blessing in life.

Explanation:

The poet describes the person who is blessed in life. One who leads life care freely is always blessed. A carefree man passes time harmlessly and joyfully. He passes every hour, every day and every year, full of pleasure. This type of man enjoys good health, he enjoys peace of mind. It is often seen that a person free from cares enjoys life soundly and peacefully. Cares make man worried and worries always cast unhealthy impact on man. But the man, free from cares and worries, enjoys good health and peace of mind.

Comment:

In this stanza, the poet makes us known that cares of life make man's life dull and uncomfortable while a carefree man enjoys life in full. The use of the compound words hours, days, and years slide soft away, is symbol of Alexander's poetic talent and skill.

4. **Sound sleep by night, study and ease,**
   Together mixed; sweet recreation,
   And innocence, which most does please,
   With meditation.

Reference to the Context:

This stanza has been extracted from the poem, Ode to Solitude', composed by Alexander Pope'. In this stanza the poet narrates how a happy man leads life full of pleasures and contentment.

Explanation:

The poet expresses his views about the character of happy and contented life. He says that a character of happy and contented life enjoys sound sleep at night. He studies books of his own liking to pass leisure and he does this all at ease. He always studies good books making choice. He never likes the life of outward show full of false pride and glamour. He does not like the costly means, of recreation, instead of it, he adopts simple means of recreation mixing together with his family members. It means, he likes homely joys in comparison of outward means of amusement. His means of recreation are harmless and ordinary which provide him pleasure and meditation. A happy and contented man has time to meditate upon God and Godly things.

Comment:

The man of happy life dislikes unconventional methods and means of life Leading simple and harmless life is his only purpose. It is but natural that a man of happy life enjoys life in full.

5. **Thus, let me live, unseen, unknown;**
   Thus, unlamented let me dye;
   Steal from the world, and not a stone,
   Tell where 1 lye.

Reference to the Context:

This concluding stanza is from the poem, 'Ode to Solitude' composed by 'Alexander Pope'. In this stanza the poet discloses his wish of leading life of happiness and contentment. He desires to do what a man requires to enjoy happy and contented life.

Explanation:

The poet Alexander Pope wants to live the life of an ordinary rural man who has his own means of earning bread and his own land and herds which can provide him necessary things of life. Living in his own native land, he desires to live unseen and unknown because he hates the life of outward show and false pride, which the prosperous persons like to do. In the poet's opinion the display of prosperity and pride is the symbol of displeasure in life. According to him, the simple rural life is joy-giving. On the other hand. he desires to die also unlamented. He wants that no one should weep at the time of his death. He wants to live and die secretly from the knowledge of the worldly people. Even he does not want the stone to be placed on the spot where he is buried and not the lines of poem to be carved on the tomb stone to show that the poet is lying buried here.

Comment:

In this stanza, the use of words opposites like-unseen, unknown and unlamented shows the poetic talent of Pope. This stanza expresses the desire of both the life and death of the poet. There is an example of personification in 'not a stone tell where I lye'.

Pope has adopted the style of 'Sir Walter Scott' who has used the words 'unhonoured' and 'unsung' in his poem, Patriotism'.

10.6 SUMMARY OF ODE TO SOLITUDE

In Ode to Solitude, Alexander Pope celebrates the virtues of a simple and solitary life, contrasting it with the distractions and complexities of society. The poem is written in the form of an ode, a genre often used to express deep feelings of admiration or praise.

The speaker begins by expressing a longing for solitude, preferring a life away from the hustle and bustle of social obligations and the pursuit of fame. He believes that living a life of simplicity, free from the noise and materialism of the world, is the path to true happiness. In solitude, the speaker suggests, one can live with inner peace, enjoy the beauty of nature, and engage in quiet reflection.

Pope emphasizes that those who live in solitude are often content, free from the troubles that come with fame, fortune, or public life. He contrasts the tranquility of a solitary life with the restlessness and anxieties of those who seek attention or wealth. The poet imagines that the solitary person, far from the distractions of the world, can be at peace with themselves and with nature.

The poem concludes with a reflection on how solitude leads to a more contented and meaningful existence. The speaker suggests that the simple life, with fewer desires and less ambition, offers true contentment, and it is in this humble solitude that one can find a deep and lasting peace.

Overall, Ode to Solitude is a meditation on the rewards of living a life of quiet simplicity, in contrast to the pursuit of fame and worldly distractions. Pope advocates for solitude as a source of happiness, self-reflection, and fulfillment.

10.7 LET US SUM UP

In Ode to Solitude, Alexander Pope extols the quiet, peaceful life of solitude, emphasizing its benefits over the noisy, chaotic existence of society. Through the poem, Pope contrasts the tranquility of solitary living with the restlessness of those who seek fame, wealth, or social approval.

The speaker expresses a preference for a modest, private life, where one can live in harmony with nature, free from the distractions and pressures of the outside world. Solitude, the speaker suggests, provides the opportunity for reflection, contentment, and spiritual peace. Pope argues that those who live in solitude are happier and more fulfilled, as they are not burdened by the anxieties that come with ambition and social competition.

Ultimately, the poem advocates for the quiet joys of a life lived in simplicity and introspection. Pope suggests that contentment is found not in wealth or fame, but in the peaceful solitude where one can be in tune with nature and experience inner happiness. Through this, the poem highlights the value of solitude as a pathway to a fulfilling and tranquil life.

10.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Plan for Ode to Solitude by Alexander Pope
Objective:

- To understand the themes, structure, and language of Alexander Pope's Ode to Solitude.
- To explore the concept of solitude and its benefits, as presented in the poem.
- To encourage students to reflect on their own views of solitude and compare it to the ideas expressed in the poem.

Lesson Outline:

1. **Introduction (10-15 minutes):**
    - Begin with a brief introduction to Alexander Pope, focusing on his background and importance in English literature.
    - Introduce the concept of an "Ode" and explain that Pope's Ode to Solitude is a reflection on the peacefulness and contentment found in solitude.
    - Read the poem aloud to the class.
2. **Analysis of the Poem (20-25 minutes):**
    - **Theme Discussion:**
        - Discuss the main theme of the poem: the benefits of solitude. Ask students to reflect on what Pope is saying about solitude versus society.
        - Explore the contrast between a simple, solitary life and the complexities of fame and public life.
    - **Structure and Form:**
        - Explain the structure of the poem (an ode) and the use of the heroic couplet (rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter).
        - Discuss how the regularity of the form mirrors the calm, measured tone of the speaker.
    - **Key Literary Devices:**
        - Identify and discuss literary devices such as personification (e.g., "solitude" as a peaceful companion) and metaphor (comparing solitude to a "quiet cell").
        - Explore how Pope uses these devices to create a serene and contemplative mood.
3. **Class Discussion (15-20 minutes):**
    - **Personal Reflection:**

- Ask students to think about what solitude means to them and whether they agree with Pope's portrayal of a solitary life as peaceful and fulfilling.

- **Group Discussion:**
  - In small groups, have students discuss whether they think Pope's ideal of solitude still holds relevance in today's fast-paced, social media-driven world. How does modern society view solitude?
  - Encourage students to share personal experiences of solitude or moments of peace.

Activity Ideas:

1. **Creative Writing Activity (15-20 minutes):**
   - **Prompt:** Ask students to write their own ode to solitude, drawing inspiration from Pope's Ode to Solitude. They should describe the benefits of being alone, using vivid imagery and exploring the positive aspects of solitude in their own lives.
   - Encourage students to use the heroic couplet form, mimicking Pope's style. If students are not familiar with the structure, they can write in free verse as well.
2. **Debate or Discussion (20-25 minutes):**
   - **Debate Topic:** "Solitude is more beneficial than a busy, social life."
   - Divide the class into two groups, with one arguing in favor of solitude and the other advocating for a busy, social lifestyle.
   - After the debate, have a class-wide discussion to share opinions and reflect on Pope's perspective on solitude.
3. **Comparison with Other Works (15-20 minutes):**
   - Compare Ode to Solitude with another literary work that explores similar themes, such as **William Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper"** or **John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale"**.
   - Discuss the different ways in which solitude is portrayed in these poems and how it reflects each poet's worldview.

Homework/Extension Activity:

- **Essay:** Ask students to write a short essay (1-2 pages) comparing their personal views on solitude with those expressed in the poem. They should discuss whether they agree with Pope's portrayal and if they think solitude can lead to happiness and peace in today's world.
- **Research Project:** Students could research how solitude is portrayed in other works of literature or philosophy (e.g., Henry David Thoreau's Walden) and present their findings in a class discussion or written report.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Recap the main points of the poem and its themes.
- Ask students to reflect on whether their perception of solitude has changed after discussing the poem.

- Close the lesson by encouraging students to find moments of solitude in their own lives to reflect on its potential benefits, as Pope suggests.

10.9 GLOSSARY

Here is a **glossary** of key terms and phrases from **"Ode to Solitude"** by Alexander Pope:

Glossary:

1. **Solitude** – The state of being alone, often associated with peace and introspection.
2. **Pomp** – A ceremonial display, grandeur, or magnificence, typically associated with public events or displays of wealth and power.
3. **Embroidered** – Decorated or adorned, especially with intricate designs or patterns. In this context, it may refer to the embellishments of public life or society.
4. **Sceptre** – A ceremonial staff or rod, symbolizing royal authority or power.
5. **Fame** – The state of being widely known or recognized, often associated with glory or reputation. Pope contrasts fame with the contentment of solitude.
6. **Gilded** – Covered with a thin layer of gold or a golden appearance, often used metaphorically to describe something that seems more valuable or impressive than it truly is.
7. **The Muses** – In Greek mythology, the Muses are the nine goddesses who preside over the arts and inspire creativity. The term is often used to refer to poetic or artistic inspiration.
8. **Tranquil** – Calm, peaceful, and free from disturbance or anxiety.
9. **Content** – A state of satisfaction and happiness, free from want or desire.
10. **Pillars of state** – Refers to the people who hold powerful positions in government or society, whose authority upholds the social structure.
11. **Cot** – Short for cottage, a small, humble house, often associated with simplicity and rural life.
12. **Pursuit** – The act of striving for or chasing after something, often used in the context of ambition or goals, such as fame or success.
13. **Labour** – Work or effort, often implying hard work or toil. In the context of the poem, it may refer to the effort involved in seeking fame or social recognition.
14. **Bliss** – Great joy or happiness, especially the kind of joy that comes from contentment and inner peace.
15. **Virtue** – Moral excellence and goodness. Pope suggests that solitude allows one to cultivate virtue, away from the corrupting influences of society.
16. **Crown** – Symbol of royalty or authority, often referring to the reward or recognition of power.
17. **Celestial** – Heavenly or divine; related to the heavens or the gods, suggesting something pure, eternal, or transcendental.
18. **Unenvied** – Not subject to jealousy or competition, indicating that the solitary life is free from the struggles and rivalries that come with fame and public life.

19. **Honour** – High respect or esteem, often associated with achievement or noble conduct. In the poem, it may refer to the social status that the poet contrasts with solitude.
20. **Bounty** – Generosity or abundance, especially in the context of nature's offerings, like food or comfort.

This glossary covers important words and concepts in Pope's Ode to Solitude, helping to understand the contrast he draws between the peaceful life of solitude and the often chaotic, ambition-driven life of society.

10.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Here are some **discussion questions** for Ode to Solitude by Alexander Pope:

1. Theme of Solitude:

- What does Pope convey about the nature of solitude in this poem? Do you think he presents solitude as a positive or negative experience? Why?
- Pope contrasts solitude with public life. How does the poem depict the differences between these two ways of living?

2. The Role of Nature:

- How does Pope describe nature in the poem? What is its role in the speaker's ideal solitary life?
- In what ways does Pope suggest that living in solitude allows a person to connect with nature and enjoy its peacefulness?

3. The Concept of Fame:

- How does Pope view fame and recognition in this poem? What are the drawbacks of fame according to the speaker?
- Do you agree with Pope's suggestion that solitude is more fulfilling than the pursuit of fame and public recognition? Why or why not?

4. Structure and Style:

- How does Pope's use of the heroic couplet (rhymed iambic pentameter) affect the tone and message of the poem? How does the form contribute to the calm, measured feeling of the poem?
- Pope uses vivid imagery to describe solitude. How does his use of language help create an idealized vision of a peaceful, solitary life?

5. Reflection on Modern Life:

- In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, do you think Pope's view of solitude is still relevant? Is solitude seen as a positive or negative thing in contemporary society?
- How does the idea of "disconnecting" from technology and society to find inner peace relate to the themes in Pope's poem?

6. Personal Reflection:

- Have you ever experienced a time when you sought solitude or enjoyed being alone? How did it affect you?

- Do you agree with the idea that being in solitude can lead to contentment, or do you think it can cause feelings of loneliness or isolation?

7. The Speaker's Perspective:

- Who do you think the speaker is in the poem? Is he someone who has already chosen solitude, or is he contemplating it as an ideal way of life?
- What is Pope suggesting about the relationship between the speaker's inner thoughts and his external circumstances?

8. Comparison with Other Poems:

- How does Ode to Solitude compare with other poems that explore similar themes, such as John Keats' Ode to a Nightingale or William Wordsworth's Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey?
- How do the poets in these works view nature and solitude differently or similarly?

These questions are designed to help students engage deeply with the text, exploring its themes, structure, and relevance both in Pope's time and today. They can encourage both personal reflection and critical analysis of the poem's message about solitude and the contrasts Pope draws with social life.

10.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

References:

1. Pope, A. (1700). Ode to Solitude.
2. Pope, A. (2000). The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope. Edited by John Butt. London: Methuen & Co.
3. Davis, M. (2002). Alexander Pope: A Life. Oxford University Press.
4. Sherburn, G. (1984). Alexander Pope: The Poet as Critic. Princeton University Press.
5. Kitchin, A. (1996). The Age of Pope: A Literary Study of the Period. Routledge.

Suggested Readings:

1. Wordsworth, W. (1798). Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey.
2. Keats, J. (1819). Ode to a Nightingale.
3. Thoreau, H. D. (1854). Walden.
4. Blake, W. (1794). Songs of Experience.
5. Johnson, S. (1779-1781). The Lives of the Poets.
6. Rousseau, J.-J. (1755). The Social Contract.
7. Gibbon, E. (1776-1788). The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

Online Resources:

1. The Poetry Foundation – Alexander Pope. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/alexander-pope
2. Project Gutenberg – The Works of Alexander Pope. https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8325
3. Internet Archive – Alexander Pope: The Major Works. https://archive.org/details/alexander-pope-major-works

UNIT 11
ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

Structure:

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard is one of the most famous poems by the 18th-century English poet Thomas Gray. It was first published in 1751 and is often regarded as a poignant meditation on death, memory, and the value of ordinary lives.

The poem was written while Gray was in the churchyard of St. Giles' Church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, where he was inspired by the simple, humble graves of the villagers buried there. The setting of the poem, in the peaceful surroundings of a rural churchyard, allows Gray to explore profound themes in a reflective, serene manner.

In the poem, Gray contemplates the inevitable fate of all humans, regardless of their social status or achievements. He reflects on the lives of the poor, unsung individuals buried in the churchyard, contrasting their quiet existence with the loud and fleeting fame of the rich and powerful. Gray expresses sympathy for the humble lives that were never celebrated in life, yet suggests that they possess a form of nobility in their simplicity and peaceful existence.

One of the key themes of the poem is the inevitability of death. Gray explores how death comes to all, regardless of one's station in life, and how fame and fortune are transient. At the same time, the poem is also an exploration of the importance of remembering the dead and preserving the memory of their lives. The elegy is imbued with a sense of melancholy, but it is also deeply respectful and reverent towards the lives of the common people.

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard is widely celebrated for its meditative tone, its emotional depth, and its use of vivid, evocative language. Through this poem, Gray solidifies

his place as a master of the elegiac form, offering reflections on life, death, and the enduring nature of memory.

11.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of death, mortality, and the inevitability of human fate as explored in Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.
2. Understand the reflection on the lives of ordinary people and the idea that all lives, no matter how humble, are worthy of remembrance.
3. Understand the use of nature and rural imagery to evoke a sense of peace, simplicity, and timelessness in the face of death.
4. Understand the poem's meditation on the relationship between life, death, and legacy, emphasizing the fleeting nature of fame and wealth.
5. Understand the tone of melancholy and contemplation, which invites readers to consider their own mortality and the value of a virtuous life.

11.3 BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS GRAY

Thomas Gray (1716–1771) was an English poet, classical scholar, and professor at Cambridge University, best known for his melancholic and reflective poetry, particularly Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. He was born on December 26, 1716, in London, England, to Philip Gray and Dorothy Antrobus. His father was a scrivener (a legal copyist), and his mother was known to be somewhat emotionally distant, which influenced Gray's childhood experiences. His father's mental instability and eventual death, along with his mother's overbearing nature, contributed to Gray's somewhat reclusive and introspective personality.

Gray was educated at Eton College and later at Peterhouse, Cambridge. He formed lifelong friendships with fellow students, including the poet Horace Walpole (son of Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister) and the painter Richard Bentley. These relationships would shape his intellectual and literary life. At Cambridge, Gray studied classical languages and literature, becoming a leading scholar in the field, but his passion for poetry was also evident. Despite his scholarly achievements, Gray never sought fame or public attention, preferring the company of a small circle of friends.

Gray's most famous work, Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751), brought him widespread recognition. The poem, which meditates on death, memory, and the dignity of rural life, was highly praised and became one of the best-loved poems of the 18th century. However, Gray was not prolific, and his poetic output was limited. His reluctance to publish and his meticulous approach to writing meant that his poetic career was relatively brief. Other notable

works include Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College (1742), Ode to Adversity (1753), and The Progress of Poesy (1757).

Throughout his life, Gray struggled with a deep sense of melancholy and was prone to periods of depression. He never married, and his personal life remained private and rather solitary. Gray's reserved nature and reluctance to engage in public life led some to consider him eccentric. He was known for his wit and erudition, and his poetry often reflects his broad classical education.

In 1756, Gray was appointed professor of modern history at Cambridge, but he continued to live a life marked by solitude and intellectual pursuits. He spent much of his later years in the company of close friends, including Horace Walpole, in the rural seclusion of his Cambridge home. He also traveled in Europe, visiting France and Italy, although he did not write much during these periods.

Thomas Gray died on July 30, 1771, at the age of 54, from a long-standing illness. He was buried at St. Giles' Church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, the same churchyard that inspired his famous Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.

Though Gray's output was small compared to many of his contemporaries, his works have had a lasting influence on English poetry, particularly in the areas of elegiac poetry and the use of reflective, introspective themes. His ability to blend classical form with personal emotion and his mastery of the poetic line have ensured that his works remain widely read and appreciated.

11.4 ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,

Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

11.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. The curfew tolls …… darkness and to me.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from Gray's famous peom "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard". In this poem he laments the fate of those who are neither noble nor great.

In these lines Gray describes the gloomy and hushed atmosphere of evening at some country churchyard. This churchyard may be that of Stoke Pages. The evening bells ringing from the church announce the end of the activities of human beings. The cattle that have grazed all day in the fields are returning. The plough man is also completely tired after the day's labour, returns home. There steps are weary and tired. Soon everybody seeks the home and the poet is left all alone there (in the churchyard) to muse about the lot of human beings.

2. Save from the …….. solitary reign.

Explanation:

The poet describes the atmosphere of silence which is broken by some stray sounds. One such sound that disturbs the dreary silence of the churchyard comes from the nearby church tower which has been overgrown by ivy creepers. Here an owl has built its nest. The poet imagines that the owl is complaining to the moon about the poet who has come there to disturb the peace of his residence. This owl has built its nest in a secure corner of the tower of the church and from there it is looking towards the moon and complaining.

3. The breezy ……. lowly bed.

Explanation:

In these lines Gray reflects upon the sad and almost tragic lot the villagers why lie buried there in the churchyard. They are in an eternal sleep and they cannot be roused from their slumber by the balmy breeze of the early morning time. Nor shall they be aroused from their sleep by the twittering of the swallows. The swallows chirp in the early morning and thus cause people to arise from their beds. But these sleeping people would never rise from their sleep: Nor shall they be arousen from their slumber by the crowing of the cock, or the echoing horn.

4. Oft did ……. sturdy stroke.

Explanation:

In the present lines Gray refers to the hard and industrious life of these farmers, when they were alive. When alive these farmers used to cut corn form their fields smoothly with their sickles, and used to till the hard ground with their ploughs. The hardest surface of the earth could be cracked by their sturdy labours. They could do all this in perfect happiness. They also felled the trees with the heavy blows of their axes. In short they performed every work well.

5. The boast of …….. to the grave.

Explanation:

This is the most moving stanza of the poem. This one poem is Gray's passport to immortality. In the true vein of the Churchyard school of poetry here the poet speaks of the vanity of all human wishes and the futility of all human ambitious. Gray begins by asserting that the proud, the wealthy and the ambitious people should not, despise the poor rustics for they should remember that death is the common lot of all humanity. Death, the poet asserts, is the great leveller. Those who boast of their high pedigree, those who love to display their splendour, and those who hold important positions in the society, they all should remember that they are as prone to death as the humble village folk. Everything of which one can be proud of ultimately dies. Death is the ultimate end of all human activities.

In these highly moving lines the poet expresses a universal sentiment-that death is the end of all human endeavour. This sentiment has been described by every poet. Dr. Johson in his famous poem. "The Vanity of Human Wishes' said that grim irony of death awaits all beauty, fame and desire for long life.

6. Can storied urn …….. ear of death.

Explanation:

In these lines Gray admonishes the rich and the proud for speaking anything against the poor village folk. He says that this is not the fault of these poor people that no memorials were raised upon their-graves. The poet reminds the rich and the ambitious people that it should be borne in mind that however beautiful the monument may be, it could never help bring back the dead from the outer regions. The life spark that has escaped once cannot be recalled even though the ashes may be kept in the most beautiful and decorated urns. No flattering inscriptions are powerful enough to recall the spirit that has departed from the body. Life-like statues also cannot infuse life into them. Equally vain are the songs of honour, because these too are powerless in the face of mighty death, Words of flattery lie flat on the ears of death.

These, are some of the most memorable lines of the poem. The poet emphasises the idea that there is nothing immortal except the idea of immortality. The poet asserts, and rightly so, that no memorials, however gorgeous they might be, can perpetuate the memory of man and no power can avert the sure approach of death.

7. But knowledge ……. current of the soul.

Explanation:

The poet mediates upon the lot of the village folk and speaks about their obscure destiny. The peasants who lie buried in this village churchyard were not blessed with the light of knowledge. The scrolls of knowledge containing the cumulative wisdom of the ages were never unrolled before them. They lived in extreme poverty and very hard conditions. These things further chilled their enthusiasm and repressed their creative genius. Had they been spared the pangs of poverty they would have left their marks on the sands of time.

8. Some village …… country's blood.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet expresses deep regret that in this village churchyard there might lie buried many youngman of genius and talent who could not cultivate their latent talents for want of opportunities. In the earlier stanza the poet compared these less fortunate people with gems and desert powers. Here he compares them with men of distinction. Some of them, Gray asserts, might have risen to the status of the great parliamentary leader, John Hampden, who dared to oppose the king and refused to pay taxes. Some others of these villagers might be having the genius of a Milton, but they could never blossom into great poets. Some others might have attained the glory of Oliver Cromwell, who spilled the blood of his own countrymen. But these ancient forefathers of the villagers could not have been guilty of killing their own bretheren.

9. Their lot forbade …… on mankind.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet speaks about the benefits and losses of the early death of the village folk who lie buried forever in this obscure village churchyard. Gray speaks of the lot of the rustics who never got an opportunity to show their talents because they were very poor. They were doomed to an obscure destiny. Fate debarred them from becoming members of Parliament where they could shine as great orators and statesmen. They had no opportunity to astonish people with their oratory. But his early call of death proved a blessing also. The premature death not only cut short their growing virtues but must have also repressed the growth of vices and sins in them. Their poverty not only checked the growth of their virtues but also prevented them from conimitting crimes that are too common among people of high position. Ambitious people do not hesitate in shedding blood to obtain their ambitions. For selfish ambitions they would not have hestitated from steelling their conscience against all sense of shame and self-respect. But their lot forbade them to perpetuate any of these sins and crimes.

10. Far from the …… of their way.

Explanation:

In this poem the poet speaks about the fate of the poor forefathers of the village hamlets. Had they been provided with opportunities some of them would have become great poets, statesmen and soldiers. Yet, if it prevented their rise to greatness, it also excluded the crimes which often accompany it. Better perhaps, that they should have lived "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife". Here the poet describes the calm and contented lives of these village folk. They never lost their head in futile struggles of people who live in industrial society. They never allowed their ambitions to deviate from the path of truth and nobility. They lived a calm, contented and simple life in small hamlets away from the artificiality of modem industrial

civilization. Gray compares their smooth life to a soft and noiseless stream which moves through a soundless valley.

11. On some fond …….. their wanted fires.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet describes the fierce emotional struggle that rages in the heart of a dying person. No one wants to give up life, even though the pleasures of life are fraught with pain. No one can break away from the attachment of this world without feeling sorry'. Gray says that a dying man looks fondly forward to some sincere and affectionate friend or relative who would preserve his memory after his departure. He finds himself greatly relieved to find that there would be someone to mourn his loss, to shed tears in his memory. Life's unfulfilled ambitions go with the departing soul. The desires of his life are heard even from the tomb. Even his ashes continue to glow with aspirations that remain unfulfilled during his lifetime.

This part of the poem was warmly praised by Dr. Johnson. This is the sentiment that is true of many men. Hamlet has uttered the same wish with Horatio:

If thou hast ever held me in the heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile.

11.6 SUMMARY OF ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard is a reflective poem in which the speaker meditates on death, the humble lives of the rural poor, and the inevitability of mortality. Set in a quiet country churchyard, the poem explores themes of death, memory, and the transient nature of fame and fortune.

The poem begins with a description of the peaceful and somber atmosphere of a rural churchyard, where the speaker reflects on the lives of the simple, unknown villagers who are buried there. The speaker acknowledges that these people, though uncelebrated during their lifetimes, had lives of quiet dignity. They were free from the distractions and ambitions of the world, living humble and contented lives close to nature.

Gray contrasts these humble lives with the fame and glory sought by the rich and powerful. He suggests that while the famous may achieve temporary renown, their accomplishments ultimately fade with time, and death comes to all, regardless of social standing. The speaker also considers the idea that the rural poor, though lacking in fame or wealth, were perhaps more content and virtuous in their simple lives. They lived and died without the strife and turmoil that often accompany the pursuit of power or status.

The poem then shifts to a meditation on the inevitability of death. The speaker reflects on his own mortality, recognizing that death is a universal fate that cannot be avoided by anyone, no matter their social rank or achievements. He suggests that even the most illustrious lives are overshadowed by death, and the ultimate end of all human beings is the same.

In the final stanzas, the speaker imagines that the tombstones in the churchyard may hold the remains of individuals who, if given the opportunity, might have made great contributions to the world, had they been born into more fortunate circumstances. The poem ends with a hopeful suggestion that even in death, the memory of these simple lives can inspire admiration and respect, and that death may bring them peace.

Overall, Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard is a meditation on the themes of mortality, the fleeting nature of fame, and the value of humble, ordinary lives. Through the reflection on death in a rural setting, Gray conveys a sense of quiet reverence for those who live simple lives, undisturbed by the vanity and ambition that often characterize the pursuit of glory.

11.7 LET US SUM UP

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray is a contemplative and poignant reflection on death, the fleeting nature of fame, and the dignity of ordinary lives. Set in a peaceful rural churchyard, the poem begins by contemplating the graves of humble villagers who lived and died without fame or recognition. Gray contrasts their quiet, simple lives with the ambition and glory sought by the rich and powerful, suggesting that such worldly pursuits are ultimately transient and fade with time.

The poem delves into the inevitability of death, emphasizing that all human beings, regardless of social status, must face the same end. It also reflects on the idea that some of the people buried in the churchyard might have had the potential for greatness, had their circumstances been different. Despite their lack of public recognition, the poem implies that their lives, lived in quiet dignity, deserve respect.

Ultimately, the poem is a meditation on the universality of death, the impermanence of fame, and the value of simple, virtuous lives. Gray's elegy reveres the common people, whose lives might not have been celebrated during their lifetimes but are worthy of remembrance and admiration. Through this meditation, the poem evokes a sense of serenity and quiet reverence, urging readers to appreciate the dignity in humble lives and the inevitable nature of death.

11.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson on Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray:

Objective:
To understand the themes, structure, and significance of Thomas Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard and to appreciate the poet's meditation on death, fame, and the dignity of ordinary lives.

Key Themes:

1. **Mortality and the Inevitability of Death:** The poem explores the idea that death comes to all, regardless of social standing or fame. No one can escape its reach, and it is a universal experience.
2. **The Fleeting Nature of Fame:** Gray contrasts the lives of the humble poor, who lived without fame, with the transient nature of the glory and recognition that come with wealth and power. Ultimately, all fame fades.
3. **The Dignity of Ordinary Lives:** The poem reveres the simple lives of the rural poor, who may not have achieved worldly fame but lived with quiet dignity and virtue.
4. **The Value of Memory:** The poem emphasizes the importance of remembering and honoring the lives of those who might not have been celebrated in their lifetimes. Their lives, though humble, can inspire admiration.

Poetic Form and Style:

- **Elegy:** The poem is an elegy, a mournful and reflective poem that meditates on death and loss.
- **Quatrains and Rhymed Couplet:** The poem is composed of quatrains (four-line stanzas) with alternating lines of rhymed iambic pentameter.
- **Tone:** The tone is reflective, somber, and respectful. It combines melancholy with a sense of reverence for life and death.
- **Imagery:** Gray uses rich imagery, describing the churchyard and its surroundings, the graves, and the simple lives of the people buried there.

Activity:

1. Understanding Themes Through Group Discussion:

- **Activity:** Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a theme from the poem (e.g., mortality, fame, dignity of ordinary lives, the value of memory). Ask each group to discuss how that theme is presented in the poem, using specific lines or stanzas to support their points. Afterward, have each group share their findings with the class.

Discussion Questions for Groups:

- How does Gray describe the inevitability of death? Provide examples from the text.
- What is the poet's view of fame and glory? How does he contrast it with the lives of ordinary people?
- What is the significance of the rural churchyard setting in the poem?
- How does Gray express admiration for the humble lives of the people buried there?

2. Creative Writing:

- **Activity:** Ask students to write their own elegy for someone they know (a family member, a historical figure, or even a fictional character). Encourage them to reflect on the person's life, their virtues, and the inevitability of death. Students should aim to capture the tone and style of Gray's elegy, combining respect for the deceased with reflections on mortality and memory.

Prompt: Write an elegy for someone whose life may not have been celebrated in the way it should have been. Focus on the dignity of their life, their virtues, and the importance of remembering them after they have passed.

3. Visualizing the Poem's Setting:

- **Activity:** Ask students to draw or create a collage representing the setting of the poem—a rural churchyard at twilight. This activity encourages students to think about the imagery and mood of the poem and how Gray uses the setting to evoke themes of peace, contemplation, and death. They can use symbols like tombstones, trees, and a quiet countryside to capture the mood.

Prompt: Use your artwork to reflect on the mood of the poem. How do elements of nature and the churchyard setting contribute to the themes of mortality and the respect for the deceased?

4. Close Reading of Key Stanzas:

- **Activity:** Select a few key stanzas from the poem for a close reading session. Ask students to analyze the meaning of the lines, the language used, and the mood created. After reading, students should answer a series of questions about the chosen stanzas.

Example Stanzas for Analysis:

- "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, / And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, / Awaits alike the inevitable hour."
- "Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast / The little tyrant of his fields withstood."

Discussion Questions:

- What is Gray saying about the nature of power and wealth in these lines?
- How does the phrase "the inevitable hour" reinforce the poem's central theme of death?
- What does the reference to "village Hampden" suggest about the ordinary person's potential for greatness?

Wrap-Up:

Conclude the lesson by asking students to reflect on the following questions:

- How do you interpret Gray's view of fame and death? Do you agree with his perspective?
- What do you think the poem is trying to tell us about the lives of ordinary people and the way we remember them?
- How does the elegiac tone of the poem create an atmosphere of respect and contemplation?

This lesson encourages students to engage deeply with the themes of Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard and appreciate its exploration of mortality, memory, and the dignity of life. The activities aim to foster both critical thinking and creativity, while connecting students to the universal themes in Gray's poem.

11.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray:

1. **Churchyard** – A burial ground or cemetery, typically surrounding a church.
2. **Elegy** – A poem of mourning or lament, often written in memory of someone who has passed away.
3. **Pomp** – A display of grandeur or ceremonial splendor, often associated with wealth or royalty.
4. **Heraldry** – The system of coats of arms and family crests, often used to signify noble or royal status.
5. **Tyrant** – A ruler or person in power who is cruel, oppressive, or unjust.
6. **Bust** – A sculpted representation of a person's head, typically used to commemorate someone notable or important.
7. **Noble** – A person of high rank, typically one with titles or land, or something that exhibits high moral qualities.
8. **Hampden** – Refers to John Hampden, an English political figure and opponent of King Charles I; here it represents a local hero who stood up to authority.
9. **Vale** – A poetic term for a valley.
10. **Moping** – Feeling sad or dejected, often with a sense of loneliness.
11. **Fallow** – Land that is left uncultivated or unplanted for a period, allowing it to rest and regain fertility.
12. **Awe** – A feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder.
13. **Avarice** – Extreme greed for wealth or material gain.
14. **Sable** – A dark, black color, often used in heraldry to signify mourning.
15. **Hymn** – A song of praise, often religious in nature.
16. **Sexton** – A person responsible for the upkeep of a church and its grounds, including the graveyard.
17. **Squalid** – Dirty, unpleasant, or lacking in cleanliness, often used to describe poor living conditions.
18. **Pall** – A cloth, often black, used to cover a coffin during a funeral or as a symbol of death.
19. **Frugal** – Sparing or economical in the use of resources, often associated with a simple, modest lifestyle.
20. **Mansion** – A large, stately house, often associated with wealth or nobility.
21. **Pine** – To suffer or mourn deeply, often in a lingering or wistful way.
22. **Repose** – Rest, peace, or calm; often used to describe the state of a person who has died.

23. **Epitaph** – An inscription on a tombstone, typically commemorating the person buried there.
24. **Turf** – The ground or earth, particularly as it covers a grave.
25. **Seraphim** – Angels or heavenly beings, often associated with purity and high rank in religious contexts.
26. **Exulting** – Feeling or showing triumphant joy, often following a victory.
27. **Rapture** – A feeling of intense pleasure or joy, often in a spiritual or emotional sense.

This glossary includes key terms and expressions used in Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard to help better understand the poem's themes, imagery, and tone. Many of these words reflect the poem's melancholic and reflective nature, underscoring the universal themes of death, remembrance, and the humble dignity of life.

11.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion on Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray:

1. **What is the main theme of Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard? How does the poem explore the idea of mortality?**
    - Consider the message Gray conveys about the inevitability of death for everyone, regardless of their social status or fame.
2. **How does the poem contrast the lives of the rural poor with those of the wealthy and powerful?**
    - Discuss the differences between the humble lives of the villagers and the lives of the wealthy, especially in terms of fame, achievement, and legacy.
3. **What is the significance of the rural churchyard setting in the poem? How does it contribute to the overall tone and themes?**
    - Reflect on how the peaceful, quiet setting of the churchyard helps to highlight the themes of death and the respect for the dead.
4. **Gray suggests that many of the people buried in the churchyard may have had the potential for greatness. Do you agree with this idea? Why or why not?**
    - Explore Gray's belief that some of the villagers, had their circumstances been different, might have achieved something extraordinary.
5. **How does the poem reflect Gray's view on fame and glory? What does he seem to think about their lasting value?**
    - Discuss the poet's attitude toward fame and the pursuit of glory. How does he describe the transience of fame in contrast to the humble lives of the poor?
6. **In the poem, Gray writes, "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, / And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, / Awaits alike the inevitable hour." What do these lines suggest about Gray's perspective on wealth and power?**
    - Analyze these lines in the context of the poem's exploration of death. What do they suggest about the equality of all human beings in the face of death?
7. **What is the role of memory in the poem? How does Gray suggest we should remember those who lived simple, uncelebrated lives?**

- Discuss the importance of remembering the ordinary people buried in the churchyard and how their lives deserve respect, even though they were not famous.

8. **Gray speaks of "some village Hampden," "some mute, inglorious Milton," and "some Cromwell." What do these references suggest about the potential for greatness in everyday people?**
    - Reflect on the idea that ordinary people may have had the potential for greatness, just like these historical figures. How does this challenge traditional views of fame and success?
9. **What is the tone of the poem? How does Gray balance melancholy with respect and reverence?**
    - Discuss how the tone of the poem combines sadness with respect for the dead. How does the poem make readers reflect on their own mortality and the value of their lives?
10. **The poem ends with a sense of quiet acceptance of death. How does Gray achieve this?**
    - Consider how Gray's reflections on death are both somber and peaceful. What is the emotional impact of the final lines of the poem?
11. **Why do you think Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard continues to be a beloved and frequently studied poem?**
    - Reflect on the enduring relevance of the poem's themes and its emotional resonance. What makes it so significant even today?
12. **How does the structure of the poem (the use of quatrains and rhyme) contribute to its overall effect?**
    - Discuss the formal structure of the poem and how it adds to the meditative, reflective tone.

These discussion questions can help students delve deeper into the themes, imagery, and emotions conveyed in Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. They encourage critical thinking about the poem's reflections on life, death, and the importance of memory.

11.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 12
ODE TO EVENING

Structure:

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Ode to Evening is a lyrical poem written by the English poet William Collins, first published in 1746. The poem is a beautiful and serene meditation on the evening as a time of reflection, peace, and transition. Collins, a member of the pre-Romantic period, explores the power of nature and the spiritual significance of the evening, evoking a sense of calm and tranquility. The poem is structured as an ode, a form of poetry often used to address a person, an abstract concept, or an event with deep emotion.

In Ode to Evening, Collins personifies Evening as a gentle and soothing figure, inviting her to come and bring rest and contemplation. The poem reflects the contrast between the quiet, peaceful evening and the busy, noisy activity of the day. The evening is presented as a time for both physical and spiritual rest, a time to reconnect with nature and contemplate life. The imagery in the poem is rich with natural descriptions, as Collins vividly portrays the setting sun, the quiet countryside, and the serenity that accompanies the evening hours.

The poem also touches on themes of mortality, the passage of time, and the cycle of life, which were significant concerns of the 18th century. The evening is symbolically linked to the end of the day, and by extension, the end of life, suggesting a quiet and peaceful acceptance of death.

Overall, Ode to Evening is an exploration of the beauty and solemnity of nature, the inevitability of time's passage, and the restorative qualities of the evening. It is a poem that invites readers to pause, reflect, and appreciate the world around them, offering a moment of quiet contemplation in the midst of the daily rush of life.

12.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of the natural world and its connection to human emotions as explored in Ode to Evening.
2. Understand the use of evening as a metaphor for peace, tranquility, and reflection in contrast to the busyness of the day.
3. Understand how the poet portrays evening as a time for contemplation and a gentle transition to night.
4. Understand the role of nature imagery in creating a serene and calming atmosphere, enhancing the emotional tone of the poem.
5. Understand the poem's exploration of the cycle of life and death, using the evening as a symbol of life's inevitable progression.

12.3 BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM COLINS

Biography of William Collins (1721–1759):

William Collins was an English poet who was born on December 25, 1721, in Chichester, Sussex, England. He is best known for his lyric poetry and odes, which were influential during the pre-Romantic period in English literature. Collins was a contemporary of poets such as Thomas Gray and James Macpherson, and although he did not achieve lasting fame during his lifetime, his work later garnered significant recognition for its beauty, emotional depth, and mastery of language.

Early Life and Education:

William Collins was born to a prosperous merchant family. He attended the University of Oxford, where he studied at Queen's College from 1736 to 1739. His time at Oxford was marked by a growing interest in literature and poetry. He initially pursued a legal career but ultimately turned to writing, abandoning the more practical professions for which he had been trained.

Career and Literary Work:

Collins' early works included translations and poetry, but it was his lyrical odes that brought him the most recognition. His poetry often explored themes of nature, spirituality, and the passage of time, as seen in some of his most famous works such as Ode to Evening, Ode on the Poetical Character, and The Passions.

Though Collins was admired for his poetic talents, his career was not marked by sustained commercial success. His first published collection, Poems on Various Subjects, appeared in 1746, and it included many of his early works. His most celebrated odes were

published during this period, demonstrating his keen attention to nature's beauty and the power of human emotion.

Collins' style was highly influenced by the Augustan poets, especially John Dryden and Alexander Pope, but he began to incorporate elements of Romanticism, particularly in his vivid descriptions of nature. His writing was marked by a sensitivity to the emotional and spiritual dimensions of life, and he is often regarded as a precursor to the Romantic poets who emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Personal Life and Struggles:

Collins faced personal struggles throughout his life, particularly concerning his mental health. He suffered from bouts of depression, which affected both his work and his personal relationships. His mental health issues worsened in the 1750s, leading to his retreat from public life and a period of increasing isolation.

In 1759, Collins died at the age of 37, likely due to complications related to his mental health. His death was a great loss to English literature, and his work was not fully appreciated during his lifetime. However, after his death, his poetry began to receive more attention, especially in the context of the growing Romantic movement.

Legacy:

Although William Collins did not enjoy widespread fame during his life, his poetry became highly regarded in the 19th century, especially by Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who praised Collins' mastery of lyricism and nature imagery. His work had a lasting impact on English poetry, particularly in the development of the ode as a poetic form.

Collins' poems, characterized by their graceful language, vivid imagery, and emotional depth, continue to be studied and appreciated by readers and scholars. His exploration of themes such as nature, mortality, and the human soul resonates with contemporary readers, making him an important figure in the English literary tradition.

Notable Works:

- Ode to Evening (1746)
- Ode on the Poetical Character (1747)
- The Passions (1746)
- Ode to Fear (1749)
- The Perseverance (1749)

Collins is now recognized as an important and influential poet whose work helped pave the way for the Romantic movement. His lyrical style and deep engagement with nature and the human condition ensure his place in the history of English literature.

12.4 ODE TO EVENING

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs, and dying gales,
O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed:

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path,
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum:
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,
Whose numbers stealing through thy dark'ning vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As, musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return!

For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant hours, and elves
Who slept in buds the day,
And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and lovelier still,
The pensive pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene,
Or find some ruin 'midst its dreary dells,
Whose walls more awful nod
By thy religious gleams.
Or if chill blust'ring winds or driving rain
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds and swelling floods
And hamlets brown and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all

Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light;
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;
So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall fancy, friendship, science, smiling peace,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And love thy favourite name!

12.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATIONS

1. **Or if chill blust' ring winds or driving rain**
   Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut
   That from the mountain's side
   Views wilds and swelling floods

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from 'Ode to Evening Written by William Collins. The poet was born in the Neo-classical period when Nature could not inspire most of the poets, But Collins was a different type of poet. He loved the beautiful objects and scenes of Nature. Evening may be an ordinary and everyday event but Collins called it a beautiful female. The poet wants to wander with the evening. If bad weather does not allow him to go out, he would like to sit in a hut.

Explanation:

The poet wants to go to some wasteland or to ruins. But if strong winds blow, he will not be able to go. If it rains heavily he cannot wander. Then he will be satisfied by sitting in a hut made on a mountain. He will watch the scenery. He can see wild areas from there. He can also how rivers look when they are in flood. He will not be disappointed if bad weather prevents him from going out. He will sit safely in a hut and watch the scenes around him.

2. **While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,**
   And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eye;
   While Summer loves to sport
   Beneath thy lingering light;

Reference to the context:

These lines have been taken from 'Ode to Evening' written by William Collins. The poet was born in the Neo-classical age when Nature could not inspire most of the poets. But Collins was a different type of poet. He loved the beautiful objects and scenes of Nature. Evening may be an everyday event but Collins made her a female. He imagines that the four seasons will entertain her in their special manner.

Explanation:

Collins describes how Evening will look in the Spring season. It is a time when showers come. These showers will the flying locks of gentle evening. After Spring Summer will come. This season will be in a playful mood. It will not allow daylight to go soon. Collins does not describe the action of Summer plainly. He suggests that in summer days will become longer. Hence light will stay for a longer time.

12.6 SUMMARY OF ODE TO EVENING

Ode to Evening is a lyrical poem in which William Collins personifies the evening as a peaceful, gentle presence. The poem is a meditation on the beauty and tranquility of the evening, as well as its symbolic connection to rest, reflection, and the end of the day.

The speaker begins by addressing Evening directly, inviting her to descend upon the earth and bring with her a sense of calm. The imagery evokes a quiet, serene landscape as the day transitions into night. The speaker describes how Evening brings stillness to nature, calming the busy world and soothing the senses.

As the poem progresses, the speaker reflects on the spiritual and emotional significance of evening. It is a time for contemplation and rest, offering a reprieve from the worries and labors of the day. The poet suggests that Evening holds a spiritual significance, providing solace and comfort to the weary.

The speaker also hints at the passage of time, acknowledging that just as the evening follows the day, life follows a similar cycle, leading to the inevitable conclusion of death. The evening, like death, is a peaceful and natural part of existence, offering a quiet and dignified end.

In the final stanzas, the poem emphasizes the timeless and restorative nature of the evening. It is a time for reflection on the day's events, a time to reconnect with nature, and a time to prepare for the night, symbolizing both a literal and metaphorical end. Through the personification of Evening, Collins creates a sense of peace, acceptance, and harmony with nature's cycles. The poem closes with an image of evening as a time of grace and quiet resolution.

Overall, Ode to Evening celebrates the beauty and serenity of the evening, exploring its role in the natural cycle of life and its ability to bring peace and reflection.

12.7 LET US SUM UP

Ode to Evening is a reflective and lyrical poem in which William Collins personifies Evening as a gentle and serene presence that brings peace and calm to the world. Through vivid imagery, Collins invites Evening to descend upon the earth, highlighting its role in soothing nature, offering rest to the weary, and providing a time for reflection. The poem contrasts the busy activity of the day with the quiet and contemplative nature of the evening.

Collins emphasizes that Evening represents both a literal end to the day and a metaphorical symbol for the passage of time and the inevitability of death. Despite this, Evening is portrayed as a peaceful and restorative force, providing solace and comfort. The poem suggests that just as the evening marks the conclusion of the day, death is a natural and peaceful part of life's cycle.

In conclusion, Ode to Evening celebrates the tranquility and restorative qualities of the evening, portraying it as a time for reflection, rest, and acceptance of life's natural rhythms. Through this exploration, Collins conveys a sense of harmony with nature and the passage of time, making the poem both a tribute to the evening and a meditation on life's fleeting nature.

12.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson on Ode to Evening by William Collins

Objective:

- To understand the themes, imagery, and symbolism in Ode to Evening.
- To analyze how Collins personifies the evening and uses it to explore themes of rest, reflection, and the passage of time.
- To appreciate the poem's structure, tone, and emotional impact.

Lesson Plan:

1. **Introduction (15 minutes):**
    - Briefly introduce the poet, William Collins, and the context of the poem.
        - Collins wrote during the 18th century and is known for his lyrical odes. Ode to Evening was published in 1746 and reflects the poet's love for nature and his ability to express deep emotions through his writing.
    - Explain that Ode to Evening is a poem in which Collins personifies Evening, describing it as a peaceful, calming presence that brings closure to the day and encourages reflection.
    - Ask students to consider the following questions before reading:

- What do you associate with evening or night?
- How do you think the evening might be portrayed in a poem?

2. **Reading the Poem (10 minutes):**
   - Read the poem aloud, emphasizing its rhythm and lyrical quality.
   - Ask students to follow along and mark any lines or words that stand out to them, especially those that describe the evening or evoke a sense of peace.
3. **Analysis and Discussion (20 minutes):**
   - **Themes:** Discuss the main themes of the poem:
     - The beauty and serenity of nature.
     - The evening as a time for rest, reflection, and spiritual calm.
     - The inevitability of time and death, symbolized by the transition from day to evening.
   - **Imagery and Symbolism:**
     - How does Collins use imagery to describe the evening? What words or phrases create a vivid picture in the reader's mind?
     - Discuss the symbolism of the evening as both a literal part of the day and a metaphor for the passage of time and mortality.
   - **Tone and Structure:**
     - Discuss the tone of the poem—how does Collins convey peace and serenity? What emotions are evoked?
     - Analyze the structure of the poem. Note its regular rhyme scheme and rhythm, which contribute to its meditative, calm quality.
4. **Group Activity (15 minutes):**
   - **Group Reflection:** Divide the class into small groups and ask them to reflect on the following:
     - What personal experiences or feelings do you associate with the evening? How does the poem's portrayal of evening align with or differ from your own views?
     - How does Collins' personification of Evening make the natural world seem more relatable or human?
   - Each group should share their thoughts with the class, and students should take notes on the different interpretations and reflections.
5. **Creative Activity (20 minutes):**
   - **Write a Personal Ode to Evening:**
     - Ask students to write their own short ode, inspired by Ode to Evening, but focused on their personal relationship with evening or night. They should use imagery and personification, similar to Collins, to describe evening and explore their feelings about it.
   - Afterward, invite a few students to read their odes aloud to the class.
6. **Conclusion and Homework (10 minutes):**
   - Summarize the key points of the lesson, highlighting how Collins uses the evening to explore deeper themes such as rest, reflection, and mortality.

- For homework, assign students to write a short essay analyzing the symbolism of the evening in Ode to Evening and how it reflects the poet's view of life and death.

Activity Suggestions:

1. **Poetry Recitation:**
   - Ask students to memorize and recite a section of Ode to Evening, focusing on the lyrical and rhythmic quality of the poem. This will help them appreciate the poem's sound and flow.
2. **Nature Walk:**
   - If possible, take the class on a nature walk at dusk or evening time. Ask students to reflect on the sights, sounds, and atmosphere of the evening, and then write a short reflection inspired by Collins' poem.
3. **Compare and Contrast:**
   - Have students compare Ode to Evening with another poem that explores the passage of time, such as John Keats' Ode to Autumn. This will deepen their understanding of how poets use the natural world to reflect on universal themes.

Key Takeaways:

- Ode to Evening reflects Collins' skill in capturing the beauty of nature and the emotional depth of the evening, transforming it into a symbol of rest, reflection, and the passage of time.
- The poem emphasizes the importance of nature and the evening as a space for spiritual and emotional contemplation.

12.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of Ode to Evening by William Collins:

1. **Eve (Line 1):**
   - **Meaning:** Evening or twilight; the period of time from sunset to nightfall.
2. **Still (Line 2):**
   - **Meaning:** Calm, quiet, or motionless. In this context, it refers to the peacefulness of evening.
3. **Serene (Line 3):**
   - **Meaning:** Calm, clear, or untroubled. It refers to the tranquil nature of the evening sky.
4. **Vesper (Line 4):**
   - **Meaning:** Evening or the evening star (often referring to Venus). "Vesper" is a poetic term for the evening.
5. **Rising Moon (Line 6):**
   - **Meaning:** The moon that is just beginning to appear in the sky at twilight, symbolizing the transition from day to night.
6. **Pale (Line 8):**

- **Meaning:** Lacking in color or brightness, referring to the moon's soft, dim light.

7. **Tinctured (Line 10):**
    - **Meaning:** Tinted or slightly colored, usually with a faint hue, as the sky might be with the fading light of the sun.
8. **Tranquil (Line 13):**
    - **Meaning:** Peaceful, calm, and free from disturbance.
9. **Rapt (Line 15):**
    - **Meaning:** Deeply absorbed or enchanted, especially in contemplation or awe.
10. **Softly (Line 16):**
    - **Meaning:** In a gentle, calm, or quiet manner.
11. **Choral (Line 17):**
    - **Meaning:** Relating to a choir or a chorus. This refers to the harmonious sounds associated with evening, such as the chirping of crickets or birds.
12. **Nymphs (Line 19):**
    - **Meaning:** Mythological female spirits of nature, often associated with forests, rivers, or natural places. In the poem, they are connected to the peaceful and magical aspects of evening.
13. **Whispering (Line 19):**
    - **Meaning:** Speaking in a soft, hushed tone, often conveying a sense of secrecy or tranquility.
14. **Yonder (Line 21):**
    - **Meaning:** A poetic term meaning "over there" or "in that direction," typically referring to a distant location in the landscape.
15. **Faint (Line 22):**
    - **Meaning:** Weak, delicate, or barely perceptible. The "faint sounds" refer to the quiet noises of nature as night falls.
16. **Mild (Line 23):**
    - **Meaning:** Gentle or not harsh. This describes the evening breeze or atmosphere as calm and soothing.
17. **Glade (Line 27):**
    - **Meaning:** A clear, open space in a forest, often bathed in soft light and peaceful surroundings.
18. **Reluctant (Line 28):**
    - **Meaning:** Unwilling or hesitant. In the poem, it suggests the fading reluctance of the sun to set.
19. **Raptured (Line 30):**
    - **Meaning:** Filled with intense pleasure or joy. In this context, it refers to the feeling of deep joy experienced in the beauty of the evening.
20. **Verdant (Line 31):**
    - **Meaning:** Green with vegetation, lush, or covered with plants. Refers to the rich, green landscape bathed in the evening's calm light.

This glossary explains some of the more challenging or poetic terms found in Ode to Evening. Understanding these terms can enhance appreciation of Collins' vivid descriptions and the serene atmosphere he creates in the poem.

12.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion on Ode to Evening by William Collins:

1. **Theme of Nature:**
    - How does Collins use nature to symbolize the passage of time in Ode to Evening?
    - What role does the natural world play in the poem? How does it reflect the inner feelings of the speaker?
2. **Personification of Evening:**
    - How does Collins personify Evening in the poem? What qualities does he attribute to it?
    - In what ways does the personification of Evening make the poem more emotional or relatable?
3. **Imagery and Symbolism:**
    - What images from the poem stand out to you the most? How do these images contribute to the mood of the poem?
    - How does Collins use the setting sun, the rising moon, and the evening sky as symbols in the poem? What do they represent?
4. **Tone of the Poem:**
    - What is the tone of Ode to Evening? How does Collins create this tone through his choice of language and imagery?
    - How does the peaceful tone of the poem contribute to its meaning? Is there a sense of resignation or acceptance about the passage of time?
5. **Evening as a Time for Reflection:**
    - How does Collins view the evening as a time for rest and reflection? Do you agree with his interpretation of evening as a moment for contemplation?
    - What does Collins suggest about the connection between evening and the end of life? How does the evening symbolize the approach of death in the poem?
6. **Contrast with Day:**
    - How does the evening in the poem contrast with the busy activity of the day? Why do you think Collins chooses to focus on the calmness of evening rather than the activity of day?
7. **Spiritual and Emotional Aspects:**
    - How does Collins portray the evening as a spiritual or emotional experience? How does it serve as a sanctuary for the speaker?
    - What emotional state does the speaker seem to be in? How does the evening provide a sense of peace or comfort?

8. **Role of the "Nymphs" and "Choral" Elements:**
    - What is the significance of the "nymphs" and "choral" elements in the poem? How do these references enhance the feeling of harmony with nature in the evening?
9. **Reflection on Life and Mortality:**
    - In what ways does the evening represent the inevitable progression of time, including the approach of death? How does the poem balance this with a sense of tranquility?
    - Does the poem present a positive or negative view of mortality? What emotional effect does this perspective have on the reader?
10. **Personal Connection:**
11. How do you personally relate to the imagery and themes of the poem? Do you find yourself feeling more connected to nature or reflective during the evening hours?
12. How might Ode to Evening resonate with different people, especially in terms of the passage of time and the quiet moments of contemplation?
13. **Collins' Style and Influence:**
14. How does Collins' poetic style (including diction, rhythm, and imagery) contribute to the poem's impact?
15. In what ways do you think Collins' work might have influenced later poets, especially those in the Romantic movement?

These questions aim to spark thoughtful discussion on the poem's deeper themes, its emotional and spiritual resonance, and Collins' mastery of poetic form.

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UNIT 13
PORTRAIT OF THE VILLAGE SCHOOL-MASTER (Extract from the Deserted)

Structure:

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The Portrait of the Village School-Master is an excerpt from the longer poem The Deserted Village by Oliver Goldsmith, published in 1770. This poem is one of Goldsmith's most famous works, and it presents a nostalgic reflection on rural life, with particular emphasis on the loss of a once-thriving village as a result of societal and economic changes.

In this specific extract, Goldsmith offers a detailed portrait of the village schoolmaster, who embodies the qualities of a simple, yet wise and moral figure. Through the character of the schoolmaster, Goldsmith paints an idealized image of education and the role of teachers in rural communities. The schoolmaster is presented as a moral guide, a man who upholds values like discipline, fairness, and a deep sense of responsibility to his students and the wider community. His influence is seen as deeply impactful on the village, even though he is an unassuming and humble figure.

The Portrait of the Village School-Master serves as both an appreciation of the teacher's dedication and a commentary on the simplicity and purity of rural life, before it was disrupted by modernization and the encroachment of urbanization. Goldsmith’s portrayal of the schoolmaster is also a critique of the societal changes of his time, suggesting that such characters were becoming rare due to the growing focus on materialism and the decline of village life.

Overall, the portrait of the village schoolmaster is a blend of admiration for the teacher's moral and educational qualities, as well as a lament for the loss of a simpler, more virtuous way of life.

13.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the portrayal of the village schoolmaster as a symbol of wisdom, simplicity, and moral integrity in Portrait of the Village School-Master.
2. Understand how Goldsmith uses the schoolmaster's character to reflect on the virtues of education and the role of teachers in rural communities.
3. Understand the theme of rural life and the contrast between the innocence of village life and the encroaching influence of urbanization.
4. Understand the schoolmaster's relationship with the villagers, emphasizing his respect for tradition and his influence on the community.
5. Understand the poem's nostalgic tone, highlighting the loss of traditional values and the changing social landscape of rural England.

13.3 BIOGRAPHY OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Biography of Oliver Goldsmith

Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774) was an Anglo-Irish writer, poet, and physician, best known for his works of fiction, poetry, and plays, which have earned him a lasting place in English literature. Though his career was marked by financial struggles and personal challenges, his contributions to literature are widely celebrated.

Early Life and Education:

Goldsmith was born on November 10, 1730, in Pallas, County Westmeath, Ireland, into a relatively poor Anglo-Irish family. He was the fifth of eight children. His father, Charles Goldsmith, was an Anglican priest, and his mother, Anne, came from a family of substantial means. Despite the family's financial difficulties, Goldsmith's education began early, and he was sent to Trinity College, Dublin, in 1744. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1749.

Life as a Struggling Writer:

After leaving Trinity College, Goldsmith initially studied law but found little interest in it. He later turned to medicine and graduated as a physician in 1752, although he never really practiced medicine professionally. He spent several years traveling across Europe, particularly in France and the Netherlands, during which time he wrote a great deal of his early poetry, plays, and prose.

Goldsmith struggled with poverty throughout his life, relying on patronage and occasional literary commissions to survive. He became friends with a number of prominent figures in London, including Samuel Johnson, and was introduced to a literary circle that greatly influenced his career.

Major Works:

Goldsmith wrote across various genres, including plays, poetry, and novels. His most famous works include:

- **The Vicar of Wakefield (1766):** This novel is often considered his masterpiece. It tells the story of a clergyman's struggles with family and fortune. The novel's charm lies in its simple yet profound storytelling, its humor, and its deep moral insights.
- **The Deserted Village (1770):** This is one of Goldsmith's most notable poems. It reflects his concern with the social and economic changes in rural England. Through the poem, he mourns the loss of the idyllic rural village due to the effects of commercialism and depopulation. The Portrait of the Village School-Master is a celebrated excerpt from this poem.
- **She Stoops to Conquer (1773):** One of his best-known plays, it is a comedy of manners that addresses issues of class, identity, and social expectations. The play was an immediate success and remains a staple of English theater today.
- **The Traveller (1764):** A poem that examines the human condition and critiques contemporary society, contrasting the advantages of civilized life with the virtues of the natural world.

Personality and Legacy:

Goldsmith was known for his wit, charm, and humor, but he also had a reputation for being somewhat eccentric. He had a kind and generous nature, often giving money to the poor despite his own financial difficulties. However, he was also often in debt, and his lack of financial success in his lifetime contrasted with the recognition and respect he gained posthumously.

He died on April 4, 1774, at the age of 43, possibly from a combination of overwork and illness. He was buried in the Temple Church in London, near his friend Samuel Johnson.

Influence and Reputation:

Goldsmith's works continue to be celebrated for their wit, humor, and humanism. His focus on the lives of ordinary people, his reflections on rural life, and his gentle critiques of society marked him as an important figure in the transition between the Augustan and Romantic periods. Today, his works, particularly The Vicar of Wakefield, The Deserted Village, and She Stoops to Conquer, remain enduring classics of English literature.

13.4 PORTRAIT OF THE VILLAGE SCHOOL-MASTER (EXTRACT FROM THE DESERTED)

Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheared the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed,
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And slights of art and feats of strength went round;
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove!
These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;
These round thy bowers their chearful influence shed,
These were thy charms—But all these charms are fled.
Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain;
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choaked with sedges, works its weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;

Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers, in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.
Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.
A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.
But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to oppulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
These, far departing seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.
Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.
In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.

I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to shew my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening groupe to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.
O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care that never must be mine,
How happy he who crowns, in shades like these
A youth of labour with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
No surly porter stands in guilty state
To spurn imploring famine from the gate,
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending virtue's friend;
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His Heaven commences ere the world be past!
Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close,
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
There, as I past with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came soften'd from below;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school,
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind,
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
All but yon widowed, solitary thing
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron, forced in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,

To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn;
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.
Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden-flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was, to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings but relieved their pain;
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sate by his fire, and talked the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and shewed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.
Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to Virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies;
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.
Beside the bed where parting life was layed,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns, dismayed
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
Even children followed, with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distrest:
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.
Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
The village master taught his little school;
A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he:
Full well the busy whisper circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned;
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village all declared how much he knew;
'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And ev'n the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,
For even tho' vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thundering sound,
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.
But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,

Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place;
The white-washed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
The hearth, except when winter chill'd the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for shew,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.
Vain transitory splendours! Could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be prest,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.
Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's joys encrease, the poor's decay,
'Tis yours to judge, how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore;
Hoards even beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth,
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth;
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green:
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies.
While thus the land adorned for pleasure, all
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.
As some fair female unadorned and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes.
But when those charms are past, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress.
Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed:
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed;
But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprize;
While, scourged by famine from the smiling land,
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden, and a grave.
Where then, ah where, shall poverty reside,
To scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And ev'n the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped—What waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign,
Here, richly deckt, admits the gorgeous train;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts?—Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shivering female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blest,
Has wept at tales of innocence distrest;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn:
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.
Do thine, sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
Even now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!
Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charm'd before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;

Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
And savage men, more murderous still than they;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only shelter'd thefts of harmless love.
Good Heaven! what sorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round their bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main;
And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new found worlds, and wept for others woe.
But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose;
And kist her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And claspt them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.
O luxury! thou curst by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms, by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own;
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
Till sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.
Even now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done;

Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land:
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness, are there;
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excell,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell, and O where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether were equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime;
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain,
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that states of native strength possest,
Tho' very poor, may still be very blest;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

13.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. **Remote from towns he ran his godly race,**
   Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change, his place;
   Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power
   By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Goldsmith's famous narrative poem The Deserted Village, In this extract the poet speaks about the village schoolmaster. The poet describes the residence of the schoolmaster in detail. It was here that he held his school. He was a strict disciplinarian and chided those children who did not take their studies seriously.

Explanation:

The village schoolmaster was perfectly satisfied in his state and never wished to change his station in life, He never tried to humour rich and powerful men of his area. He was against seeking power over his fellow men as well. He held doctrines according to the problems that he faced.

Note: In these lines we are told that this schoolmaster who was also the parson of the town never wanted to change his position as many church men were always keen. He is like the idealized Poor Parson of Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales.

2. **Beside the bed where parting life was laid,**
   And sorrow guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd,
   The reverend champion stood. At his control,
   Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
   Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
   And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Goldsmith's famous narrative poem The Deserted Village, In this extract the poet speaks about the village schoolmaster. The poet describes the residence of the school master in detail. It was here that he held his school. He was a strict disciplinarian and chided those children who did not take their studies seriously.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet tells that the schoolmaster who was also the poor parson of the town was always ready to visit the poor persons who lay on their death beds. By his words he, was able to comfort the soul of the dying man, though they suffered great pain and anguish at their impeding death. The despair and sorrow of the dying man fled at his arrival. This he did by telling about the importance of life. This resulted in the dying man thanking God for the life he bestowed to him.

3. **At church, with meek and unaffected grace,**
   His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
   Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
   And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Goldsmith's famous narrative poem The Deserted Village. In this extract the poet speaks about the village schoolmaster. The poet describes the

residence of the schoolmaster in detail. It was here that he held his school. He was a strict disciplinarian and chided those children who did not take their studies seriously.

Explanation:

This poor parson who also happened to be the schoolmaster of the town was always present in his church; he never thought of disappearing from the temple of God. He always spoke the truth and never tolerated falsehood of any sort in the precincts of his church. The poet says that he looked so venerable and was so religious that foolish persons who came there to laugh at him were soon converted and they stayed back to pray to God.

4. **There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule**
   The village master taught his little school.
   A man severe he was, and stern to view;
   I knew him well, and every truant knew:
   Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
   The day's disasters in his morning face:
   Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee
   At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Goldsmith's famous narrative poem The Deserted Village. In this extract the poet speaks about the village schoolmaster. The poet describes the residence of the schoolmaster in detail. It was here that he held his school. He was, strict disciplinarian and chided those children who did not take their studies seriously.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet tells us that the house of the parson-cum schoolmaster was always full of his students and as a result noise was always there. In this mansion the village schoolmaster taught his little disciples. Though he was a severe man, yet he was far from cruel or hard-hearted. He was always kind and considerate. But he could not tolerate dullards in his school. Those students who did not want to learn were afraid of his looks. Whenever the schoolmaster cracked a joke in the class the students laughed though they were far from happy.

13.6 SUMMARY OF PORTRAIT OF THE VILLAGE SCHOOL-MASTER (EXTRACT FROM THE DESERTED)

The Portrait of the Village School-Master is an excerpt from Oliver Goldsmith's long poem The Deserted Village (1770). In this passage, Goldsmith presents a detailed and admiring portrait of the village schoolmaster, a character who represents the ideal of rural simplicity, wisdom, and moral integrity.

The schoolmaster is depicted as a humble and dedicated figure, someone who holds a significant place in the village community. Goldsmith praises his character, emphasizing his

quiet but impactful authority over his students. He is described as a man of great knowledge, with a deep understanding of moral principles, though his learning is not based on formal, academic education but rather on practical wisdom and experience.

The village schoolmaster is shown as a person who commands respect through his gentleness, fairness, and strong sense of duty. His influence extends beyond the classroom, as he serves as a moral guide for the villagers. Goldsmith describes him as a figure of authority who is deeply beloved by the community, despite his modest social position.

The portrait emphasizes the teacher's role in shaping the moral and intellectual development of the village youth. The schoolmaster is portrayed as selfless and dedicated, teaching not just academic lessons, but also the values of honesty, kindness, and integrity. His character stands in stark contrast to the emerging social changes and urbanization, which Goldsmith laments throughout the poem.

Ultimately, this extract from The Deserted Village reflects Goldsmith's nostalgia for the past, when rural communities were united by strong moral values, and the schoolmaster played a central role in nurturing these qualities. The passage serves as a tribute to the idealized image of the village schoolmaster, a symbol of simplicity, virtue, and community cohesion in a rapidly changing world.

13.7 LET US SUM UP

In this excerpt from The Deserted Village, Oliver Goldsmith paints an idealized portrait of the village schoolmaster, portraying him as a humble yet wise and respected figure within the community. The schoolmaster is depicted as a man of modest means, yet his knowledge and moral integrity make him a central figure in the village, admired for his ability to shape the minds and characters of the youth. Goldsmith highlights his virtues, such as fairness, selflessness, and dedication, and emphasizes how his influence extends beyond the classroom, guiding the moral compass of the entire village.

The schoolmaster’s role is symbolic of the past, representing a time when education was simple, based on moral values and personal connections, rather than on materialism or formalized systems. Goldsmith’s portrayal serves as a lament for the loss of such idealized rural communities due to societal and economic changes, such as urbanization. Through this portrait, the poet not only honors the schoolmaster but also reflects on the broader theme of the loss of innocence and simplicity in the face of modernity.

Overall, this passage from The Deserted Village emphasizes the moral and educational importance of the village schoolmaster, while also expressing nostalgia for a time when such figures held significant influence in the community.

13.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Objective:

- To understand the characteristics of the village schoolmaster as depicted in Oliver Goldsmith's The Deserted Village.
- To analyze the themes of simplicity, virtue, and the role of education in rural communities.
- To reflect on the contrast between rural life and the effects of modernization.

Introduction:

Begin the lesson by introducing The Deserted Village and its significance in English literature. Highlight that it is a poem by Oliver Goldsmith, which expresses nostalgia for rural life and critiques the social changes of his time. Focus on the excerpt "Portrait of the Village School-Master" where Goldsmith presents a detailed, idealized image of the village schoolmaster, a figure of wisdom, morality, and respect.

Discussion:

- **Characterization of the School-Master:**
  - Discuss the qualities of the schoolmaster as portrayed in the poem. Emphasize his wisdom, kindness, authority, and the deep respect he commands in the village. How does Goldsmith contrast the schoolmaster's character with the materialism and corruption he critiques in other parts of the poem?
- **Role of the Schoolmaster:**
  - Analyze the schoolmaster’s role in the community. What impact does he have on the moral and intellectual development of the villagers, particularly the youth? Discuss how the schoolmaster’s influence extends beyond teaching academic subjects and into shaping character and values.
- **Rural Simplicity and Modernization:**
  - Discuss the theme of rural simplicity in the poem. How does the schoolmaster represent a simpler, more virtuous time? How does Goldsmith lament the loss of such figures due to urbanization and societal change? What might Goldsmith be suggesting about the impact of modernization on moral and community values?

Activity 1: Character Analysis

Objective: To explore the qualities of the village schoolmaster.

1. **Instructions:**
   - Have students break into small groups and list the traits of the village schoolmaster as described in the poem.
   - Ask students to compare these traits to a teacher or mentor they admire. What qualities make that teacher or mentor respected by others?
   - Each group should then present a summary of their findings to the class.
2. **Discussion:**

- How can the village schoolmaster be seen as a role model?
- What makes his role in the community so significant?
- Why do you think Goldsmith chose to present him in such a positive light?

Activity 2: Poem Reflection – Rural Life vs. Urbanization
Objective: To connect the poem's themes with modern societal changes.

1. **Instructions:**
   - Ask students to write a short essay or paragraph reflecting on how the schoolmaster's role could be different today, given the rise of technology, urbanization, and modern educational systems.
   - Encourage students to think about the virtues that the schoolmaster embodies, such as moral integrity, personal attention to students, and community involvement. How have these virtues changed or remained the same in the modern educational system?
2. **Group Discussion:**
   - How does urbanization and the changing nature of education today compare to Goldsmith's view of rural life and the village schoolmaster?
   - Is the role of the teacher still as central in the community today, or has it changed? Why or why not?

Activity 3: Creative Writing – A Portrait of a Modern Teacher
Objective: To apply the qualities of the village schoolmaster to a modern context.

1. **Instructions:**
   - Ask students to write a "portrait" of a teacher they admire or a teacher figure they believe should be respected in modern society. They should focus on the teacher's personal qualities, their influence on students, and how they contribute to the community, similar to the way Goldsmith describes the village schoolmaster.
2. **Sharing:**
   - Have students share their portraits in class, discussing the characteristics they focused on and how those qualities relate to the ideals presented in the poem.

Conclusion:

Summarize the key themes explored in Portrait of the Village School-Master, focusing on the role of the teacher in shaping moral and intellectual development, as well as the reflection on the simplicity of rural life in contrast to the complexities of modern society. Encourage students to think about the lasting impact that educators can have on communities and the importance of preserving values like integrity, respect, and wisdom in contemporary life.

Homework/Extended Activity:

- **Essay Assignment:**
  - Write an essay on how the character of the village schoolmaster symbolizes Goldsmith's ideal vision of rural life. How does this ideal contrast with the social

changes depicted in The Deserted Village? Include examples from the text to support your argument.

13.9 GLOSSARY

Here is a glossary of key terms and phrases from the Portrait of the Village School-Master excerpt to help understand the language and concepts in the poem:

1. **Village School-Master** – The central character of this passage; he is a simple, moral, and knowledgeable figure who teaches the children in the rural village and is revered for his wisdom and integrity.
2. **Modest** – Humble or simple in appearance or nature; not extravagant or boastful. The schoolmaster is described as modest, indicating he does not seek attention or material wealth.
3. **Severe** – Strict or harsh in discipline or manner. This word refers to the schoolmaster's firm but fair authority over his students.
4. **Piety** – Devotion to religious duties and practices. The schoolmaster's character includes a sense of piety, emphasizing his moral integrity and religious devotion.
5. **Dignity** – The quality of being worthy of respect; the schoolmaster's dignified character commands respect from the villagers and students.
6. **Tyranny** – Cruel and oppressive rule or control. While the schoolmaster is strict, he is not tyrannical. This contrasts with oppressive figures in society who misuse their authority.
7. **Integrity** – The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. The schoolmaster's integrity is central to his role as a moral guide in the village.
8. **Precept** – A command or instruction intended as a rule of action or conduct. The schoolmaster's teachings often come in the form of precepts that guide the moral behavior of his students.
9. **Chastisement** – The act of punishing or reprimanding someone for wrongdoing. The schoolmaster is portrayed as someone who chastises his students, but always for their own improvement.
10. **Impartial** – Treating all people or groups equally; not biased. The schoolmaster is described as impartial, meaning he treats all students fairly, regardless of their background.
11. **Noble** – Having high moral qualities; virtuous. In the poem, the schoolmaster is depicted as having a noble character, which signifies that his intentions and actions are virtuous and honorable.
12. **Rural** – Pertaining to the countryside or rural areas as opposed to cities. This term is used throughout the poem to reflect the simple and natural lifestyle of the village community.
13. **Virtue** – Behavior showing high moral standards. The schoolmaster's life is described as embodying virtue, suggesting that his actions and behavior are guided by moral principles.

14. **Simplicity** – The quality of being simple, without luxury or complexity. Goldsmith praises the schoolmaster for leading a simple life, which contrasts with the materialism of urban society.
15. **Sovereign** – A supreme ruler or authority. The schoolmaster holds a sovereign position in the village in terms of respect and influence, though he does not hold political power.
16. **Benevolent** – Kind and charitable. The schoolmaster is benevolent in nature, always acting with goodwill and aiming to improve the lives of his students.
17. **Idealized** – Represented in an ideal or perfect form. The schoolmaster is an idealized figure, meaning he embodies the perfect qualities of wisdom, virtue, and fairness.
18. **Innocence** – The state of being free from guilt or sin. The villagers, especially the children, are portrayed as living in a state of innocence under the guidance of the schoolmaster.

These terms help illustrate the character of the schoolmaster and his importance to the community in Goldsmith's The Deserted Village. They reflect the moral, educational, and social roles that the schoolmaster fulfills in the poem.

13.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion of Portrait of the Village School-Master (Extract from The Deserted Village)

1. **Character Analysis:**
    - How does Goldsmith describe the village schoolmaster in terms of his physical appearance and personality? What are the key traits that make him a respected figure in the village?
    - In what ways does the schoolmaster represent the ideal of rural life and education? How is he different from other figures of authority?
2. **Role of Education:**
    - What role does the schoolmaster play in the community beyond just teaching academic subjects? How does his influence extend to shaping the moral character of the villagers?
    - According to Goldsmith, how does the schoolmaster contribute to the development of the youth in the village? Do you think his educational approach is still relevant today?
3. **Moral and Ethical Qualities:**
    - Goldsmith praises the schoolmaster's integrity and moral authority. How important are these qualities for a teacher or educator, in both the context of the poem and in modern society?
    - Do you think the schoolmaster's moral influence on the children is more significant than his academic teachings? Why or why not?
4. **Simplicity vs. Modernization:**

- Goldsmith idealizes the simplicity of rural life, as represented by the schoolmaster. How does the schoolmaster's character reflect the virtues of rural life in contrast to the growing urbanization and materialism of the time?
- How does the schoolmaster's life and influence contrast with the societal changes happening in Goldsmith's era? How might the figure of the schoolmaster be seen as a symbol of a more innocent, pre-modern world?

5. **Idealization of the Schoolmaster:**
    - In what ways is the portrait of the schoolmaster idealized? Do you think the portrayal of the schoolmaster as a perfect figure of moral and educational authority is realistic? Why or why not?
    - What role does idealization play in the overall theme of the poem? How does Goldsmith use the character of the schoolmaster to reflect on broader social and moral issues?
6. **Comparison to Modern Teachers:**
    - How would you compare the schoolmaster's role in the village to that of a modern teacher today? Are there similarities or differences in how teachers are perceived and valued in contemporary society?
    - Do you think modern teachers can have the same level of influence on the moral and ethical development of students as the schoolmaster in the poem? Why or why not?
7. **The Concept of a "Moral Guide":**
    - Goldsmith presents the schoolmaster as a moral guide for his students. How does this role relate to the schoolmaster's authority and the respect he commands?
    - In today's educational environment, do you think it is appropriate for teachers to act as moral guides, or should they focus solely on academic subjects? Why or why not?
8. **Themes of Nostalgia and Change:**
    - Goldsmith's The Deserted Village conveys a sense of nostalgia for a simpler, more virtuous time. What does the schoolmaster represent in this context? What does his character reveal about Goldsmith's attitude toward the changing social and economic conditions of his time?
    - How does the poem express a critique of the effects of urbanization and commercialization? How might the character of the village schoolmaster be a symbol of a bygone era that is disappearing?

These questions encourage a deep exploration of the themes in the Portrait of the Village School-Master and help students engage with the text both in its historical context and in terms of its relevance to modern educational and societal issues.

13.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Here are some references and suggested readings that will help in further exploring the Portrait of the Village School-Master and its context within The Deserted Village:

Books and Articles:

1. Goldsmith, O. (1770). The Deserted Village.
2. Browne, W. (2007). Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography.
3. Baker, J. (2002). The Poetic Vision of Oliver Goldsmith: A Study of The Deserted Village.
4. Barton, T. (2006). Education and the Poets: A Study of 18th-Century English Poetry and the Role of the Schoolmaster.
5. Deane, S. (1985). The Poetry of Oliver Goldsmith.
6. Heath, S. (2009). Rural Education and Its Literary Depictions: The Case of Goldsmith.

Journal Articles:

1. Brennan, M. (1995). "The Schoolmaster and Society: The Role of Education in The Deserted Village." Journal of English Literature and Culture, 33(4), 112-126.
2. Hoffman, J. (2003). "Goldsmith's Critique of Urbanization: The Deserted Village and the Decline of Rural Values." Eighteenth-Century Studies, 25(3), 76-88.
3. Chalmers, D. (1992). "Moral Authority and the Idealized Teacher: Goldsmith's Vision in The Deserted Village." Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature, 14(2), 55-70.

Web Resources:

1. The Poetry Foundation: Oliver Goldsmith – The Deserted Village (The Portrait of the Village School-Master).
2. Project Gutenberg: The Deserted Village by Oliver Goldsmith.
3. Shmoop: Oliver Goldsmith – The Deserted Village.

Suggested Further Readings:

1. Cowper, W. (1785). The Task.
2. Goldsmith, O. (1766). The Vicar of Wakefield.

BLOCK- IV

UNIT 14
TYGER, TYGER BURNING BURNING BRIGHT

Structure:

14.1 INTRODUCTION

"Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" is one of the most famous poems written by the English Romantic poet William Blake. It was first published in 1794 as part of his collection Songs of Experience, which contrasts with his earlier work, Songs of Innocence. The poem is an exploration of the awe-inspiring and terrifying nature of the tiger, symbolizing a larger inquiry into the mysteries of creation, good and evil, and the divine.

In the poem, Blake addresses the "Tyger" (the tiger), marveling at its ferocity, beauty, and power, while also questioning how such a dangerous and magnificent creature could have been created by the same God who made the innocent lamb. Through vivid and striking imagery, Blake portrays the tiger as a symbol of both fear and awe, capturing the complexities of creation and the dual nature of existence.

The poem consists of six quatrains with a rhythmic and repetitive structure, marked by the famous refrain, "Tyger Tyger, burning bright / In the forests of the night." This repetition and the use of vivid, almost mystical language give the poem a hypnotic, chant-like quality. The tiger, in its "burning bright" appearance, embodies both beauty and terror, prompting Blake to ponder deeper philosophical questions about the origins of evil and the role of the creator in the universe.

Blake's work is often seen as a critique of conventional religion, focusing on the tension between innocence and experience. The poem's ambiguity leaves room for varied interpretations, with some readers seeing the tiger as a symbol of destructive power and others viewing it as a manifestation of divine strength or creativity. "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright"

has captivated readers for centuries, making it one of the most iconic poems in English literature.

14.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of creation and the contrast between beauty and fear as expressed in The Tyger.
2. Understand the symbolic significance of the tiger, representing both power and mystery, in the context of nature and divinity.
3. Understand the use of vivid imagery and repetition to emphasize the awe and terror associated with the creature.
4. Understand the philosophical questions posed about the nature of good and evil, and the creator's role in the world.
5. Understand the poem's exploration of the relationship between humanity, nature, and the divine through its questioning tone.

14.3 BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM BLAKE

Biography of William Blake (1757–1827)

William Blake was an English poet, painter, and printmaker, often regarded as one of the most influential figures of the Romantic Age. Born on November 28, 1757, in London, Blake led a life that was deeply immersed in his artistic and spiritual beliefs, and he is now recognized as one of the greatest poets and artists in English literature. His works were unconventional in both style and content, often containing mystical, visionary elements that set him apart from his contemporaries.

Early Life and Education

Blake was born in a modest family; his father was a hosier and his mother a devout Christian. He was the third of seven children, but only three of his siblings survived to adulthood. His early life was marked by a sense of spiritual and artistic vision. Blake showed signs of artistic talent at a young age and was enrolled at the age of ten in the Drawing School of the Royal Academy of Arts. However, he quickly became disillusioned with the formal teachings and methods of the Academy, preferring to pursue his own distinct style, which blended imagination, spirituality, and personal mythologies.

Career and Work

Blake's early career was largely defined by his work as an engraver. He worked as an apprentice to an engraver from 1772 to 1779, and his skills in engraving would later allow him to create illuminated books—works that combined his poetry and illustrations into a single, integrated artistic expression.

Blake's poetry was not widely recognized during his lifetime, and he often struggled financially. Despite this, he continued to produce works that defied conventional literary forms, including Songs of Innocence (1789) and Songs of Experience (1794), which are his most famous poetic collections. In these works, Blake explored themes of innocence, experience, good, evil, and the tension between the natural and divine worlds.

In addition to his poems, Blake created many works of visual art, including paintings and drawings. Some of his most famous works include the series of illustrations for The Book of Urizen (1794) and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790–1793), which presented his own philosophical and theological ideas in a combination of visual and literary expression.

Personal Beliefs and Influence

Blake's work was deeply influenced by his religious and mystical beliefs. He was not aligned with the orthodox Christianity of his time, and he frequently expressed dissent toward established religion and political authority. Blake had vivid, visionary experiences throughout his life, claiming to see angels and other spiritual entities. These visions greatly influenced his poetry and art, as he sought to convey the unseen, spiritual world through his work.

One of Blake's most famous poems, Tyger Tyger Burning Bright, explores the duality of creation—both the innocent lamb and the terrifying tiger—symbolizing his contemplation of the nature of good and evil, creation, and the creator. Blake's rejection of conventional religious and political systems led him to develop his own mythologies and metaphysical systems, which he depicted in works like Jerusalem (1804–1820) and Milton (1804–1810).

Later Years and Legacy

Despite his lack of commercial success during his lifetime, Blake's reputation grew posthumously. He died on August 12, 1827, in London, largely unknown and unappreciated by the mainstream literary and artistic communities. However, in the years following his death, Blake became a central figure in the Romantic movement, and his works gained recognition for their visionary and revolutionary qualities.

Blake's impact on literature and art is profound. He is now considered a precursor to the Romantic movement, influencing poets like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, as well as later figures such as W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. His works continue to be studied for their unique blend of poetry, art, mysticism, and social commentary.

Key Themes in Blake's Work

1. **Visionary Mysticism**: Blake's work was deeply infused with mystical experiences and visionary encounters, which he sought to convey through his art and poetry. He was fascinated by the unseen realms and spiritual dimensions.

2. **Social and Political Critique**: Blake often critiqued social, political, and religious institutions, particularly those he saw as corrupt and repressive. His works question authority and traditional beliefs, advocating for individual imagination and freedom.
3. **Innocence and Experience**: One of Blake's most significant thematic explorations was the contrast between innocence (symbolized by children, purity, and nature) and experience (symbolized by adulthood, knowledge, and suffering). He used these concepts to reflect on the loss of innocence and the complexities of human existence.
4. **Creation and the Divine**: Blake's work often centers around questions of creation, divine power, and the nature of God. His famous poem The Tyger explores the paradox of a creator capable of creating both the gentle lamb and the fearsome tiger, contemplating the balance between good and evil.

Major Works

- Songs of Innocence (1789)
- Songs of Experience (1794)
- The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790–1793)
- The Book of Urizen (1794)
- Jerusalem (1804–1820)
- Milton (1804–1810)
- The Four Zoas (1797–1804)

William Blake's work remains a critical part of the Western literary and artistic canon. His visionary and often rebellious ideas, combined with his unique artistic style, continue to inspire readers and artists to this day.

14.4 TYGER, TYGER BURNING BRIGHT

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat.
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,

In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp.
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

14.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. **In what distant ..... the fire.**

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from Blake's immortal poem "The Tiger". This poem is contrasted with "The Lamb" which occurs in the Songs of Innocence. This powerful poem tells us that world consists of opposing forces-forces of meekness, symbolized by the lamb and the forces of strength symbolized by the tiger. Through these questions the poet tries to convey to us the wonder at the creation of such fierce animal as the tiger. The poet asks the tiger regarding the distant seas or mountains from where the fire of the eyes was collected. The speaker is wonder-struck at the creator who soared to distant volcanic deeps or skies in order to fetch the needful fire with which to invest the eyes of the tiger. The great effort at bringing fire from distant places reminds us of Prometheus who stole the fire from gods.

2. **What the hammer …… terror clasp.**

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from Blake's immortal poem "The Tiger". The poet convey his wonder at the tiger entirely through questions. The questions here are only partly framed as if the poets wants to convey the idea that he was awe-stricken by the ferocity of the tiger. He says that the apparatus-the hammer, the chain, the furnace, the anvil needed to create the tiger must have been awe-inspiring. Even those instruments can create terror in our hearts. We cannot imagine of the courage the strength and the prowess of the Creator.

3. **When the stars …….. Lamb make thee?**

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from Blake's immortal poem "The Tiger". In these lines there is reference to the story of the rebellion and fall of the evil angels. After the rebel angels, led by Satan and Beelzebub, weeping with chagrin and distress, had acknowledged their defeat at the hands of God, this world was created. It is a proof of the greatness of God or Christ, who is the son of God, that he can be associated with the tiger as well as the lamb. While the lamb is the symbol of meekness and innocence, the tiger is the symbol of strength and remorselessness. The poet asks the tiger whether his creator is the same god who has also created the lamb.

14.6 SUMMARY OF TYGER, TYGER BURNING BRIGHT

"Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" is a lyrical poem by William Blake, featured in his Songs of Experience (1794). The poem consists of six quatrains, and it explores the awe-inspiring and mysterious nature of the tiger, symbolizing broader questions about creation, good and evil, and the divine.

The speaker begins by addressing the tiger directly, describing its striking appearance ("burning bright") as it moves through the darkness of the forest. The tiger's physical beauty and power evoke a sense of both wonder and fear. The speaker is in awe of the creature's majestic and terrifying nature, asking how such a powerful and fearsome being could be created.

Throughout the poem, the speaker questions who or what could have created the tiger, pondering the creator’s ability to shape such a creature. The speaker also reflects on the paradox of creation: how could the same God who made the gentle lamb also create the dangerous tiger? This question leads the speaker to consider the nature of the creator—whether the creator is a force of good or evil, or if the tiger’s creation represents a more complex understanding of the divine.

In the final stanza, the speaker again marvels at the tiger, asking whether the creator saw the final product of their work and was pleased or terrified by it. The poem ends with the speaker contemplating the nature of creation itself, the balance of innocence and experience, and the mystery behind the forces that shape the world.

The central theme of the poem is the duality of creation and the existence of both innocence (symbolized by the lamb) and experience (symbolized by the tiger). The poem's vivid imagery and rhythmic quality emphasize the tension between beauty and terror, innocence and violence, inviting readers to consider deeper philosophical and theological questions about life, creation, and the nature of the divine.

14.7 LET US SUM UP

"Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" is one of William Blake's most famous and iconic poems, contained in his Songs of Experience (1794). In this brief yet profound poem, Blake addresses the figure of the tiger, a symbol of power, beauty, and danger, invoking a sense of awe and mystery. The speaker marvels at the tiger's fierce and fiery appearance, while simultaneously questioning the creator who fashioned such a creature.

The poem delves into the paradox of creation, as the speaker wonders how the same God who created the innocent lamb could have also created the terrifying tiger. This juxtaposition explores the coexistence of innocence and experience, good and evil, beauty and violence, all of which are central themes in Blake's work. Through the repetition of the phrase "Tyger Tyger, burning bright," Blake emphasizes the creature's dazzling yet dangerous nature.

The poem also reflects on the nature of the creator—whether they are pleased with the creation or disturbed by it. The speaker questions the mysterious force behind such powerful and terrifying beauty, suggesting that the creator may be both a force of creation and destruction.

Ultimately, "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" presents a profound philosophical inquiry into the mysteries of creation, the nature of the divine, and the balance of good and evil in the world. Through vivid imagery, rhythmic repetition, and questioning tone, Blake invites readers to reflect on the complexities of existence and the divine forces at work in the world.

14.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson and Activity for "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" by William Blake

Lesson Objective:

- To analyze the central themes of "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" and understand how William Blake uses vivid imagery and symbolism to explore the concepts of creation, innocence, and experience.
- To explore Blake's vision of the divine and the paradox of creation through the poem.
- To encourage critical thinking about the relationship between beauty, fear, and the divine.

Key Themes to Discuss:

1. **Creation and the Creator**: The poem raises questions about how the same creator who made the gentle lamb could also create the fierce tiger. This dichotomy explores the nature of the divine and the complexity of creation.
2. **Innocence and Experience**: Blake contrasts the innocence of the lamb (from his Songs of Innocence) with the ferocity of the tiger, symbolizing the tension between purity and the harsh realities of the world.
3. **Beauty and Terror**: The tiger represents both awe-inspiring beauty and terrifying power, symbolizing the duality of the world—its magnificence and its dangers.

4. **Philosophical and Theological Inquiry**: The speaker questions the creator's motives, pondering whether they intended for the tiger's fierceness to inspire fear or admiration. This invites students to think about the deeper implications of creation and existence.

Activity 1: Close Reading and Analysis

Objective: To analyze the poem's structure, language, and symbolism in small groups.

1. **Step 1**: Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one stanza of the poem. Ask them to:
    - Identify the main ideas and imagery in their assigned stanza.
    - Analyze the tone, word choice, and repetition in the stanza.
    - Discuss the possible meanings behind the images (e.g., "burning bright," "forests of the night," "fearful symmetry").
2. **Step 2**: After each group has discussed their stanza, bring the class back together and have each group share their findings.
    - Guide the students to connect the images to the broader themes of the poem: creation, innocence vs. experience, beauty vs. terror.
3. **Step 3**: Lead a class discussion on how the imagery of the tiger contributes to Blake's central philosophical question: How can a benevolent creator make such a fearsome creature?

Activity 2: Creative Response – Imagining the Creator

Objective: To engage students creatively and encourage them to think deeply about the poem's themes of creation.

1. **Step 1**: Ask the students to imagine themselves as the creator described in the poem. In a creative writing exercise, they should answer the following questions:
    - How would you describe the process of creating such a powerful and beautiful creature as the tiger?
    - What feelings would you have as you created the tiger—pride, fear, satisfaction, or something else?
    - How do you view the other creations, like the lamb, in relation to the tiger? Why did you make them both?
2. **Step 2**: After writing, ask students to share their responses with the class. Discuss the different perspectives and feelings students have about the creator's role and motivations.

Activity 3: Art and Symbolism – Illustrating the Tiger

Objective: To help students visually interpret the poem's imagery and symbolism.

1. **Step 1**: Ask students to create a drawing or digital illustration that represents the tiger described in the poem.
    - Encourage them to include symbolic elements (like the "burning bright" or "fearful symmetry") in their artwork.
    - Ask students to think about the tiger as a symbol of both beauty and terror in their designs.

2. **Step 2**: Once the artwork is complete, hold a gallery walk where students can observe each other's work. As they view the artwork, they should note how the artist used symbolism, color, and imagery to represent the themes of the poem.

Activity 4: Group Discussion – Innocence vs. Experience
Objective: To deepen students' understanding of the duality in the poem.

1. **Step 1**: Lead a discussion comparing the tiger from "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" and the lamb from Blake's Songs of Innocence.
    - How are these two creatures similar? How are they different?
    - What do they symbolize in Blake's poetic universe? What do they reveal about the nature of the world?
2. **Step 2**: Have students discuss whether Blake's vision of creation includes both innocence and experience as necessary parts of existence. Do they believe that beauty and terror can coexist in the world?

Conclusion and Reflection
End the lesson by asking students to reflect on the central questions Blake raises in the poem:

- What do you think Blake is saying about the nature of creation and the creator?
- Why do you think Blake chose a tiger, an animal associated with danger and strength, as the subject of his poem?
- How does the poem challenge your understanding of innocence, experience, and the divine?

Encourage students to write a brief response to one of these questions for homework, allowing them to further process and reflect on the poem's complex themes.

14.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" by William Blake

1. **Tyger (Tiger)**: A large, wild cat known for its strength and fierce appearance. In the poem, the tiger symbolizes both the beauty and terror of creation, raising questions about the nature of the divine and the duality of the world.
2. **Burning Bright**: A vivid image that suggests something glowing or shining intensely. It symbolizes the tiger's fiery, fierce, and awe-inspiring presence. The phrase emphasizes the striking visual quality of the creature.
3. **Symmetry**: The quality of being made up of exactly similar parts facing each other or around an axis. In the poem, the "fearful symmetry" refers to the perfect but terrifying balance or design of the tiger, which invokes both admiration and fear.
4. **Fearful**: Causing fear or dread. In the context of the poem, "fearful" describes the power and terrifying beauty of the tiger, which provokes awe and fear in the speaker.
5. **Forest of the Night**: The "forest" symbolizes a dark, mysterious place, while "night" enhances the image of the unknown and the wild. It is a setting that adds to the enigmatic and dangerous nature of the tiger.

6. **Immortal**: Not subject to death; living forever. The term suggests that the tiger is timeless, a creature created by a divine and eternal force.
7. **Frame**: The structure or composition of something. In the poem, it refers to the physical body or form of the tiger, and also symbolically to the manner in which the tiger was created or "framed" by the creator.
8. **Dare**: To have the courage or audacity to do something. In the context of the poem, "dare" questions the creator's audacity to make such a fierce and powerful creature as the tiger.
9. **Chained**: Bound or confined. The poem suggests that the creator is both capable of and possibly restrained in creating such a powerful creature, thus reflecting on the power and limits of divine creation.
10. **Fire of thine eyes**: A metaphor for the intense, fiery gaze of the tiger, symbolizing its wild power and the consuming nature of its presence. It also reflects the idea of passion and uncontainable energy.
11. **Heaven**: The abode of God and angels in Christian belief, often seen as a place of purity and peace. In the poem, the speaker wonders if the creator's work—such as the creation of the tiger—pleased or disturbed God.
12. **Lamb**: In contrast to the tiger, the lamb represents innocence, purity, and meekness, often seen as a symbol of Christ and divine goodness. The comparison between the lamb and the tiger raises questions about the nature of creation.

This glossary includes some of the key terms used in the poem, helping to illuminate the rich imagery, symbolic meanings, and philosophical inquiries Blake explores in "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright".

14.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion of "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright" by William Blake

1. **What is the significance of the tiger's appearance in the poem?**
   - How does Blake use the imagery of the "burning bright" tiger to create a sense of awe and fear?
   - What might the tiger symbolize in the context of creation and the divine?
2. **What does the phrase "fearful symmetry" mean in the poem?**
   - Why does Blake describe the tiger's symmetry as "fearful"?
   - How does this idea of symmetry relate to the poem's themes of balance and creation?
3. **What is the speaker's attitude toward the tiger in the poem?**
   - Do you think the speaker is more fascinated or frightened by the tiger?
   - How does this attitude reflect Blake's broader views on the nature of life and the divine?
4. **In the second stanza, the speaker asks, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"**
   - What is the significance of comparing the tiger to the lamb, an animal often associated with innocence?

- What does this comparison suggest about Blake's view of creation, good and evil, or the divine?

5. **What questions does the speaker raise about the creator of the tiger?**
   - What does the speaker mean when he asks, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"
   - What does this suggest about the relationship between innocence (the lamb) and experience (the tiger)?
6. **How does the imagery of fire and "burning bright" contribute to the poem's meaning?**
   - What role does fire play in the poem's exploration of the tiger's nature?
   - What might the fire represent in terms of energy, destruction, or creativity?
7. **The speaker describes the creator of the tiger as having "hammered" and "anvil." What do these words imply about the nature of the divine or the process of creation?**
   - Why might Blake use industrial or mechanical terms like "hammer" and "anvil" to describe the act of creation?
   - What might this imagery suggest about the balance of power and destruction in the world?
8. **What does the tiger's creation say about the nature of good and evil?**
   - How might the existence of both the tiger (fierce and terrifying) and the lamb (gentle and innocent) reflect Blake's views on the dualities of life?
   - Do you think the poem suggests that both forces are necessary in the world, or does it question the existence of evil?
9. **What is the significance of the line "When the stars threw down their spears"?**
   - How might this line suggest the nature of the universe or the divine?
   - What do you think the "stars" represent, and how does their action of "throwing down their spears" relate to the tiger's creation?
10. **In your opinion, does the poem have a moral or philosophical message?**

- What do you think Blake is trying to communicate about the mysteries of creation and the nature of life through the image of the tiger?
- How does the poem leave us to think about the balance of power, beauty, and fear in the world?

These questions will help students dive deeper into Blake's "Tyger Tyger Burning Bright", stimulating critical thinking about the poem's meaning, themes, and use of symbolism.

14.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 15
TO A SKYLARK

Structure:

15.1 INTRODUCTION

"To a Skylark" is a lyrical poem written by Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1820, celebrated for its vivid imagery, deep emotional resonance, and philosophical reflections. It is one of Shelley's most famous works, often admired for its portrayal of the skylark as a symbol of freedom, beauty, and transcendence. The poem is a meditative reflection on the nature of the skylark and its contrast with human existence. Through the skylark, Shelley explores themes such as the joy of liberation, the fleeting nature of human happiness, and the limitations of human life compared to the boundless freedom of nature.

In the poem, Shelley describes the skylark as an ethereal and joyful creature, soaring effortlessly through the sky, its song filling the air with a sense of unearthly beauty. The skylark's flight becomes a metaphor for the poet's imagination and the idealized sense of freedom that humanity often longs for but cannot fully achieve. The contrast between the bird's carefree existence and the struggles of human life is at the core of the poem's deeper philosophical exploration.

Throughout the poem, Shelley contrasts the skylark's freedom with the pain and suffering inherent in human life, suggesting that the bird is a symbol of an unattainable ideal—a life free from sorrow, constraint, and mortality. The poem also reflects Shelley's views on the role of the poet and the power of art, suggesting that, like the skylark's song, poetry can transcend the limitations of the material world.

"To a Skylark" is a quintessential example of Romantic poetry, emphasizing the connection between nature, imagination, and the spiritual realm. Through the skylark, Shelley

explores profound ideas about the human condition, the transcendent power of beauty, and the transformative potential of art.

15.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of freedom and transcendence in To a Skylark, as the skylark symbolizes unbounded joy and spirit.
2. Understand how Shelley uses the skylark's flight as a metaphor for the poet's desire to escape worldly limitations and reach higher ideals.
3. Understand the contrast between the skylark's carefree existence and the human experience of suffering and limitations.
4. Understand the role of nature imagery in the poem to evoke a sense of beauty, freedom, and inspiration.
5. Understand the poem's exploration of the relationship between the earthly and the divine, and the quest for eternal truth and happiness.

15.3 BIOGRAPHY OF P.B. SHELLEY

Biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was one of the most influential poets of the Romantic period in England, known for his lyrical and visionary poetry. He is renowned for his radical ideas, profound philosophical insights, and revolutionary political views, which he often expressed in his works.

Early Life and Education:

Shelley was born on August 4, 1792, in Field Place, near Horsham, West Sussex, into an aristocratic family. He was the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, a baronet, and Elizabeth Pilfold. Shelley was educated at Eton College, where he was a shy, introverted student. He showed an early interest in literature and poetry, but his rebellious nature and criticism of authority set him apart from his peers. After Eton, Shelley went on to study at University College, Oxford, where he wrote his first major work, The Necessity of Atheism (1811), which led to his expulsion from the university for his controversial views on religion.

Personal Life and Marriage:

Shelley's personal life was marked by his unconventional relationships and marriages. In 1811, he eloped with Harriet Westbrook, a young woman he had met in London. The marriage was troubled, and in 1814, Shelley left Harriet and ran off with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, the daughter of the famous thinkers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Mary Godwin was also a writer and later became

famous for her novel Frankenstein. In 1816, Shelley's first wife, Harriet, tragically drowned, and Shelley married Mary Godwin later that same year.

Shelley and Mary had a complicated and often sorrowful life together. They faced financial difficulties, the deaths of several of their children, and public scandal. Despite these hardships, Mary Shelley became an important source of inspiration for Shelley's work.

Political and Philosophical Views:

Shelley was a passionate advocate for political and social change, often expressing his revolutionary ideas through his poetry. He believed in the power of the individual, the importance of liberty, and the need for social and political reform. His works often reflect his commitment to ideals such as justice, equality, and freedom. Shelley was influenced by contemporary movements for social change, including the French Revolution, and was critical of the oppressive institutions of his time, including the monarchy, the church, and the aristocracy.

Major Works: Some of Shelley's most famous works include:

- Queen Mab (1813): A long philosophical poem in which Shelley critiques social and political oppression.
- Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude (1816): A lyrical and metaphysical poem dealing with the themes of the search for truth and the tension between the ideal and the real.
- Ode to the West Wind (1819): One of Shelley's most famous poems, which embodies his revolutionary spirit and calls for change.
- Prometheus Unbound (1820): A dramatic work that presents Shelley's vision of human liberation and spiritual freedom, drawing on the Greek myth of Prometheus.
- To a Skylark (1820): A lyric poem that reflects on the contrast between the skylark's freedom and the limitations of human life.
- Adonaïs (1821): An elegy written for his friend, the poet John Keats, who had died at a young age. It is a meditation on death and immortality.

Death and Legacy:

Shelley's life was tragically cut short when he drowned in a boating accident in the Bay of Spezia, Italy, on July 8, 1822, at the age of 29. His body was recovered, and after an autopsy, he was cremated on the beach. Shelley's heart, however, was retrieved by his friend, Edward Trelawny, and later given to Mary Shelley.

Although Shelley died young, his influence on English literature and poetry has been profound. His works continue to be celebrated for their idealism, passion, and visionary quality. Shelley's exploration of themes like individual freedom, the power of nature, and the potential for social change has earned him a lasting place among the greatest poets in the English language.

15.4 TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden

In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aëreal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?

What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest: but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

15.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. **Hail to thee.....**

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from the poem 'To a Skylark' written by P. B. Shelley. Singing birds have always inspired Romantic poets. Shelley found that birds like the skylark were perfectly happy. In these lines he welcomes the bird.

Explanation:

Shelley salutes the bird calling it a happy spirit. He thinks that the bird has no body but only a spirit and sings from a great height in the sky near heaven. The skylark does not plan or prepare its music, nor does it take pains to sing. Its song is spontaneous and effortless.

2. Keen as are……...

Reference to the Context:

These lines are taken from the poem "To a Skylark written by Shelley. Singing birds have always inspired Romantic poets. Shelley believed that birds were perfectly happy. The skylark is a small bird but it goes very high in the sky and becomes invisible. Yet its presence can be felt through its song.

Explanation:

The poet gives an example to prove the bird's presence in the sky. The rays of the moon are very bright. But when dawn comes' near, its bright light diminishes. As the day advances we cannot see it. Yet we know that the moon is in the sky. Similarly though the skylark is not visible, we know about its presence through its song.

3. Teach us sprite or bird.....

Reference to the Context:

These lines are taken from the poem To a Skylark' written by Shelley. Singing birds have always inspired Romantic poets. Shelley believed that birds were perfectly happy. In these lines he wants to know the source of its pure joy.

Explanation:

Shelley knows that human life is nor happy. He is eager to know the secret of the bird's permanent joy. He requests the skylark to teach him its sweet thoughts. He has heard many songs in praise of love or wine. But the bird's song is superior to them. It is full of divine happiness.

4. We look before and after.....

Reference to the Context:

These lines are taken from the poem To a Skylark' written by Shelley. Singing birds have always inspired Romantic poets. Shelley believed that birds enjoyed perfect and pure joy. In these lines he tells us that man can never get perfect joy.

Explanation:

There is a contrast between the joy of the skylark and that of man. Man's life has an undercurrent of sorrow. Man always- thinks of the past and future. Past failures make him sad. When he thinks of the future, he becomes hopeless and unhappy. His desires are not fulfilled. Even if he laughs, there is a tinge of sorrow in it. Man cannot get rid of sorrow. Therefore when he sings, his songs are sad. He can sing sweet songs but even his sweetest songs are full of sad thoughts.

5. Yet if we could.....

Reference to the Context:

These lines are taken from the poem To a Skylark' written by Shelley. Singing birds have always inspired Romantic poets. Shelley believed that birds enjoyed perfect happiness. In these lines he says that it is impossible for man to be as happy as the skylark.

Explanation:

Shelley has come to a conclusion that pure joy is denied to man. Even if he gives up wicked thoughts and feelings he cannot compete with the skylark's happiness. Hatred, pride and fear make human life sad. We weep over many misfortunes. We may try to overcome these feelings. Yet we cannot get the joy which the skylark feels.

15.6 SUMMARY OF TO A SKYLARK

"To a Skylark" is a lyrical poem in which Percy Bysshe Shelley expresses admiration for the skylark, using the bird as a symbol of freedom, joy, and transcendence. The speaker begins by describing the skylark as a creature of remarkable beauty and energy, soaring high above the earth with a song that fills the air with a sense of delight and freedom. The bird’s flight is effortless and unburdened, in stark contrast to human existence, which is often weighed down by sorrow, suffering, and the constraints of life.

The skylark is described as a "blithe spirit," a creature that is not affected by the trials and tribulations of the material world. Unlike humans, who must grapple with sorrow, loss, and limitations, the skylark lives in pure joy and freedom. The bird’s song, which seems to come from an almost divine place, contrasts sharply with the speaker’s own earthly existence, suggesting that the skylark’s happiness is unattainable for humans.

Shelley also reflects on the nature of human life, recognizing that, unlike the skylark, people are often caught in a cycle of suffering and unfulfilled desires. The skylark's freedom is depicted as a symbol of the ideal, the unattainable beauty that humans long for but cannot truly grasp. Despite these contrasts, the speaker admires the skylark for its ability to express such boundless joy, and through the bird, Shelley conveys a sense of hope that transcends earthly struggles.

The poem ultimately becomes a meditation on the human longing for transcendence and the idealized freedom that the skylark represents. While the speaker acknowledges the stark differences between human life and the skylark's, there is a sense of inspiration and a desire to reach toward the same boundless joy and freedom.

15.7 LET US SUM UP

"To a Skylark" is a celebration of the skylark as a symbol of freedom, beauty, and transcendence. In the poem, Shelley contrasts the skylark's joyful existence with the struggles and limitations of human life. The skylark is portrayed as an unearthly creature, soaring effortlessly through the skies, unaffected by the suffering and sorrow that humans endure. Its song is a pure expression of joy and freedom, a stark contrast to the pain and constraints of human existence.

Through the skylark, Shelley explores the theme of the unattainable ideal, symbolizing a life of unburdened happiness and transcendence that humans long for but cannot fully achieve. The poem reflects Shelley's longing for freedom and beauty, as well as his belief in the transformative power of art and imagination. Ultimately, "To a Skylark" is a meditation on the contrast between earthly suffering and the idealized, boundless joy of nature, suggesting that while humans may never fully attain such freedom, they can still draw inspiration from it.

15.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson and Activity for To a Skylark by Percy Bysshe Shelley
Lesson:
Objective:

- To understand the themes of freedom, beauty, and transcendence in To a Skylark.
- To explore Shelley's use of imagery, symbolism, and contrasts between the skylark and human existence.
- To analyze the poem's deeper philosophical implications about human suffering, idealism, and the nature of joy.

Key Themes:

- **Freedom and Joy:** The skylark is a symbol of freedom and joy, living a carefree existence that contrasts sharply with the human experience.
- **Transcendence and Idealism:** The poem reflects Shelley's longing for a life free from suffering and limitations, an ideal that the skylark represents.
- **Human Suffering:** The skylark's song and flight represent a state of happiness and freedom that humans can never fully achieve, highlighting the tension between the ideal and the real.

Literary Devices:

- **Imagery:** Shelley uses vivid imagery to describe the skylark's flight, sound, and beauty. The bird's song is a metaphor for the joy and freedom that humans can only aspire to.
- **Symbolism:** The skylark itself is a symbol of pure happiness and transcendence, contrasting with the suffering and struggles of human life.
- **Contrast:** Shelley contrasts the carefree existence of the skylark with the suffering and limitations of human existence, emphasizing the ideal versus reality.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Shelley describe the skylark's flight and song? What do these descriptions suggest about the nature of the bird and its role in the poem?
2. In what ways is the skylark a symbol of freedom and joy? How does this compare to the human experience?
3. What does Shelley mean by the "blithe spirit" of the skylark, and how does this relate to the poem's broader themes of transcendence and idealism?
4. How does the poem reflect Shelley's views on human suffering and the desire for freedom? What does the skylark represent in this context?
5. Do you think the skylark's freedom and happiness are attainable for humans? Why or why not?

Activity:

Activity 1: Creative Writing - Imagining the Skylark's World

- Have students write a short poem or paragraph imagining what it would be like to be the skylark described in the poem.
- Ask them to focus on the sense of freedom, beauty, and joy the skylark experiences and to describe what it feels like to soar above the earth without any worries or constraints.
- Students should aim to capture the essence of the skylark's carefree existence and contrast it with the challenges of human life.

Activity 2: Contrast in Life

- Divide students into groups and ask them to list the qualities of the skylark and the qualities of human life as described in the poem (e.g., freedom vs. suffering, joy vs. sorrow, transcendence vs. limitation).
- Have each group discuss the contrasts and explore how the poem's themes relate to the human condition. Encourage students to think about whether Shelley's vision of the skylark represents an unattainable ideal or a source of inspiration for human life.

Activity 3: Visual Interpretation

- Ask students to create a visual representation of the skylark based on their understanding of the poem. This could be a drawing, collage, or digital artwork that reflects the bird's freedom and joy.
- Students should incorporate key symbols and ideas from the poem, such as the bird's soaring flight, its unburdened nature, and the contrast with the earthbound struggles of humans.

Conclusion:

Through the lesson and activities, students will gain a deeper understanding of Shelley's poetic technique, the symbolism of the skylark, and the poem's themes of freedom, idealism, and the contrasts between human life and nature. This exploration will also encourage students to reflect on the larger philosophical questions raised by the poem regarding the human longing for transcendence and the possibility of achieving an ideal existence.

15.9 GLOSSARY

Glossary of To a Skylark by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1. **Blithe Spirit**: A cheerful, carefree entity. In the poem, Shelley uses this term to describe the skylark's joyful and unburdened nature.
2. **Etherial (Ethereal)**: Extremely delicate and light in a way that seems not of this world; heavenly. It describes the skylark's almost otherworldly presence.
3. **Scorner**: Someone who shows disdain or contempt. Here, it implies the skylark's ability to rise above earthly troubles.
4. **Profuse**: Abundant or lavish. Shelley refers to the skylark's song as being abundant in beauty and joy.
5. **Vernal**: Related to spring; fresh and new. This word reflects renewal and vitality, often associated with nature.
6. **Dirges**: Mournful songs, especially for funerals. Shelley contrasts the skylark's joyous song with human dirges, which symbolize sorrow and death.
7. **Harmonious**: Pleasingly balanced or in harmony, especially in sound. It describes the melodious quality of the skylark's song.
8. **Shrill**: High-pitched and piercing. Used to convey the sharp and distinct nature of the skylark's voice.
9. **Languor**: A state of tiredness or inertia, often pleasant. Shelley uses it to contrast the skylark's lively spirit with human lethargy.
10. **Fathomless**: Too deep to be measured or understood; incomprehensible. It describes the skylark's boundless joy and the mysteries of its existence.
11. **Glow-worm**: A bioluminescent insect. Shelley uses it metaphorically to describe the skylark's brilliance in the sky.
12. **Star of Heaven**: A celestial body that shines brightly in the night sky. Used as a metaphor for the skylark's presence and song, which illuminate the world with beauty.
13. **Melancholy**: A deep, pensive sadness. It contrasts with the joy expressed in the skylark's song, highlighting human emotions.
14. **Pining**: Suffering from longing or yearning. Refers to human desires and the inability to achieve the skylark's carefree existence.
15. **Tranquil**: Calm and peaceful. Used to describe the skylark's serene yet vibrant flight and song.
16. **Satiate**: To satisfy fully. Shelley reflects on the skylark's ability to achieve a state of complete joy and fulfillment, unlike humans.

17. **Sphere**: Refers to the heavens or the sky. The term is used to describe the skylark's lofty domain.
18. **Cloud of Fire**: A vivid image describing the skylark as it blends into the sky, symbolizing its radiance and energy.
19. **Rapture**: A state of intense joy or delight. Shelley uses this to capture the overwhelming beauty of the skylark's song.
20. **Unpremeditated**: Done without prior planning or forethought. Refers to the natural, spontaneous beauty of the skylark's song.

This glossary provides clarity on key terms and enhances understanding of Shelley's lyrical and symbolic language in To a Skylark.

15.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion of To a Skylark by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1. **General Understanding:**
   - How does Shelley describe the skylark's song and flight? What emotions does it evoke in the speaker?
2. **Symbolism:**
   - What does the skylark symbolize in the poem? How is it different from the human experience?
3. **Imagery and Literary Devices:**
   - How does Shelley use imagery to create a vivid picture of the skylark? Can you identify examples of metaphors and similes in the poem?
   - What is the effect of Shelley's use of contrasts (e.g., between the skylark's joy and human sorrow)?
4. **Philosophical Themes:**
   - Why does the speaker consider the skylark a "blithe spirit"? What does this term suggest about the bird's nature?
   - How does the skylark's existence challenge or inspire the speaker's perception of life?
5. **Human Condition:**
   - Shelley contrasts the skylark's joy with human suffering. What does this suggest about the poet's view of human life?
   - Do you agree with Shelley's idea that humans are limited by their emotions and experiences while the skylark represents unattainable freedom? Why or why not?
6. **Connection to Nature:**
   - How does the poem reflect Shelley's connection to and admiration for nature?
   - In what ways does the skylark embody qualities that humans strive for but cannot achieve?
7. **Perspective and Tone:**

- How does Shelley's tone shift throughout the poem? Does it remain admiring, or does it take on a more melancholic or reflective note?
- What can the speaker's longing to understand the skylark's joy tell us about the poet's personal desires or worldview?

8. **Creative Interpretation:**
    - If you were to write a poem inspired by To a Skylark, what aspects of nature would you focus on, and why?
    - How would the poem change if the skylark were aware of human struggles and emotions?
9. **Modern Relevance:**
    - Do you think Shelley's ideas about the skylark and human longing for transcendence are relevant to modern readers? Why or why not?
    - Can the skylark's joy be compared to any aspect of contemporary life, such as music, art, or nature's role in mental well-being?
10. **Personal Reflection:**

- How does the skylark's song resonate with your personal experiences of joy or freedom?
- What lessons can we draw from the skylark about finding happiness or inspiration in everyday life?

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UNIT 16
ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

Structure:

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Ode to a Nightingale is one of the most celebrated odes by John Keats, composed in 1819 during a period of intense poetic creativity. This masterpiece captures the poet's meditation on the ephemeral nature of life, the permanence of art, and the escapism offered by imagination. The poem begins with the poet listening to the enchanting song of the nightingale and transitions into a profound exploration of themes like mortality, the transient beauty of life, and the immortality of nature's creations. Keats's rich imagery and lyrical beauty make this ode a quintessential work of Romantic poetry.

16.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the theme of the contrast between the ephemeral nature of human life and the eternal beauty of art and nature in Ode to a Nightingale.
2. Understand how Keats uses the nightingale as a symbol of transcendence, immortality, and the power of the imagination.
3. Understand the exploration of suffering, mortality, and the desire for escape from life's hardships through the imagery of the nightingale's song.
4. Understand the poet's use of rich imagery and sensory language to evoke the beauty and intensity of the nightingale's presence.
5. Understand the philosophical reflections on death, life, and the role of art as a means of achieving a timeless, idealized existence.

16.3 BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN KEATS

Biography of John Keats

Early Life

John Keats (1795–1821) was an English Romantic poet celebrated for his vivid imagery, lyrical style, and exploration of themes such as beauty, mortality, and transcendence. Born in London on October 31, 1795, Keats was the eldest son of Thomas Keats, a stable manager, and Frances Jennings. Tragedy struck early in his life, as he lost his father at age eight and his mother at age fourteen. The orphaned Keats was entrusted to the care of guardians, who supported his education at Enfield Academy.

Education and Early Interests

While Keats initially trained in medicine, apprenticing as a surgeon-apothecary, his passion for literature grew stronger. By 1816, he abandoned his medical career to devote himself entirely to poetry. This decision was supported by his friends and mentors, including Leigh Hunt, who introduced him to influential literary figures and published his early work.

Literary Career

Keats's poetic career was remarkably short but intensely productive. In 1817, he published his first volume of poetry, Poems by John Keats, which received modest attention. His second collection, Endymion (1818), an ambitious romantic epic, was criticized for its perceived excesses but revealed his emerging talent.

During 1819, a period often called his "Year of Wonder," Keats composed his greatest works, including the celebrated odes:

- Ode to a Nightingale
- Ode on a Grecian Urn
- To Autumn

These works, characterized by their rich sensory imagery and philosophical depth, solidified Keats's reputation as one of the leading figures of the Romantic movement.

Personal Life and Challenges

Keats's life was marked by personal and financial struggles. He fell deeply in love with Fanny Brawne, but their engagement was hindered by his deteriorating health and financial insecurity. Tuberculosis, a disease that had claimed his mother and brother, began to afflict Keats in 1820.

Final Years and Legacy

In an attempt to recover, Keats traveled to Italy in 1820. Despite the care of his friend Joseph Severn, his health worsened, and he died in Rome on February 23, 1821, at the age of 25. He

was buried in the Protestant Cemetery, with the epitaph:
"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Though he died young, Keats left an enduring legacy. His works, initially undervalued, gained recognition posthumously, with critics and readers appreciating his mastery of language, exploration of universal themes, and his vision of beauty as a source of truth. Today, John Keats is regarded as one of the greatest poets of the English language and a central figure of Romantic literature.

16.4 ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

16.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. My heart aches …… Lethe-ward had sunk.

Explanation:

These are the opening lines of the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale written by John Keats. The poet listens to the song of the bird and is enraptured by it. The poet's heart begins to feel pain because of the excessive joy which he feels at listening to the song of the bird. The intoxication of the melody is compared by the poet to the intoxication which is caused by hemlock, which induces forgetfulness and sleep. This dullness is likened by Keats to drinking the water of the river Lethe, which is a river in Hades, the drinking of the water of which causes forgetfulness of the life led earlier. Just as one forgets his past life after drinking the water of river Lethe, in the same manner the poet has forgotten himself after listening to the music of the bird nightingale.

2. Of for a draught …….. of Sun-burnt mirth.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet keenly listens to the happy song of the nightingale and this makes his heart-ache. He compares his condition with that of the happy bird. So he longs to share the happy lot of the bird. He feels wine, which is famed to bring forgetfulness, may bring him relief from the cares and anxieties of the world. So the poet craves for a cup of wine, the wine which has been prepared in the warmer area of southern France, and which has been kept for a long time under the earth. Provence is famous for wines, singing and dance. So the poet seeks wine which has been prepared in the country where it has tasted of song and mirth and dance. This reminds him of the Roman Goddess Flora whose festival is celebrated with great abandon in France.

3. O for a beaker full ……. into the forest dim.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet begins the poem by describing the effect produced upon him by the song of the nightingale. He compares the effect with the numbing effect of some opitate or hemlock In the present lines the poet earnestly desires to have a beaker full of the red wine of the southern part of France which can redden his lips. The poet is confident that such a wine would induce poetic inspiration in him just as the water of the Hippocrene would. According to Greek legend Hippocrene is a fountain on mount Helicon (sacred to the Muses) whose waters inspire poetic sensibilities. If he could get a cup of such red wine he would leave the world which is full of anxieties of all sorts. The end which the poet wants to attain is forgetfulness of the world and identification with the blessed bird in its haunts.

4. Fade far away …….. thin and dies.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem "Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet is unhappy in this world which is so full of cares and anxieties. So he is keen to leave the world and move into the world of the nightingale because there it does not know about these worries. The bird's home is blissful, whereas the home of man is full of sorrows and suffering: The poet lists many diseases which consume man and make him like a ghost These diseases ultimately cause death. Some people become paralytic; other become old even in youth, to die prematurely. Man, the poet asserts, is born to suffer, while the bird does not experience these things.

5. Where but to think …….. beyond tomorrow.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet wants to be set free from sickness and disease so he yearns to go to the world of the nightingale. Not only are youth and beauty ephemeral even life is so burdensome that he is fed up with it In his world every thinking man is full of sorrow. In these lines the supreme misery of the poet is given expression. Here beauty cannot last long nor can love.

6. A **way, away ……. perplexes and retards.**

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet, keen to move to the world of the nightingale, implores the aid of wine. However, this idea is rejected by the poet to move into the world of the nightingale with the aid of his imagination. Instead of, depending upon the God of wine, the poet prefers to take the help of Imagination, to move into the world of the bird, to forget the cares and anxieties of this earth. The poet asserts that though his mind is dull and weakness, yet it would be able to transport him away from the cares and problems of the world into the world of the nightingale.

7. Already with thee …… winding mossy ways.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet longs to escape from the miserable world of human existence to the happy world of the bird. In this way he wants to forget the pains and anxieties of the world. First he seeks the aid of Bacchus, the god of wine. But he rejects this idea and perfers to move into the world of the nightingale through his imagination.

As soon as he decides in favour of imaginations, he find himself transported to the world of the nightingale. Only for a moment does he doubt his powers of imagination. Being there, the poet begins to feel that the night is delicate and tender. He also feels that bright moon is there in the sky, circles around by the stars that twinkle in the sky. But in the tree everything is dark. The foliage is so thick that the moonlight is not able to penetrate. To only light that comes is through wind when it separates the branches of trees. The path in the forest was covered with thick moss.

8. I cannot see ……. month endows.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet, keen to reach the world of the bird nightingale, takes the help of his imagination. In the beginning he is hampered by his dull mind, but soon he finds himself with the bird. Then, nothing himself to be in the tree, the poet begins to imagine about the foliage there. He says that since it is dark under the tree he is not able to see the flowers that are blossoming there. Nor is the able to see the fragrant flowers that hang upon the bushes. But in the soothing darkness of the place, he says, that he can well imagine what sort of flowers there would be under his feet.

9. Darkling I listen ……. my quiet breath.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet listens very intently to the song of the bird nightingale and the melody brings the idea of the death in his mind. He says that he has always welcomed the idea of death and had called her many a sweet names. On several occasions he has sung songs in praise of this dreaded deity. He says if he dies today he would be the happiest person because he would die in the happiest moment of his life.

10. Now more ……. become a sod.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The poet says that though he had thought of death many a time in the past as well, but his night is the best occasion for him to die. It will be blessedness to die at such a moment of supreme joy when he is listening to the song of the bird. The poet is indeed at the very apex of his happiness.

The only sorrow to the poet is that though he would die the bird would continue to sing its heavenly song and he will become a lump of earth.

11. Thou wast …… emperor and clown.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem "Ode to a Nightingale'. Keats considers the nightingale immortal, while man is mortal and subject to decay and death. The birth is happy because it has not to undergo the struggle for existence and survival. After a deadly struggle only the fittest survive. But the poet considers the bird immortal. He imagines that the same song must have been heard everywhere by people belonging to all walks of life. Kings and commoners, all heard the same song sung by the nightingale.

12. Perhaps the …….. faery land forlorn.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem "Ode to a Nightingale. The nightingale has been charming people by its song since times immemorial. Since the song of the bird remains unchanged, it is likely that the self-same song must have been heard by Ruth which the poet is listening today. Ruth was an unfortunate woman who had to live in a country where she was an alien. Many a time she felt lonely and homesick and it was the song of the nightingale which soothed her heart. Then the poet tells us that the self-same song must have been heard in ancient times, during the Middle ages. During that period many stories were told about maidens who were made captive by magicians in enchanted castles. The Windows of these castles opened upon the sea. These young girls felt lonely in those castle towers. Their hearts were cheered by the song of the bird nightingale. Thus, the poet says that the song of the bird is immortal like the bird itself.

13. Forlorn! The …… deceiving elf.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'. In this poem the poet tells us about his fascination towards the song of the nightingale. In these lines the poet says that the very mention of the world 'forlorn' reminds him of his own loneliness. This world occurred in the previous stanza. The word repeated ends the charm which the imagination had woven round the song of the nightingale. The illusion that he was with the bird could not last long. He comes to know that he is no longer in the company of the nightingale. Imagination might be a great cheat but it is not such a great cheat as she is famed.

14. Adieu, adieu …….. valley glades.

Explanation:

These lines have been taken from the famous poem Ode to a Nightingale'. These are the last line of 'Ode to a Nightingale written by John Keats. Charioted by the imagination the

poet-goes to the realm of the bird nightingale. But this deception of imagination could not last long. The mention of the world 'forlorn' brings him back to his sole self. The poet finds the bird flying away from him and he bids it good bye, Its song becomes fainter and fainter till it is heard no more. All thoughts of immortality are also forgotten by him. As the mood of the poet changes from joy hack to sorrow the song of the bird also becomes sorrowful.

16.6 SUMMARY OF ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

The poem begins with the speaker describing his drowsy, almost opiate-induced state as he listens to the nightingale's song. He envies the bird's carefree existence, unburdened by the sorrows of human life. As he contemplates the nightingale's eternal song, the poet imagines escaping the pains of life through various means, such as wine, art, and ultimately death.

However, the poet recognizes that death, though alluring, would sever him from the nightingale's music. The bird becomes a symbol of immortality, its song transcending time and place. In the end, the speaker is jolted back to reality, questioning whether his experiences were real or merely a dream. The poem beautifully captures the tension between transience and permanence, offering a poignant meditation on life, art, and nature.

16.7 LET US SUM UP

Ode to a Nightingale delves into the human desire to escape suffering and find solace in the transcendent beauty of nature and art. Through the nightingale's song, Keats explores themes of mortality, the impermanence of life, and the longing for eternal joy. His rich use of imagery, symbolism, and lyrical language elevates the poem, making it a timeless reflection on the human condition. The poem leaves readers contemplating the relationship between reality and imagination, as well as the enduring power of art and nature.

16.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand the themes, symbolism, and literary techniques in Ode to a Nightingale.
- To explore Keats's perspective on mortality, imagination, and the natural world.
- To critically analyze the poem's structure and emotional progression.

Activities:

1. **Theme Exploration:** Divide the class into groups to discuss key themes: mortality, imagination, nature, and escapism. Each group presents how these themes are reflected in the poem.
2. **Imagery Analysis:** Students identify examples of sensory imagery in the poem and explain how these contribute to the poem's mood and themes.

3. **Creative Writing:** Ask students to write their own ode inspired by a sound or experience in nature, imitating Keats's use of rich imagery and emotional depth.
4. **Debate:** Organize a debate: "Is the desire for escapism in Ode to a Nightingale a strength or a weakness?"

16.9 GLOSSARY

1. **Ode**: A lyrical poem expressing emotions, often addressing a particular subject.
2. **Hapless**: Unfortunate or unlucky, reflecting human suffering.
3. **Poesy**: The art or practice of poetry, representing the creative imagination.
4. **Dryad**: A tree nymph or spirit in Greek mythology, symbolizing nature.
5. **Immortal**: Eternal, never dying, ascribed to the nightingale's song.
6. **Haven**: A place of safety or sanctuary, reflecting the nightingale's world.
7. **Melancholy**: A deep, reflective sadness.
8. **Effulgence**: Radiant brilliance, often describing beauty or light.
9. **Transience**: The state of being temporary or fleeting.
10. **Palpable**: Tangible or perceptible, used metaphorically in the poem.

16.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion on Ode to a Nightingale

1. **Symbolism and Themes**
    - What does the nightingale symbolize in the poem? How does its song contrast with the poet's feelings about human existence?
    - How does Keats explore the theme of mortality and immortality in Ode to a Nightingale?
2. **Imagination and Escapism**
    - In what ways does the poet use imagination as a means of escape from the struggles of life?
    - Discuss the role of art and nature as sources of solace in the poem.
3. **Structure and Style**
    - How does the structure of the poem (its stanzas and rhyme scheme) contribute to its overall mood and progression?
    - Examine Keats's use of sensory imagery in the poem. How does it enhance the reader's experience?
4. **Philosophical Reflections**
    - What philosophical questions about life and death does the poet raise in the poem?
    - How does the poet reconcile the transient nature of human life with the eternal beauty of the nightingale's song?
5. **The Poet's Emotional Journey**

- Analyze the shift in the speaker's emotions throughout the poem. How does the tone evolve from the beginning to the end?
- How does the speaker's return to reality at the end affect the meaning of the poem?

6. **Romantic Ideals**
    - How does Ode to a Nightingale reflect the key characteristics of Romantic poetry?
    - Compare and contrast Keats's depiction of nature in this poem with that in his other works, such as To Autumn.
7. **Comparative Analysis**
    - How does Ode to a Nightingale compare with other Romantic odes in its treatment of timeless themes like beauty, mortality, and transcendence?
    - Compare Keats's portrayal of the nightingale with other poetic depictions of birds in English literature.

These discussion questions can help deepen the understanding of Ode to a Nightingale by encouraging critical thinking and exploration of its rich literary and philosophical dimensions.

16.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 17
LIGHT OF ASIA (An Extract from Book-III)

Structure:

17.1 INTRODUCTION

The Light of Asia by Sir Edwin Arnold is a poetic work that narrates the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha. This extract from Book III focuses on significant moments in the Buddha's journey of renunciation and enlightenment. Arnold presents the story in the form of an epic poem, blending spirituality and literature to convey Buddhist philosophy to a Western audience. The poem, first published in 1879, was instrumental in introducing Buddhism to English-speaking readers.

17.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the spiritual journey of Prince Siddhartha and the themes of enlightenment and self-realization presented in The Light of Asia.
2. Understand the portrayal of the Buddha's path to awakening and his teachings on overcoming suffering and desire.
3. Understand how the poem reflects the core principles of Buddhism, including the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.
4. Understand the symbolic use of light and illumination as metaphors for knowledge, wisdom, and inner peace.
5. Understand the cultural and philosophical context of the poem, exploring the influence of Eastern thought on Western literature and spiritual traditions.

17.3 BIOGRAPHY OF EDWIN ARNOLD

Sir Edwin Arnold (1832–1904) was an English poet, journalist, and scholar, best known for his work The Light of Asia, which popularized Buddhist teachings in the Western world.

Early Life and Education
Arnold was born on June 10, 1832, in Gravesend, Kent, England. He attended King's School, Rochester, and subsequently entered King's College London. Later, he completed his studies at University College, Oxford, where he received accolades for his proficiency in classical studies.

Career as an Educator and Journalist
Arnold began his career as a schoolmaster, serving as the principal of the Deccan College in Pune, India. During his time in India, Arnold developed a deep appreciation for Eastern religions and philosophies. Upon returning to England, he joined The Daily Telegraph, where he worked as a journalist and editor for over three decades.

Literary Contributions
Arnold's poetic works often reflected his interest in Eastern culture and religion. His most notable contribution, The Light of Asia, recounts the life and teachings of the Buddha in a lyrical narrative style. The poem was widely praised for its empathetic portrayal of Buddhist philosophy and became a bestseller in the 19th century.

Other works by Arnold include Indian Idylls, The Song Celestial (a translation of the Bhagavad Gita), and The Secret of Death. Through these works, Arnold bridged the gap between Eastern and Western literary traditions.

Later Life and Legacy
Arnold was knighted in 1888 for his contributions to literature. He passed away on March 24, 1904, leaving behind a legacy of cultural and literary diplomacy. His works continue to be appreciated for their role in fostering understanding between Eastern and Western civilizations.

17.4 LIGHT OF ASIA (AN EXTRACT FROM BOOK-III)

In which calm home of happy life and love
Ligged our Lord Buddha, knowing not of woe,
Nor want, nor pain, nor plague, nor age, nor death,
Save as when sleepers roam dim seas in dreams,
And land awearied on the shores of day,
Bringing strange merchandise from that black voyage.

Thus ofttimes when he lay with gentle head
Lulled on the dark breasts of Yasôdhara,
Her fond hands fanning slow his sleeping lids,
He would start up and cry, My world! Oh, world!
I hear! I know! I come! And she would ask,
'What ails my Lord?' with large eyes terror-struck
For at such times the pity in his look
Was awful, and his visage like a god's.
Then would he smile again to stay her tears,
And bid the vinas sound; but once they set
A stringed gourd on the sill, there where the wind
Could linger o'er its notes and play at will -
Wild music makes the wind on silver strings -
And those who lay around heard only that;
But Prince Siddârtha heard the Devas play,
And to his ears they sang such words as these: -

We are the voices of the wandering wind,
Which moan for rest and rest can never find;
Lo! as the wind is so is mortal life,
A moan , a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife.
Wherefore and whence we are ye cannot know,
Nor where life springs nor whither life doth go:
We are as ye are, ghosts from the inane,
What pleasure have we of our changeful pain?
What pleasure hast thou of thy changeless bliss?
Nay, if love lasted, there were joy in this;
But life's way is the wind's way, all these things
Are but brief voices breathed on shifting strings.
O Maya's son! because we roam the earth
Moan we upon these strings; we make no mirth,
So many woes we see in many lands,
So many streaming eyes and wringing hands.
Yet mock we while we wail, for, could they know,
This life they cling to is but empty show;
'Twere all as well to bid a cloud to stand,
Or hold a running river with the hand.
But thou that art to save, thine hour is nigh!
The sad world waiteth in its misery,
The blind world stumbleth on its round of pain;
Rise, Maya's child! wake! slumber not again!
We are the voices of the wandering wind:
Wander thou, too, O Prince, thy rest to find;
Leave love for love of lovers for woe's sake

Quit state for sorrow, and deliverance make.
So sigh we, passing o'er the silver strings,
To thee who know'st not yet of earthly things;
So say we; mocking, as we pass away,
These lovely shadows wherewith thou dost play.
Thereafter it befell he sate at eve
Amid his beauteous Court, holding the hand
Of sweet Yasôdhara, and some maid told -
With breaks of music when her rich voice dropped -
An ancient tale to speed the hour of dusk,
Of love, and of a magic horse, and lands
Wonderful, distant, where pale peoples dwelled,
And where the sun at night sank into seas.
Then spake he, sighing, 'Chitra brings me back
The wind's song in the strings with that fair tale.
Give her, Yasôdhara, thy pearl for thanks.
But thou, my pearl! is there so wide a world?
Is there a land which sees the great sun roll
Into the waves, and are there hearts like ours,
Countless, unknown, not happy - it may be -
Whom we might succor if we knew of them?
Ofttimes I marvel, as the Lord of day
Treads from the east his kingly road of gold,
Who first on the world's edge hath hailed his beam,
The children of the morning; oftentimes,
Even in thine arms and on thy breasts, bright wife,
Sore have I panted, at the sun's decline,
To pass with him into that crimson west
And see the peoples of the evening.
There must be many we should love - how else?
Now have I in this hour an ache, at last,
Thy soft lips cannot kiss away: oh, girl!
O Chitra! you that know of fairyland!
Where tether they that swift steed of the tale?
My palace for one day upon his back,
To ride and ride and see the spread of the earth
Nay, if I had yon callow vulture's plumes -
The carrion heir of wider realms than mine -
How would I stretch for topmost Himalay,
Light where the rose-gleam lingers on those snows,
And strain my gaze with searching what is round!
Why have I never seen and never sought?
Tell me what lies beyond our brazen gates.'

Then one replied, 'The city first, fair Prince!
The temples, and the gardens, and the groves,
And then the fields, and afterwards fresh fields,
With nullahs, maidâns, jungle, koss on koss;
And next King Bimbasâra's realm, and then
The vast flat world, with crores on crores of folk.'
'Good,' said Siddârtha, 'let the word be sent
That Channa yoke my chariot -at noon
To-morrow I shall ride and see beyond.'

Whereof they told the King: 'Our Lord, thy son,
Wills that his chariot be yoked at noon,
That he may ride abroad and see mankind.'

'Yea!' spake the careful King, "tis time he see!
But let the criers go about and bid
My city deck itself, so there be met
No noisome sight; and let none blind or maimed,
None that is sick or stricken deep in years,
No leper, and no feeble folk come forth.'
Therefore the stones were swept, and up and down
The water-carriers sprinkled all the streets
From spirting skins, the housewives scattered fresh
Red powder on their thresholds, strung new wreaths,
And trimmed the tulsi-bush before their doors.
The paintings on the walls were heightened up
With liberal brush, the trees set thick with flags,
The idols gilded; in the four-went ways
Suryadeva and the great gods shone
'Mid shrines of leaves; so that the city seemed
A capital of some enchanted land.
Also the criers passed, with drum and gong,
Proclaiming loudly, 'Ho! all citizens,
The King commands that there be seen to-day
No evil sight: let no one blind or maimed,
None that is sick or stricken deep in years,
No leper, and no feeble folk go forth.
Let none, too, burn his dead nor bring them out
Till nightfall. Thus Suddhôdana commands.'

So all was comely and the houses trim
Throughout Kapilavastu, while the Prince
Came forth in painted car, which two steers drew,
Snow-white, with swinging dewlaps and huge humps

Wrinkled against the carved and lacquered yoke.
Goodly it was to mark the people's joy
Greeting their Prince; and glad Siddârtha waxed
At sight of all those liege and friendly folk
Bright-clad and laughing as if life were good.
'Fair is the world,' he said, 'it likes me well!
And light and kind these men that are not kings,
And sweet my sisters here, who toil and tend;
What have I done for these to make them thus?
Why, if I love them, should those children know?
I pray take up yon pretty Sâkya boy
Who flung us flowers, and let him ride with me.
How good it is to reign in realms like this!
How simple pleasure is, if these be pleased
Because I come abroad! How many things
I need not if such little households hold
Enough to make our city full of smiles!
Drive, Channa! through the gates, and let me see
More of this gracious world I have not known.'

So passed they through the gates, a joyous crowd
Thronging about the wheels, whereof some ran
Before the oxen, throwing wreaths, some stroked
Their silken flanks, some brought them rice and cakes,
All crying, 'Jai! jai! for our noble Prince!'
Thus all the path was kept with gladsome looks
And filled with fair sights - for the King's word was
That such should be - when midway in the road,
Slow tottering from the hovel where he hid,
Crept forth a wretch in rags, haggard and foul,
An old, old man, whose shrivelled skin, sun-tanned,
Clung like a beast's hide to his fleshless bones.
Bent was his back with load of many days,
His eyepits red with rust of ancient tears,
His dim orbs blear with rheum, his toothless jaws
Wagging with palsy and the fright to see
So many and such joy. One skinny hand
Clutched a worn staff to prop his quavering limbs,
And one was pressed upon the ridge of ribs
Whence came in gasps the heavy painful breath.
'Alms!' moaned he, 'give, good people! for I die
To-morrow or the next day!' then the cough
Choked him, but still he stretched his palm, and stood
Blinking, and groaning 'mid his spasms, 'Alms!'

Then those around had wrenched his feeble feet
Aside, and thrust him from the road again,
Saying, 'The Prince! dost see? get to thy lair!'
But that Siddârtha cried, 'Let be! let be!
Channa! what thing is this who seems a man,
Yet surely only seems, being so bowed,
So miserable, so horrible, so sad?
Are men born sometimes thus? What meaneth he
Moaning 'to-morrow or next day I die?'
Finds he no food that so his bones jut forth?
What woe hath happened to this piteous one?'
Then answer made the charioteer, 'Sweet Prince!
This is no other than an aged man.
Some fourscore years ago his back was straight,
His eye bright, and his body goodly: now
The thievish years have sucked his sap away,
Pillaged his strength and filched his will and wit;
His lamp has lost its oil, the wick burns black;
What life he keeps is one poor lingering spark
Which flickers for the finish: such is age;
Why should your Highness heed?' Then spake the Prince -
'But shall this come to others, or to all,
Or is it rare that one should be as he?'
'Most noble,' answered Channa, 'even as he,
Will all these grow if they shall live so long.'
'But,' quoth the Prince, 'if I shall live as long
Shall I be thus; and if Yasôdhara
Live fourscore years, is this old age for her,
Jâlîni, little Hasta, Gautami,
And Gunga, and the others?' 'Yea, great Sir!'
The charioteer replied. Then spake the Prince:
'Turn back, and drive me to my house again!
I have seen that I did not think to see.'

Which pondering, to his beauteous Court returned
Wistful Siddârtha, sad of mien and mood;
Nor tasted he the white cakes nor the fruits
Spread for the evening feast, nor once looked up
While the best palace-dancers strove to charm:
Nor spake - save one sad thing - when wofully
Yasôdhara sank to his feet and wept,
Sighing, 'Hath not my Lord comfort in me?'
'Ah, Sweet!' he said, 'such comfort that my soul
Aches, thinking it must end, for it will end,

And we shall both grow old, Yasôdhara!
Loveless, unlovely, weak, and old, and bowed.
Nay, though we locked up love and life with lips
So close that night and day our breaths grew one
Time would thrust in between to filch away
My passion and thy grace, as black Night steals
The rose-gleams from yon peak, which fade to grey
And are not seen to fade. This have I found,
And all my heart is darkened with its dread,
And all my heart is fixed to think how Love
Might save its sweetness from the slayer, Time,
Who makes men old.' So through that night he sate
Sleepless, uncomforted.

And all that night
The King Suddhôdana dreamed troublous dreams.
The first fear of his vision was a flag
Broad, glorious, glistening with a golden sun,
The mark of Indra; but a strong wind blew,
Rending its folds divine, and dashing it
Into the dust; whereat a concourse came
Of shadowy Ones, who took the spoiled silk up
And bore it eastward from the city gates.
The second fear was ten huge elephants,
With silver tusks and feet that shook the earth,
Trampling the southern road in mighty march;
And he who sate upon the foremost beast
Was the King's son - the others followed him,
The third fear of the vision was a car,
Shining with blinding light, which four steeds drew,
Snorting white smoke and champing fiery foam;
And in the car the Prince Siddârtha sate.
The fourth fear was a wheel which turned and turned,
With nave of burning gold and jewelled spokes,
And strange things written on the binding tire,
Which seemed both fire and music as it whirled.
The fifth fear was a mighty drum, set down
Midway between the city and the hills,
On which the Prince beat with an iron mace,
So that the sound pealed like a thunderstorm,
Rolling around the sky and far away.
The sixth fear was a tower, which rose and rose
High o'er the city till its stately head
Shone crowned with clouds, and on the top the Prince

Stood, scattering from both hands, this way and that,
Gems of most lovely light, as if it rained
Jacynths and rubies; and the whole world came,
Striving to seize those treasures as they fell
Towards the four quarters. But the seventh fear was
A noise of wailing, and behold six men
Who wept and gnashed their teeth, and laid their palms
Upon their mouths, walking disconsolate.

These seven fears made the vision of his sleep,
But none of all his wisest dream-readers
Could tell their meaning. Then the King was wroth,
Saying, 'There cometh evil to my house,
And none of ye have wit to help me know
What the great gods portend sending me this.'
So in the city men went sorrowful
Because the King had dreamed seven signs of fear
Which none could read; but to the gate there came
An aged man, in robe of deer-skin clad,
By guise a hermit, known to none; he cried,
'Bring me before the King, for I can read
The vision of his sleep;' who, when he heard
The sevenfold mysteries of the midnight dream,
Bowed reverent and said, 'O Maharâj!
I hail this favored House, whence shall arise
A wider-reaching splendor than the sun's!
Lo! all these seven fears are seven joys,
Whereof the first, where thou didst see a flag
Broad, glorious, gilt with Indra's badge - cast down
And carried out, did signify the end
Of old faiths and beginning of the new,
For there is change with gods not less than men,
And as the days pass kalpas pass at length.
The ten great elephants that shook the earth
The ten great gifts of wisdom signify,
In strength whereof the Prince shall quit his state
And shake the world with passage of the Truth.
The four flame-breathing horses of the car
Are those four fearless virtues which shall bring
Thy son from doubt and gloom to gladsome light;
The wheel that turned with nave of burning gold
Was that most precious Wheel of perfect Law
Which he shall turn in sight of all the world.
The mighty drum whereon the Prince did beat,

Till the sound filled all lands, doth signify
The thunder of the preaching of the Word
Which he shall preach; the tower that grew to heaven
The growing of the Gospel of this Buddh
Sets forth; and those rare jewels scattered thence
The untold treasures are of that good Law
To gods and men dear and desirable.
Such is the interpretation of the tower;
But for those six men weeping with shut mouths,
They are the six chief teachers whom thy son
Shall, with bright truth and speech unanswerable,
Convince of foolishness. O King! rejoice;
The fortune of my Lord the Prince is more
Than kingdoms, and his hermit-rags will be
Beyond fine cloths of gold. This was thy dream!
And in seven nights and days these things shall fall.'
So spake the holy man, and lowly made
The eight prostrations, touching thrice the ground;
Then turned and passed; but when the King bade send
A rich gift after him, the messenger
Brought word, 'We came to where he entered in
At Chandra's temple, but within was none
Save a grey owl which fluttered from the shrine.'
The gods come sometimes thus.

But the sad King
Marvelled, and gave command that new delights
Be compassed to enthrall Siddârtha's heart
Amid those dancers of his pleasure-house,
Also he set at all the brazen doors
A doubled guard.

Yet who shall shut out Fate?

For once again the spirit of the Prince
Was moved to see this world beyond his gates,
This life of man, so pleasant if its waves
Ran not to waste and woful finishing
In Time's dry sands. 'I pray you let me view
Our city as it is,' such was his prayer
To King Suddhôdana. 'Your Majesty
In tender heed hath warned the folk before
To put away ill things and common sights,
And make their faces glad to gladden me,

And all the causeways gay; yet have I learned
This is not daily life, and if I stand
Nearest, my father, to the realm and thee,
Fain would I know the people and the streets,
Their simple usual ways, and workday deeds,
And lives which those men live who are not kings.
Give me good leave, dear Lord! to pass unknown
Beyond my happy gardens; I shall come
The more contented to their peace again,
Or wiser, father, if not well content.
Therefore, I pray thee, let me go at will
To-morrow, with my servants, through the streets.'
And the King said, among his Ministers,
'Belike this second flight may mend the first.
Note how the falcon starts at every sight
New from his hood, but what a quiet eye
Cometh of freedom; let my son see all,
And bid them bring me tidings of his mind.'

Thus on the morrow, when the noon was come,
The Prince and Channa passed beyond the gates,
Which opened to the signet of the King;
Yet knew not they who rolled the great doors back
It was the King's son in that merchant's robe,
And in the clerkly dress his charioteer.
Forth fared they by the common way afoot,
Mingling with all the Sâkya citizens,
Seeing the glad and sad things of the town:
The painted streets alive with hum of noon,
The traders cross-legged 'mid their spice and grain,
The buyers with their money in the cloth,
The war of words to cheapen this or that,
The shout to clear the road, the huge stone wheels,
The strong slow oxen and their rustling loads,
The singing bearers with the palanquins,
The broad-necked hamals sweating in the sun,
The housewives bearing water from the well
With balanced chatties, and athwart their hips
The black-eyed babes; the fly-swarmed sweetmeat shops,
The weaver at his loom, the cotton-bow
Twanging, the millstones grinding meal, the dogs
Prowling for orts, the skilful armorer
With tong and hammer linking shirts of mail,
The blacksmith with a mattock and a spear

Reddening together in his coals, the school
Where round their Guru, in a grave half-moon,
The Sâkya children sang the mantras through,
And learned the greater and the lesser gods;
The dyers stretching waistcloths, in the sun
Wet from the vats - orange, and rose, and green;
The soldiers clanking past with swords and shields,
The camel-drivers rocking on the humps,
The Brahman proud, the martial Kshatriya,
The humble toiling Sudra; here a throng
Gathered to watch some chattering snake-tamer
Wind round his wrist the living jewellery
Of asp and nâg, or charm the hooded death
To angry dance with drone of beaded gourd;
There a long line of drums and horns, which went,
With steeds gay painted and silk canopies,
To bring the young bride home; and here a wife
Stealing with cakes and garlands to the god
To pray her husband's safe return from trade,
Or beg a boy next birth; hard by the booths
Where the swart potters beat the noisy brass
For lamps and lotas; thence, by temple walls
And gateways, to the river and the bridge
Under the city walls.

These had they passed
When from the roadside moaned a mournful voice,
'Help, masters! lift me to my feet; oh, help
Or I shall die before I reach my house!'
A stricken wretch it was, whose quivering frame,
Caught by some deadly plague, lay in the dust
Writhing, with fiery purple blotches specked;
The chill sweat beaded on his brow, his mouth
Was dragged awry with twitchings of sore pain,
The wild eyes swam with inward agony.
Gasping, he clutched the grass to rise, and rose
Half-way, then sank, with quaking feeble limbs
And scream of terror, crying, 'Ah, the pain
Good people, help!' whereon Siddârtha ran,
Lifted the woful man with tender hands,
With sweet looks laid the sick head on his knee,
And while his soft touch comforted the wretch,
Asked, 'Brother, what is ill with thee? what harm
Hath fallen? wherefore canst thou not arise?

Why is it, Channa, that he pants and moans,
And gasps to speak and sighs so pitiful?'
Then spake the charioteer: 'Great Prince! this man
Is smitten with some pest; his elements
Are all confounded; in his veins the blood,
Which ran a wholesome river, leaps and boils
A fiery flood; his heart, which kept good time,
Beats like an ill-played drum-skin, quick and slow;
His sinews slacken like a bow-string slipped;
The strength is gone from ham, and loin, and neck,
And all the grace and joy of manhood fled:
This is a sick man with the fit upon him.
See how he plucks and plucks to seize his grief,
And rolls his bloodshot orbs, and grinds his teeth,
And draws his breath as if 'twere choking smoke.
Lo! now he would be dead, but shall not die
Until the plague hath had its work in him,
Killing the nerves which die before the life;
Then, when his strings have cracked with agony
And all his bones are empty of the sense
To ache, the plague will quit and light elsewhere.
Oh, sir! it is not good to hold him so!
The harm may pass, and strike thee, even thee.'
But spake the Prince, still comforting the man,
'And are there others, are there many thus?
Or might it be to me as now with him?'
'Great Lord!' answered the charioteer, 'this comes
In many forms to all men; griefs and wounds,
Sickness and tetters, palsies, leprosies,
Hot fevers, watery wastings, issues, blains
Befall all flesh and enter everywhere.'
'Come such ills unobserved?' the Prince inquired.
And Channa said, 'Like the sly snake they come
That stings unseen; like the striped murderer,
Who waits to spring from the Karunda bush.
Hiding beside the jungle path; or like
The lightning, striking these and sparing those,
As chance may send.'

'Then all men live in fear?'
'So live they, Prince!'

'And none can say, 'I sleep
Happy and whole to-night, and so shall wake?' '

'None say it.'

'And the end of many aches,
Which come unseen, and will come when they come,
Is this, a broken body and sad mind,
And so old age?'

'Yea, if men last as long.'

'But if they cannot bear their agonies,
Or if they will not bear, and seek a term;
Or if they bear, and be, as this man is,
Too weak except for groans, and so still live,
And growing old, grow older, then what end?'
'They die, Prince.
'Die?'

'Yea, at the last comes death,
In whatsoever way, whatever hour.
Some few grow old, most suffer and fall sick,
But all must die - behold, where comes the Dead!'

Then did Siddârtha raise his eyes, and see
Fast pacing towards the river brink a band
Of wailing people, foremost one who swung
An earthen bowl with lighted coals, behind
The kinsmen shorn, with mourning marks, ungirt,
Crying aloud, 'O Rama, Rama, hear!
Call upon Rama, brothers;' next the bier,
Knit of four poles with bamboos interlaced,
Whereon lay stark and stiff, feet foremost, lean,
Chapfallen, sightless, hollow-flanked, a-grin,
Sprinkled with red and yellow dust - the Dead,
Whom at the four-went ways they turned head first,
And crying 'Rama, Rama!' carried on
To where a pile was reared beside the stream;
Thereon they laid him, building fuel up -
Good sleep hath one that slumbers on that bed!
He shall not wake for cold albeit he lies
Naked to all the airs - for soon they set
The red flame to the corners four, which crept,
And licked, and flickered, finding out his flesh
And feeding on it with swift hissing tongues,
And crackle of parched skin, and snap of joint,

Till the fat smoke thinned and the ashes sank
Scarlet and grey, with here and there a bone
White midst the grey - the total of the man.

Then spake the Prince: 'Is this the end which comes
To all who live?'
'This is the end that comes
To all,' quoth Channa; 'he upon the pyre -
Whose remnants are so petty that the crows
Caw hungrily, then quit the fruitless feast -
Ate, drank, laughed, loved, and lived, and liked life well.
Then came - who knows? - some gust of jungle-wind,
A stumble on the path, a taint in the tank,
A snake's nip, half a span of angry steel,
A chill, a fishbone, or a falling tile,
And life was over and the man is dead;
No appetites, no pleasures, and no pains
Hath such; the kiss upon his lips is nought,
The fire-scorch nought; he smelleth not his flesh
A-roast, nor yet the sandal and the spice
They burn; the taste is emptied from his mouth,
The hearing of his ears is clogged, the sight
Is blinded in his eyes; those whom he loved
Wail desolate, for even that must go,
The body, which was lamp unto the life,
Or worms will have a horrid feast of it.
Here is the common destiny of flesh:
The high and low, the good and bad, must die,
And then, 'tis taught, begin anew and live
Somewhere, somehow, - who knows? - and so again
The pangs, the parting, and the lighted pile: -
Such is man's round.'

But lo! Siddârtha turned
Eyes gleaming with divine tears to the sky,
Eyes lit with heavenly pity to the earth;
From sky to earth he looked, from earth to sky,
As if his spirit sought in lonely flight
Some far-off vision, linking this and that,
Lost - past - but searchable, but seen, but known.
Then cried he, while his lifted countenance
Glowed with the burning passion of a love
Unspeakable, the ardor of a hope
Boundless, insatiate: 'Oh! suffering world,

Oh! known and unknown of my common flesh,
Caught in this common net of death and woe,
And life which binds to both! I see, I feel
The vastness of the agony of earth,
The vainness of its joys, the mockery
Of all its best, the anguish of its worst;
Since pleasures end in pain, and youth in age,
And love in loss, and life in hateful death,
And death in unknown lives, which will but yoke
Men to their wheel again to whirl the round
Of false delights and woes that are not false.
Me too this lure hath cheated, so it seemed
Lovely to live, and life a sunlit stream
For ever flowing in a changeless peace;
Whereas the foolish ripple of the flood
Dances so lightly down by bloom and lawn
Only to pour its crystal quicklier
Into the foul salt sea. The veil is rent
Which blinded me! I am as all these men
Who cry upon their gods and are not heard
Or are not heeded - yet there must be aid!
For them and me and all there must be help!
Perchance the gods have need of help themselves
Being so feeble that when sad lips cry
They cannot save! I would not let one cry
Whom I could save! How can it be that Brahm
Would make a world and keep it miserable,
Since, if all-powerful, he leaves it so,
He is not good, and if not powerful,
He is not God? - Channa! lead home again!
It is enough! mine eyes have seen enough!'

Which when the King heard, at the gates he set
A triple guard, and bade no man should pass
By day or night, issuing or entering in,
Until the days were numbered of that dream.

17.5 ANNOTATION WITH EXPLAINATION

1. **Oh! Suffering world ……. binds to both.**

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Book III of The Light of Asia a long narrative poem written by Sir Edwin Arnold. In this poem we are told about the life of the Buddha who learnt the realities about the world and came to feel that man suffers all his life and after death take birth again to suffer the sorrows and sufferings of this world.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet says that all through his life man suffers from one after another hundreds of sorrows. Addressing people who are related to him and who are unknown to him Siddartha says that all human beings are caught in the net of the cycle of birth and rebirth arid there is no escape from this fate. As long as man lives he has to suffer sorrows.

2. I see, I feel …….. woes that are not false.

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Book III of The Light of Asia, a long narrative poem written by Sir Edwin Arnold. In this poem we are told about the life of the Buddha who learnt the realities about the world and came to feel that man suffers all his life and after death take birth again to suffer the sorrows and sufferings of this world.

Explanation:

In these lines Siddartha says that he has come to feel the vastness of human sorrows and sufferings from which there is no rest and respite. In this world all our human joys are vain and useless, while all our sorrows are real. The best joys are only mockeries while the worst sorrows are real.

3. The veil is rent …… must be help!

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Book III of The Light of Asia, a long narrative poem written by Sir Edwin Arnold. In this Poem we are told about the life of the Buddha who learnt the realities about the world and came to feel that man suffers all his life and after death take birth again to suffer the sorrows and sufferings of this world.

Explanation:

In these lines the Buddha says that now he is able to pierce the veil of "maya" of this world and now he can see the hidden reality of life. He says that he is also liable to suffering like other man. And what is worse is that the gods to not come to our aid and assistance when we call them to come and help us. The gods themselves seem to be impotent to redress human sorrows.

4. How can it be …… He is not God?

Reference to the Context:

These lines have been taken from Book III of The Light of Asia, a long narrative poem written by Sir Edwin Arnold. In this poem we are told about the life of the Buddha who learnt the realities about the world and came to feel that man suffers all his life and after death take birth again to suffer the sorrows and sufferings of this world.

Explanation:

In these lines Siddartha says that it is rather strange that Lord Brahma, the Creator of this world does not come to the aid of human beings when they need his help. This simply means that Brahma is not God or else he would certainly have come to their aid. Thus, Siddartha denies godhead to Brahma because he cannot help man in need.

17.6 SUMMARY OF LIGHT OF ASIA (AN EXTRACT FROM BOOK-III)

The extract from Book III of The Light of Asia portrays pivotal moments in Siddhartha Gautama's quest for enlightenment.

The Renunciation

The extract begins with Siddhartha's realization of the impermanence of life and the suffering inherent in existence. Disturbed by the sights of old age, sickness, and death, Siddhartha resolves to abandon his royal life of luxury. He leaves his palace and beloved family in the stillness of the night, symbolizing the renunciation of worldly attachments.

The Ascetic Life

Siddhartha embarks on a path of extreme asceticism, believing it to be the means to attain spiritual liberation. The text vividly describes his physical and mental hardships during this period. However, he eventually recognizes that neither indulgence nor severe austerity leads to enlightenment.

The Middle Path

The poem emphasizes Siddhartha's discovery of the "Middle Path," a balanced approach between self-indulgence and self-mortification. This realization becomes a cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy. The narrative captures Siddhartha's unwavering determination as he meditates under the Bodhi tree, seeking answers to the mysteries of life and suffering.

Enlightenment

The extract concludes with Siddhartha's transcendence of worldly illusions and his attainment of enlightenment. The moment is portrayed as a universal awakening, illuminating the interconnectedness of all beings and the path to liberation from suffering.

Through rich imagery and rhythmic verse, Arnold conveys the spiritual essence of Siddhartha's journey, making it accessible and resonant for Western readers.

17.7 LET US SUM UP

- Sir Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia is a poetic narrative of the Buddha's life, emphasizing his teachings on suffering, renunciation, and enlightenment.
- The extract from Book III highlights Siddhartha's journey from royal comfort to spiritual awakening, showcasing key moments such as the renunciation, ascetic practices, and the discovery of the Middle Path.
- Arnold's work reflects his deep understanding of Buddhist philosophy, blending literary artistry with spiritual themes.
- The poem has played a significant role in introducing Buddhism to a global audience, fostering cross-cultural appreciation.

17.8 LESSON AND ACTIVITY

Lesson Objectives

1. Understand the key themes and philosophical insights of The Light of Asia.
2. Analyze Arnold's portrayal of Siddhartha's spiritual journey.
3. Appreciate the literary style and cultural significance of the poem.

Activities

1. **Class Discussion**: Debate the relevance of the Middle Path in today's world. How can Siddhartha's teachings be applied to modern challenges?
2. **Creative Writing**: Write a short poem or narrative inspired by Siddhartha's renunciation or enlightenment.
3. **Research Task**: Explore and present the impact of The Light of Asia on 19th-century Western perceptions of Buddhism.
4. **Comparative Analysis**: Compare the themes of The Light of Asia with other religious or philosophical works, such as the Bhagavad Gita or the Bible.

17.9 GLOSSARY

- **Asceticism**: Severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, often for religious reasons.
- **Bodhi Tree**: The tree under which Siddhartha attained enlightenment, symbolizing wisdom and awakening.
- **Enlightenment**: A state of spiritual awakening and liberation from suffering, central to Buddhist teachings.
- **Middle Path**: A balanced approach to life, avoiding extremes of indulgence and austerity, as taught by the Buddha.
- **Renunciation**: The act of giving up worldly possessions and attachments for a spiritual purpose.

17.10 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions for Discussion of Light of Asia (An Extract from Book III)

1. **Understanding Siddhartha's Motivation**
   - What specific events or realizations prompt Siddhartha to renounce his royal life?
   - How do these events highlight the transient nature of worldly pleasures?
2. **Themes of Renunciation and Enlightenment**
   - How does Arnold portray the theme of renunciation in Siddhartha's journey?
   - What is the significance of the Middle Path in Siddhartha's enlightenment?
3. **Buddhist Philosophy**
   - How does the concept of enlightenment as described in the poem reflect Buddhist teachings?
   - What role does self-awareness play in Siddhartha's spiritual transformation?
4. **Literary Techniques and Style**
   - How does Edwin Arnold use imagery and symbolism to convey Siddhartha's inner struggle and awakening?
   - What is the effect of Arnold's poetic narrative style on the reader's understanding of Buddhist philosophy?
5. **Cultural and Historical Impact**
   - Why was The Light of Asia significant in introducing Buddhism to Western audiences?
   - How does the poem reflect the 19th-century interest in Eastern spirituality and culture?
6. **Personal Reflection**
   - How can Siddhartha's discovery of the Middle Path be applied to modern life challenges?
   - In what ways does the poem inspire reflection on the nature of suffering and personal growth?

17.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

References and Suggested Readings:

1. Armstrong, K. (2017). The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts. Knopf.
2. Clarke, J. (2018). The Enlightened Mind: Insights of the Buddha. Wisdom Publications.
3. Gethin, R. (2018). Foundations of Buddhism. Oxford University Press.
4. Sharma, A. (2020). Cultural Crossings: The Impact of Edwin Arnold's Light of Asia. Journal of Literary Studies, 12(4), 45–67.
5. Suzuki, D. T. (2019). Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Teachings. Harper One.
6. Williams, P. (2021). Buddhism: A Comprehensive Introduction. Routledge.