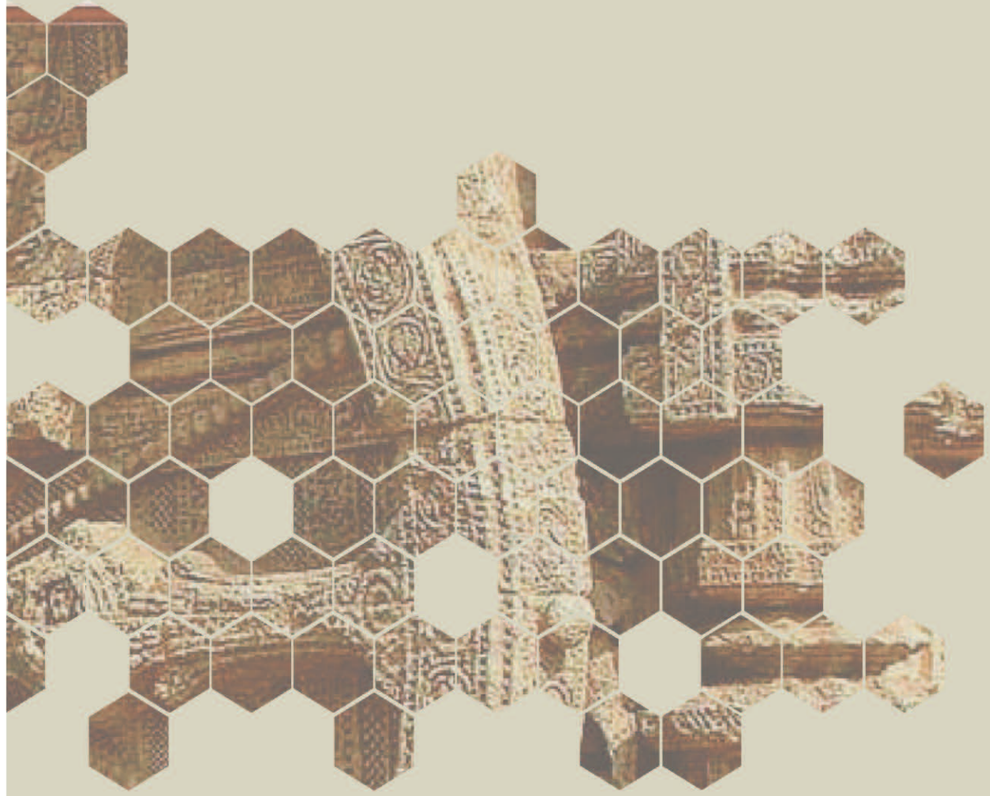
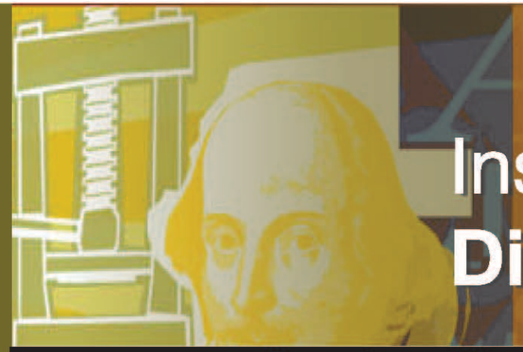


Poetry-I


Dr. C.V. Raman University
Kargi Road, Kota, BILASPUR, (C. G.),
Ph. : +07753-253801, +07753-253872
E-mail : info@cvru.ac.in | Website : www.cvru.ac.in

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

**Faculty of Arts**

# Poetry-I

**1MAENG1**

# DR. C.V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY

Chhattisgarh, Bilaspur — A STATUTORY UNIVERSITY UNDER SECTION 2(F) OF THE UGC ACT

# 1MAENG1

# Poetry-I

**1MAENG1**

# Poetry-I

**Credit- 4**

## Subject Expert Team


***Dr. Gurpreet Kour, Dr. C.V. Raman*** University, Kota, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

***Dr. Manisha Dwivedi, Dr. C.V. Raman*** University, Kota, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

***Dr. Om Prakash Tiwari, Dr. C.V. Raman*** University, Kota, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

***Dr. Anupa Thomas, Dr. C.V.*** Raman University, Kota, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

***Dr. Shantanu Ghosh,*** Department of English, Govt. Kesharwani College, Kargi Road, Kota, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

***Dr. Kishori Patel,*** Govt. College, Kotari, Mungeli, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh


## Course Editor:


**Dr. Ruchi Mishra, Associate Professor**
Department of English, Rabindranath Tagore University, Bhopal, M.P.


## Unit Written By:


**1. Dr. Gurpreet Kour**

**(Associate Professor, Dr. C. V. Raman University)**

**2. Dr. Om Prakash Tiwari**

**(Associate Professor, Dr. C. V. Raman University)**

**3. Dr. Anupa Thamas**

**(Assistant Professor, Dr. C. V. Raman University)**





Published by: Dr. C.V. Raman University Kargi Road, Kota, Bilaspur, (C. G.), Ph. +07753-253801,07753-253872 E-mail: info@cvru.ac.in, Website: www.cvru.ac.in

## BLOCK -I



## BLOCK II



## BLOCK-III



## BLOCK-IV

# BLOCK- I

# UNIT – 1
# EPIC POETRY

**STRUCTURE**



## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Epic poetry is one of the oldest and most prestigious literary forms in the world, often regarded as a foundational genre in many cultures. Epic poems are long, narrative works that tell the stories of heroic deeds, legendary figures, and significant events, often intertwined with mythology, cultural values, and the spirit of an era. These poems are not just about the actions of heroes; they also reflect the societal ideals and moral values of the time in which they were composed.

The epic genre is typically characterized by grand themes, such as the quest for honor, the struggle between good and evil, the intervention of gods or supernatural forces, and the exploration of human fate. Some of the most famous examples of epic poetry include the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer, the *Aeneid* by Virgil, and the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* from India.

Epic poetry often follows a structured form, using a specific meter, rhyme, and sometimes even invoking divine inspiration or calling on muses to assist the poet. The language is often elevated and formal, and epics may include speeches, digressions, and genealogies of gods and heroes. These characteristics combine to create a sense of monumental importance, making epic poetry one of the cornerstones of classical and world literature.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Understand the key characteristics and elements of epic poetry, including its narrative structure, heroic themes, and use of elevated language.
- Understand the cultural and historical significance of epic poetry in preserving legends, values, and societal ideals.
- Understand the role of the epic hero and how their journey reflects universal themes such as bravery, honor, and the struggle between good and evil.
- Understand the stylistic features of epic poetry, such as the use of formal language, in medias res storytelling, and the presence of supernatural beings and divine interventions.

## 1.3 ABOUT EPIC POETRY

Epic poems are the product of preliterate societies or those in which reading and writing were uncommon. Writing might've been part of society, but not to the extent it is today. Therefore, stories were told orally, passed down from person to person, and embellished and changed as they travelled. Scholars believe that Homeric epics, like the *Odyssey,* were originally oral in nature. Epic poems are also considered to be the first form of poetry.

## 1.4 THE CHARACTERS IN EPIC POETRY

When considering epic poetry, more than likely, your thoughts immediately go to the two works attributed to Homer, the Iliad, and the Odyssey. The main characters of these works–Odysseus, Achilles, Hector, Agamemnon, Priam, Helen– are all heads above other men and women of their time for their bravery, and of course, in Helen's case, for her beauty.

Aside from their courage and beauty, these characters are more often than not representatives of some set of values. These could belong to an entire region or a small group of people. There is a lot hinging on the plotlines of those in epic poems. Take, for example, Gilgamesh from the oldest recorded epic, the *Epic of Gilgamesh.* (Written in Mesopotamia in 1800 BC). He is the king of the Uruk and is commonly recognized as an actual historical figure.

But, in the epic, he takes on a larger-than-life presence. He battles with a rival, Enkidu, and eventually embarks on a journey to find the secret of eternal life. The form of the epic plays straight into the major themes of the Epic of Gilgamesh as it is through this poem that the ancient king found eternal life. His story, in what is undoubtedly an exaggerated form, is still told almost 4,000 years after it was written.

## 1.5 THE FORM OF EPIC POETRY

Just as the characters in epic poetry have to be grand enough to stand up to the form, so too does the form have to do justice to the character. The verse is normally elaborate and therefore able to exaggerate the already otherworldly qualities of the characters of an epic.

Almost every epic in the Western literary canon makes use of a dactylic hexameter. This pattern is also referred to as a heroic hexameter. This metrical pattern can be seen in Virgil's *Aeneid* as well as Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and Homer's *Iliad*, about the siege of Troy, and *Odyssey.* Each line of these long narrative poems, ideally, if the poet stuck to the pattern 100% of the time, is made up of six feet. These feet would consist of one long and two short beats, or one stressed and two unstressed. But, poets often use spondees rather than dactyls, two stressed syllables followed by one unstressed. Enjambment and caesura are also common features.

- Epic poems are also noted for their length. The longest ever written was the Indian Mahabharata. It was 200,000 lines of verse as well as some lengthy prose passages. Shorter but still considerable are the Odyssey with 12,110 lines and Dante's The Divine Comedy with 14,233 lines. The latter is separated into three distinct sections and describes the poet's journey through *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise/Heaven). Another example is Lord Byron's '*Don Juan.*'

## 1.6 SUPERNATURAL FORCES IN EPIC POETRY

The heroes in epic poetry are often assisted or stymied by known or unknown supernatural forces. This is a literary technique known as dues ex machina. It refers to the intervention of a god or more than a natural force into a narrative. This technique is usually applied in order to push the story towards a certain conclusion or change up what could be a predictable series of

events. The most obvious examples come from the *Iliad,* in which the two sides, the Greeks, or Achaeans, and the Trojans, are assisted to different agrees by different Gods in the Greek Pantheon.

Take, for example, the relationship that Athena, the goddess of Wisdom, has with the Achaeans. She fights on their side partly because of her love and appreciation for Menelaus, a commander of the Greek army, husband to Helen, and brother to Agamemnon, but also because of her anger at Paris and Helen, who started the war.

The gods appear in this epic poem in the same way humans do. They can fight physically alongside them, but they can also control the elements and influence the outcome of events.

> The supernatural can also be seen in *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser and *Beowulf.*

## 1.7 EXAMPLES OF EPIC POETRY

### *Paradise Lost* by John Milton

One of the most widely read epics today, *Paradise Lost,* tells the story of Satan's fall from Heaven, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and Satan's attempts to fight a war against the angels remaining in Heaven. Here is a quote:

Me miserable! Which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep,
Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

### *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri

As mentioned above, *The Divine Comedy* is an epic that details the poet's journey through the various stages of the afterlife. He's led on this journey by Virgil, the poet responsible for the epic

poem (that continues the story of the Trojans after the conclusion of the *Iliad*), the *Aeneid.* Here is a quote:

The man who lies asleep will never waken fame, and his desire and all his life drift past him like a dream, and the traces of his memory fade from time like smoke in air, or ripples on a stream.

### *The Metamorphoses* by Ovid

Ovid's most famous and lasting work, *The Metamorphoses,* was written in 8 AD. It is made up of 11,995 lines and spans 15 books. It is usually considered an epic, but there are such a variety of themes and tones tapped into within the poem that it is sometimes classified into other genres. The verse tells around 250 individual stories within its lines. Altogether, they depict the story of the world's creation to the birth of Julius Caesar. Here is a quote:

As wave is driven by wave
And each, pursued, pursues the wave ahead,
So time flies on and follows, flies, and follows,
Always, for ever and new. What was before
Is left behind; what never was is now;
And every passing moment is renewed.

## 1.8 SUMMARY

Epic poetry is a long, narrative poem that often tells the story of heroic deeds, significant events, or the foundational myths of a culture. These poems are typically written in formal, elevated language and often feature larger-than-life characters, gods, and supernatural elements. Some key characteristics of epic poetry include .Famous examples include the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer, the *Aeneid* by Virgil, and the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* from Indian literature. Epic poetry has influenced many later literary traditions and continues to be a powerful way of storytelling.

## 1.9 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. Create Your Own Epic Hero

- Objective: Students or participants can create their own epic hero, inspired by characters in famous epics.

- Steps:
    1. Think about what qualities make a hero in epic poetry (e.g., bravery, strength, leadership).
    2. Write a character sketch for your hero, detailing their background, abilities, weaknesses, and personal goals.
    3. Have the hero undertake a major quest or battle. Write a brief scene from your epic story where they face a challenge and use their unique traits to overcome it.
- Extension: Encourage the addition of gods, monsters, or supernatural elements that influence the hero's journey.

2. Epic Poem Writing

- Objective: Participants can write a short epic poem, using the traditional style and themes.
- Steps:
    1. Start by selecting a grand theme or idea, like a battle, a hero's journey, or a mythical event.
    2. Use elevated language, strong imagery, and formal verse (like dactylic hexameter or another metrical structure) to compose the poem.
    3. Introduce a hero or central figure who faces a major challenge, with divine or supernatural elements influencing the story.
- Extension: Perform the poem aloud with dramatic flair, focusing on tone and expression, to capture the epic storytelling experience.

3. Epic Poetry Comparison

- Objective: Compare and contrast two epic poems to analyze common themes, motifs, and structures.
- Steps:
    1. Choose two well-known epic poems, such as *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid*, or *The Odyssey* and *The Ramayana*.
    2. Focus on key elements: the protagonist's journey, divine intervention, epic battles, and moral lessons.

3.Discuss the similarities and differences in the heroes' motivations, the role of gods, and the challenges they face.

## 1.10 GLOSSARYY

1. Epic

A long narrative poem that tells the story of heroic deeds, adventures, or the foundational history of a nation or culture, often involving gods, supernatural elements, and grand themes.

2. Heroic Couplet

A pair of rhymed lines of iambic pentameter often used in epic poetry. It is a form of rhythm in which each line consists of ten syllables, with alternating unstressed and stressed syllables.

3. Epic Hero

The central character of an epic, typically a larger-than-life figure who embodies the values of the culture, facing challenges and undergoing significant trials.

4. Invocation

A formal plea for inspiration, often directed to a muse or god, at the beginning of an epic poem. In many epics, the poet calls upon a divine being to help them tell the story (e.g., Homer's *Iliad*).

## 1.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is an epic poem?

2. What is an epic hero?

3. What role do gods or supernatural beings play in epic poetry?

4. What is "in media res" in epic poetry?

5. What is the significance of the "hero's journey" in epic poetry?

- Answer:1 An epic poem is a long narrative poem that tells the story of a heroic figure or a significant historical event. It often involves gods, supernatural beings, and grand themes. Famous examples include *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Aeneid*.

- Answer:2 An epic hero is the central character in an epic poem, typically possessing extraordinary strength, intelligence, or bravery. The hero often embarks on a grand journey or quest, faces major challenges, and exhibits virtues admired by their culture.

- Answer:3 In epic poetry, gods or supernatural beings often play an important role by guiding, aiding, or hindering the hero's journey. They may intervene directly in human affairs, sometimes as protectors or adversaries, influencing the outcome of events.

- Answer:4 "In media res" is a narrative technique in which the story begins in the middle of action or conflict rather than at the beginning. The background or events leading up to the start of the story are often revealed through flashbacks or dialogue. *The Iliad* begins "in media res," with the Trojan War already underway.

- Answer: 5 The "hero's journey" is a common narrative pattern in epic poetry. It involves the hero going on a quest, overcoming trials, receiving help from allies or gods, and returning home transformed. This structure serves to highlight the hero's growth and the moral lessons learned through their journey. The *Odyssey* follows this pattern closely.

## 1.12 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- Homer. (2019). *The Iliad* (R. Fagles, Trans.). New York, NY: Penguin Classics.
- Milton, J. (2019). *Paradise Lost*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Virgil. (2019). *The Aeneid* (D. West, Trans.). New York, NY: Penguin Classics.
- Homer. (2020). *The Odyssey* (E. Wilson, Trans.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Beowulf. (2021). *Beowulf* (S. Heaney, Trans.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Dante Alighieri. (2022). *The Divine Comedy* (R. M. Durling & R. Martinez, Trans.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.


## 1.13 TERMINAL QUESTION

**1.** What are the key characteristics that define an epic poem?
**2.** How does the hero's journey or quest function in epic poetry?
**3.** What role do supernatural beings or gods play in epic poetry?
**4.** How do epic similes contribute to the storytelling in epic poems?
**5.** What are the differences between the epic traditions of Greek, Roman, and other cultures?

# UNIT –2

## JOHN MILTON : PARADISE LOST

**STRUCTURE**



## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

*Paradise Lost* by John Milton is an epic poem first published in 1667, widely regarded as one of the greatest works in English literature. It explores the biblical story of humanity's fall from grace, focusing on Adam and Eve's disobedience and its cosmic consequences. Spanning twelve books, the poem blends classical epic conventions with Christian theology, aiming "to justify the ways of God to men."

Milton portrays Satan as a complex anti-hero, whose rebellion against God and subsequent fall sets the narrative in motion. Themes of free will, divine justice, temptation, and redemption pervade the work, raising profound philosophical and theological questions. Written during Milton's blindness, the poem also reflects his personal struggles and political disillusionment. Its vivid imagery, majestic language, and profound moral inquiry have cemented *Paradise Lost* as a timeless meditation on human agency and divine providence.

## 2.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the nature of free will and its role in the choices of Adam, Eve, and Satan, emphasizing the consequences of disobedience and moral responsibility.

2. Understand Milton's depiction of divine justice and its balance with mercy, exploring how it aligns with his theological aim to "justify the ways of God to men."
3. Understand the complex characterizations of Satan, Adam, and Eve, analyzing their motivations, flaws, and growth to reflect on human nature and moral dilemmas.
4. Understand the literary techniques and epic conventions used by Milton, such as the invocation of the muse, use of blank verse, and integration of classical and biblical traditions.
5. Understand the interplay of themes like temptation, redemption, and the eternal struggle between good and evil, and their relevance to broader philosophical and spiritual questions.

## 2.3 BIOGRAPHY

### John Milton: A Detailed Biography

Full Name: John Milton
Date of Birth: December 9, 1608
Place of Birth: London, England
Date of Death: November 8, 1674
Place of Death: Bunhill Fields, London, England
Occupation: Poet, Essayist, Civil Servant, Pamphleteer
Known For: *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes*, *Areopagitica*

Early Life and Education

John Milton was born into a prosperous family in London during the reign of King James I. His father, John Milton Sr., was a composer and scrivener, while his mother, Sarah Jeffrey, came from a well-to-do family. Milton was the youngest of three children, and his early life was marked by a strict religious upbringing in a family that was strongly Puritan.

Milton was a precocious child and showed an early aptitude for learning. He was educated at St. Paul's School in London, where he studied the classics, including Latin and Greek, as well as other subjects like logic and rhetoric. His father was a strong supporter of his education and hired tutors to further develop Milton’s intellectual abilities.

At the age of 16, in 1625, Milton entered Christ's College, Cambridge. There, he received a formal education in the arts and humanities, particularly focusing on classical languages and literature. Milton earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1629 and his Master of Arts degree in 1632. His time at Cambridge was deeply formative for his intellectual development, and he began writing poetry, drawing heavily from the classical traditions.

### Early Literary Career

Milton's early poetry was heavily influenced by the classical writers of ancient Greece and Rome. His first major published work was a Latin elegy titled *"On the Death of a Fair Infant"* (1626), a piece of mourning that reflects his early fascination with classical forms and themes.

In 1634, he wrote his first major English-language poems: *"On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"* and *"At a Solemn Music"*. These works established his reputation as a poet with a deep religious sensibility, and they also demonstrated his command of poetic language and form. In these early poems, Milton began developing his grand style, marked by elevated language and formal structures.

Milton's most famous early work is *L'Allegro* (1632) and *Il Penseroso* (1632), two companion poems that reflect the dichotomy between the carefree, joyous life and the thoughtful, contemplative life. These poems showcased Milton's range of poetic abilities and his growing mastery of English verse.

## The Civil War and Political Writings

In the 1640s, England was in the midst of political and religious turmoil, which culminated in the outbreak of the English Civil War (1642–1651). Milton's Puritan beliefs aligned with the Parliamentarians, who opposed the monarchy led by King Charles I. Milton, a staunch supporter of republicanism and a critic of royal absolutism, became increasingly involved in the political and religious debates of his time.

During the Civil War, Milton wrote extensively in prose, producing a number of pamphlets that argued for the rights of individuals, freedom of speech, and religious liberty. His most famous prose work is *Areopagitica* (1644), a passionate defense of freedom of the press and a powerful argument against censorship. In this work, Milton argued that the truth would ultimately prevail if individuals were allowed to freely debate ideas and read different viewpoints.

Milton also wrote on issues of divorce, advocating for the freedom to divorce on the grounds of mutual incompatibility. His pamphlet *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643) argued for the reform of marriage laws in England and the right of individuals to separate if they could not live in harmony.

Blindness and Later Works

By 1651, Milton's life took a tragic turn. He began to lose his eyesight, likely due to an underlying medical condition, and by 1652, he was completely blind. Despite this devastating loss, Milton's intellectual output did not diminish. In fact, some of his most important and lasting works were written during this period.

Milton's blindness deepened his sense of intellectual purpose. He famously dictated his later works to assistants, including his daughters and other scribes. These works, particularly his epic poems, reflect his desire to explore grand philosophical and theological ideas, even in the face of personal hardship.

Paradise Lost and Other Major Works

Milton's magnum opus, *Paradise Lost* (1667), is one of the greatest achievements in English literature. It tells the story of the Fall of Man, focusing on the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve's temptation and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The epic poem explores themes of free will, the nature of evil, divine justice, and human suffering. Milton's depiction of Satan, who famously declares, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," has become an iconic part of Western literature.

*Paradise Lost* was published in 1667 in ten books, and a revised edition in 1674 included twelve books. The poem is known for its grand, blank-verse style, complex theological themes, and psychological depth. Milton's portrayal of Satan as a tragic, rebellious figure was revolutionary, and the work continues to be studied and admired for its intellectual and artistic brilliance.

Following the success of *Paradise Lost*, Milton wrote *Paradise Regained* (1671), a shorter epic that focuses on the temptation of Christ, and *Samson Agonistes* (1671), a tragic closet drama about the biblical figure Samson. Both works reflect Milton's continued exploration of themes of temptation, redemption, and divine justice.

## Final Years and Death

In his final years, Milton lived in relative obscurity and poverty, though he still maintained a reputation as one of England's greatest poets. He continued to write and work on his poetry, but much of his later life was marked by personal tragedy. His first wife, Mary Powell, whom he had married in 1642, had died in 1652, and his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, died in 1658. Milton's daughters, Deborah and Anne, were his primary caregivers in his later years.

Milton died on **November 8, 1674**, at the age of 65, from complications related to his health. He was buried in **Bunhill Fields** in London, where other prominent figures like William Blake would later be buried.

## Legacy

Milton's influence on English literature is immense. *Paradise Lost* has been interpreted in countless ways over the centuries and remains a touchstone for the exploration of religion, politics, and human nature. His influence extends beyond literature into theology, philosophy, and politics, as he was a key figure in the intellectual and cultural movements of his time.

Milton's works have inspired generations of writers, poets, and thinkers, including figures like William Blake, Samuel Johnson, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and T.S. Eliot. His exploration of the human condition, particularly the tensions between free will and divine providence, continues to resonate with readers today.

## Major Works

- *Poems of Mr. John Milton* (1645)

- *Areopagitica* (1644)
- *Paradise Lost* (1667)
- *Paradise Regained* (1671)
- *Samson Agonistes* (1671)
- *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643)
- *The Reason of Church Government* (1642)

Milton's body of work, both in poetry and prose, positions him as a pivotal figure in the development of English literature, especially for his ability to blend classical learning with deep theological and philosophical inquiry. His works continue to be studied for their formal brilliance, moral insight, and profound reflection on the human experience.

## 2.4 EXPLANATION

### Invocation to the Muse (Lines 1-26)

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
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 advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

Explanation:
Milton begins by declaring the subject of the poem: the first disobedience of mankind, referring to Adam and Eve's fall. This disobedience brought "death" into the world, a loss of innocence, and banished humanity from Eden. The invocation to the Muse (the traditional literary figure who inspires poets) calls upon a divine spirit (here, *Heav'nly Muse*) to help Milton recount the story of mankind's fall. He references *Oreb* and *Sinai*, mountains associated with biblical events (the Ten Commandments), and evokes the influence of earlier prophets or biblical figures like Moses. Milton asks for divine inspiration to undertake an epic journey to narrate the fall, one "unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."

**2**. And chiefly, thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first

Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dovelike 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 height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Explanation:
Here, Milton calls upon the "Spirit" (likely referring to the Holy Spirit) to guide him in understanding and writing this grand narrative. This Spirit was present at the creation of the world, "brooding on the vast Abyss," making it "pregnant" with life. Milton asks the Spirit to illuminate his mind, to raise him up, and to help him assert "Eternal Providence"—the belief in God's divine plan. Milton's famous line "justify the ways of God to men" expresses one of the poem's central themes: to explain why God permits evil and suffering in the world.

## Satan's Rebellion (Lines 26-49)

3. Say first, for heav'n hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our grand parents, in that happy state
Favour'd of heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides.
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
'T' infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,
Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The mother of mankind: what time his pride
And had cast out from heav'n, with all his host
Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himsef in glory above his Peers,
Drew after him the third part of heaven's host,
With dreadful encounter, and conflict with God,
And with fierce aim drove out from heav'n, the storm
Of battle proud with rage.

Explanation:
Milton now shifts to the cause of humanity's fall: the original sin of Adam and Eve, caused by Satan. He asks why the "grandparents" (Adam and Eve) fell from their favored state. The answer is given: Satan, the "infernal Serpent," led them to revolt against God. Milton describes Satan's own rebellion in Heaven, when he was cast out for aspiring to overthrow God and "set himself in glory above his Peers." Satan's pride and envy led him to lead a third of Heaven's angels in rebellion, resulting in a catastrophic battle that saw them driven out of Heaven.

4. Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky

With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.
Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the air with ruin
Confounded though his strength with troubled joy,
Satan in the beginning, after the war in heaven, was banished to Hell.

Explanation:
Milton describes Satan's fall from Heaven. He was cast out "headlong," engulfed in "flaming" ruin, down to "bottomless perdition"—a term for Hell. Satan is bound in chains and fire, condemned to eternal punishment for daring to defy God. The scale of Satan's fall is emphasized, as he and his followers are hurled to a place "nine times the space that measures day and night"—a vast, chaotic, and unmeasurable realm of suffering.

## Satan's Response (Lines 50-104)

5. Hither, as to their fountain, other nations come to praise them; he was amazed at their infernal state.

## Satan's Reflection on His Fall and Future Plans (Lines 103-505)

In this section, Satan and his fallen angels regroup in Hell. Satan speaks to his followers, rejecting the idea of repentance and vowing to continue his war against God. He declares it better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven, famously stating:

"Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

Satan's speech sets the tone for his character: prideful, defiant, and unrepentant. Satan's rhetoric stirs his followers, and they agree to follow him in continuing their rebellion.

## Lines 505 and Beyond: The Council of Hell and the Decision to Tempt Humanity

The fallen angels convene in a dark, fiery council to discuss their next move. Satan suggests that they corrupt God's new creation—mankind—by seducing Adam and Eve into sin. Satan, now resolved to cause harm to God's plan, sets his sights on humanity as the next target.

## Invocation to the Muse (Lines 1-26)

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
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 advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

## Explanation:

Milton begins by addressing the Muse—his divine inspiration—to help him tell the story of humanity's first disobedience (Adam and Eve's fall). He refers to the "forbidden tree" from which Adam and Eve ate, which led to the death and suffering of mankind, and the loss of Paradise (Eden). He then invokes the Muse, asking for help in telling a story of cosmic significance, and references biblical figures like Moses and the prophets (Sion Hill and the Oracle of God). This invocation is a standard epic convention.

2. And chiefly, thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dovelike 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 height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

## Explanation:

Milton appeals to the Holy Spirit for divine inspiration, acknowledging that the Spirit was present at the creation of the universe ("brooding on the vast Abyss") and helped bring order out of chaos. Milton asks the Spirit to illuminate his mind and raise him to the level necessary to undertake the epic task of justifying the ways of God to humanity. This line is one of the key themes of the poem: the problem of evil and why a benevolent God allows it.

## Satan's Rebellion and Fall (Lines 26-49)

3. Say first, for heav'n hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our grand parents, in that happy state
Favour'd of heav'n, so highly, to fall off

From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides.
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
'T' infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,
Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The mother of mankind: what time his pride
And had cast out from heav'n, with all his host
Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himsef in glory above his Peers,
Drew after him the third part of heaven's host,
With dreadful encounter, and conflict with God,
And with fierce aim drove out from heav'n, the storm
Of battle proud with rage.

## Explanation:

Milton begins recounting the events of Satan’s rebellion. He questions why Adam and Eve, who were in a state of divine favor, would choose to disobey God. The answer is that Satan, the "infernal Serpent," seduced them with his deceitful ways. Satan’s own fall from Heaven, driven by pride and envy, is described here. He aspired to be greater than God and led a rebellion, drawing a third of the angels to follow him. This rebellion culminates in a war in Heaven, with Satan and his followers cast out by God.

4. Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.
Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the air with ruin
Confounded though his strength with troubled joy,
Satan in the beginning, after the war in heaven, was banished to Hell.

## Explanation:

Milton vividly describes Satan’s fall from Heaven—cast headlong, engulfed in flames, and thrown into "bottomless perdition," a place of eternal suffering. The imagery of "adamantine chains and penal fire" emphasizes Satan’s eternal punishment. The "Nine times the space that measures day and night" refers to the vastness of Hell. Though Satan is defeated and suffering, he still retains some "troubled joy" at his defiance of God.

## Satan’s Thoughts (Lines 50-102)

Hither, as to their fountain, other nations come to praise them; he was amazed at their infernal state.
What though the field be lost? all is not lost—the mighty fallen!

Explanation:

These lines reflect Satan's defiance and determination. He acknowledges the loss of the battle in Heaven, but he rejects the idea of total defeat. Satan refuses to accept that all is lost. This is the first sign of Satan's enduring pride and determination, which will continue to characterize his actions throughout the poem.

Satan Speaks to His Fallen Angels (Lines 102-505)

The next section of the first book describes Satan rallying his fallen angels, motivating them with words of defiance. He gives a speech about their continuing strength and pride, despite their banishment. Here, Satan delivers one of the most famous lines in *Paradise Lost*: "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

## 2.4 ANNOTATION

1. "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

- Reference: Book I, Line 263.
- Context: Satan speaks to the fallen angels after their expulsion from Heaven. He encourages them to accept their new state in Hell and declares his preference for rule and independence over subservience in Heaven.
- Explanation: This line encapsulates Satan's pride and defiance. It also raises questions about freedom, ambition, and rebellion. Satan views leadership and autonomy, even in suffering, as preferable to subjugation, making him both a tragic and defiant figure.

2. "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."

- Reference: Book I, Lines 254–255.
- Context: Satan reflects on the power of perception and will as he processes his fall from grace. He attempts to find solace by asserting the dominance of the mind over external circumstances.
- Explanation: This line speaks to the themes of perspective and resilience. It also highlights Satan's complex character, portraying him as both determined and deluded, as he tries to justify his rebellion.

3. "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste / Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

- Reference: Book I, Lines 1–3.

- Context: These are the opening lines of the epic. Milton introduces the poem's subject—humanity's fall through Adam and Eve's disobedience—and its consequences, including death and suffering.
- Explanation: This prologue sets the stage for the epic's theological purpose: to explore the consequences of sin and redemption. Milton emphasizes the universality of human suffering and signals his intent to "justify the ways of God to men."

4. "Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell."

- Reference: Book III, Line 102.
- Context: God speaks in Heaven, addressing the fall of both angels and humans. He emphasizes that all beings were created with free will, and their choices are their own responsibility.
- Explanation: This line underscores the theme of free will. It reflects Milton's theological stance that true obedience and love must be freely given, not compelled, and that individuals are accountable for their choices.

5. "Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven firstborn!"

- Reference: Book III, Line 1.
- Context: Milton begins Book III with an invocation to divine light, symbolizing both physical and spiritual illumination. As a blind poet, Milton meditates on the nature of inner vision and divine inspiration.
- Explanation: This invocation mirrors classical epic tradition, but it is deeply personal and Christian in focus. Milton's plea for guidance reflects the poem's dependence on divine truth and aligns his blindness with prophetic insight.

6. "What in me is dark / Illumine, what is low raise and support."

- Reference: Book I, Lines 22–23.
- Context: Milton's invocation to the Muse at the beginning of the poem. He asks for divine inspiration to write an epic that will clarify spiritual truths and elevate human understanding.
- Explanation: This reflects Milton's ambition to create a work that is not just artistically grand but spiritually meaningful. It shows his humility in seeking divine guidance for such an enormous theological undertaking.

7. "For man will hearken to his glozing lies / To bring them to destruction, sin, and death."

- Reference: Book III, Lines 93–94.
- Context: God foresees Satan's deception of Adam and Eve and predicts humanity's fall. The term "glozing lies" refers to Satan's flattering and deceitful rhetoric.
- Explanation: This highlights the themes of temptation and human susceptibility to sin. The foreknowledge of God contrasts with His granting of free will, emphasizing the complexity of divine justice and grace.

## 2.5 SUMMARY

**Setting the Stage:**
*Paradise Lost* begins with a grand **invocation to the Muse** (lines 1–26), where Milton calls upon divine inspiration to help him tell the story of humanity's fall. He explicitly mentions "Man's first disobedience" and the consequences that follow from Adam and Eve's original sin: the loss of Eden, death, and the suffering of mankind. Milton asks for guidance from the Holy Spirit to help him "justify the ways of God to men," a central theme of the entire poem.

**Satan's Rebellion and Fall (Lines 26-49):**
Milton recounts the backstory of Satan's fall from Heaven. Satan, once the most powerful of the archangels, becomes prideful and rebels against God. He aspires to surpass God, and in a great battle, he and his followers are cast out of Heaven. Satan leads a third of the angels in this rebellion, but they are defeated by God's power. Satan is hurled down from Heaven, along with his fallen angels, into **Hell**—a place of eternal punishment.

**Satan in Hell (Lines 49–505):**
After being banished, Satan and his followers are in Hell, a "place of utter darkness" described as an "abyss." Satan, however, refuses to accept his defeat. Despite being thrown into Hell, he maintains his defiance, declaring, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." He asserts that though they are fallen, they still retain their freedom and power. He addresses his fallen followers, rallying them with speeches that emphasize defiance and revenge.

Satan then calls a council of the fallen angels to discuss their situation. His words ignite their rebellious spirits once more, and they agree to continue their defiance of God. Satan's speech sets the tone for the rest of the poem—his pride and refusal to submit to divine authority will continue to influence his actions throughout the epic.

## 2.6 CHARACTER

1. Satan: Satan is the central character in Book 1, and his rebellion sets the entire narrative in motion. He is portrayed as both a tragic hero and a villain. His speech to his fallen angels reveals his pride, ambition, and refusal to accept defeat. Satan's hubris (excessive pride) and his insistence on choosing his own will over God's result in his downfall, but they also make him a compelling figure. Satan embodies the conflict between personal freedom and divine obedience—he chooses freedom even if it leads to his suffering. His famous line, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," encapsulates his character: his pride and refusal to submit to a higher power define his tragic flaw.
2. Beelzebub: Beelzebub is Satan's second-in-command and one of the fallen angels who accompanies Satan in rebellion. Although he plays a minor role in Book 1, his loyalty to Satan is evident. He is depicted as a supportive but less charismatic figure compared to Satan. Beelzebub shares Satan's ambition for revenge, though he is slightly more cautious than Satan, reflecting his function as a foil to Satan's more extreme and defiant nature.

3. The Fallen Angels: The fallen angels are Satan's followers, who, like him, are cast down from Heaven after the war. While they are loyal to Satan, they are also depicted as lacking his charisma and leadership. They are tragic figures who suffer the consequences of their rebellion. While Satan leads them with fiery speeches, they are in a state of confusion and despair, wondering how they came to such a miserable end. Their reflections and speeches highlight the tragic consequences of rebellion.
4. God: God is not physically present in Book 1, but he is referred to and his actions are implied. God's justice and omnipotence are central to the unfolding events. Satan's rebellion and punishment demonstrate God's sovereignty and the ultimate power of divine will. God's decision to allow free will is also a central issue: although Satan rebels, it is important that Satan's fall reflects a larger divine plan.

## 2.7 THEMES

1. The Fall of Satan and the Problem of Free Will: Satan's rebellion introduces one of the central themes of *Paradise Lost*: free will and its consequences. Satan chooses to rebel against God, and this choice results in his fall. Milton raises important philosophical questions about whether Satan's fall was predestined by God or the result of Satan's own free will. Satan's actions demonstrate the tragic consequences of pride and the misuse of free will, a theme that is mirrored in the fall of Adam and Eve.
2. Rebellion Against Divine Authority: A central theme is Satan's prideful defiance against God. His rebellion is driven by the belief that he, as a created being, should be on par with or superior to God. His refusal to accept God's authority leads to his expulsion from Heaven. In his defiance, Satan embodies the theme of pride as the root of all sin.
3. The Nature of Evil and Suffering: Satan's fall sets the stage for the exploration of evil, sin, and suffering. In Hell, Satan reflects on his plight and begins to develop his plan for revenge against God. Milton uses Satan's defiance to explore the nature of evil—whether evil is an active choice or the absence of good. Satan's declaration that it is "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" illustrates the deep bitterness and self-destructive pride that defines his character.
4. The Justification of God's Ways: Milton begins the process of justifying the ways of God to men. While Satan may be portrayed as a tragic figure, the poem emphasizes that God is just in his actions. Satan's fall is a result of his own choice and pride, showing that even the greatest of beings are responsible for their own actions. This aligns with the Christian belief in the free will of humankind—mankind's ability to choose between good and evil.

The Heroic Ideal: Another important theme in Book 1 is the **heroic ideal** and the portrayal of Satan as a tragic, epic hero. Satan's speech to his fallen angels and his unwavering belief in his own power make him seem heroic in his defiance, but his actions ultimately lead to destruction. Milton's Satan, like other epic heroes, possesses great strength, but he uses it for destructive purposes. This irony is one of the poem's driving forces.

5. **God:** God is not physically present in Book 1, but he is referred to and his actions are implied. God's justice and omnipotence are central to the unfolding events. Satan's rebellion and punishment demonstrate God's **sovereignty** and the ultimate power of

divine will. God's decision to allow free will is also a central issue: although Satan rebels, it is important that Satan's fall reflects a larger divine plan.

## 2.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. **Epic Style and Form:** *Paradise Lost* is written in **blank verse** (unrhymed iambic pentameter), which gives the poem a formal, elevated tone that is fitting for the epic subject matter. Milton's choice of form reflects the **grand scale** of the poem and its exploration of cosmic themes. The use of **classical epic conventions**, such as the invocation of the Muse, the hero's journey, and speeches, creates a sense of timelessness and universality.
2. Imagery and Symbolism: The poem is rich in visual imagery and symbolism. For example, Satan's fall is depicted as a dramatic and fiery event, with "headlong flaming" and "hideous ruin." Hell is described as a place of chaos and suffering. The contrast between Heaven and Hell, light and dark, is a recurring motif throughout the work. The imagery also evokes classical and Christian traditions, with Satan often compared to mythological figures such as the Titans.
3. Philosophical and Theological Questions: Book 1 opens the door to many philosophical and theological questions about free will, predestination, and divine justice. Milton invites readers to consider why God allows evil to exist and why Satan, a once-glorious being, chooses to rebel. Through Satan's speech and internal struggle, Milton explores the nature of evil and suffering, suggesting that free will, while a divine gift, can lead to destruction if misused.
4. Milton's Use of Classical and Biblical Allusion: Milton draws extensively from both Classical mythology and Christian theology in Book 1. References to Oreb and Sinai, as well as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, show Milton's grounding in both religious and literary traditions. These allusions give the poem depth and complexity, allowing it to function on multiple levels—both as a theological work and as a continuation of the epic tradition that includes figures like Homer and Virgil.
5. Milton's Complex Portrayal of Satan: One of the most striking aspects of Book 1 is Milton's complex portrayal of Satan. While he is clearly the antagonist and represents evil, Milton also portrays him as a figure of tragic grandeur. His speeches are full of dignity, even as he expresses defiance and despair. Satan's charismatic leadership and powerful rhetoric make him an intriguing character, drawing the reader's attention and sympathy at times. This dual nature of Satan as both a villain and a tragic hero makes him one of the most compelling characters in literature.

## 2.10 SUMMARY

*Paradise Lost* opens with an invocation to the **Heav'nly Muse**, asking for divine inspiration to tell the story of **man's first disobedience**—the fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Milton reflects on how the **forbidden tree** led to death, sin, and the loss of **Eden**, and the eventual need for a "greater Man" to restore paradise.

The focus then shifts to **Satan** and his followers, who were cast out of Heaven after their rebellion. Satan, once the highest of angels, becomes consumed by **pride**, leading him to defy God. In a battle with God's forces, Satan is defeated and hurled from Heaven into **Hell**, a place of eternal punishment. There, Satan gathers his fallen angels and begins plotting revenge against God by corrupting His new creation, **Man**. Satan's famous declaration, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," captures his defiant attitude and pride.

Book 1 introduces the central themes of the epic: **free will**, **rebellion**, the **nature of evil**, and the **fall of man**. It establishes **Satan** as both the tragic hero and the antagonist, setting the stage for the events that will unfold throughout the poem.

## 2.11 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. **Character Analysis Exercise:**
    - **Objective:** Students will analyze **Satan's character** by focusing on his speeches in Book 1.
    - **Instructions:** Have students select one or two passages where Satan speaks to his fallen angels. Analyze his **rhetoric**, the way he justifies his rebellion, and his attitude towards God and Heaven. What does Satan's attitude tell us about his character and motivations? Do students view him as a tragic hero or a villain? Discuss how Milton presents Satan as both a figure of **sympathy** and **condemnation**.
2. **Debate: "Better to Reign in Hell than Serve in Heaven"**
    - **Objective:** To explore the theme of pride and free will in *Paradise Lost*.
    - **Instructions:** Organize a debate in which one team argues for the proposition "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" and the other team argues against it. Each team must use **passages from Book 1** to support their argument. After the debate, discuss the broader implications of Satan's rebellion on human free will and the consequences of choosing pride over obedience.
3. **Symbolism Mapping:**
    - **Objective:** To analyze the symbols and imagery in Book 1.
    - **Instructions:** Create a **mind map** or **graphic organizer** where students list key symbols from Book 1, such as **Hell**, **Satan's fall**, **the "forbidden tree"**, and **the abyss**. For each symbol, students should provide an explanation of its meaning and how it contributes to the poem's themes. Discuss how these symbols create a sense of cosmic order and chaos.
4. **Writing Prompt:**
    - **Objective:** To encourage critical thinking about the poem's moral and philosophical questions.
    - **Instructions:** Ask students to write an essay on the following prompt: "What is Milton's message in Satan's rebellion? Does Satan's fall represent a universal truth about the human condition? How does the idea of **free will** shape the moral universe of *Paradise Lost*?"

## 2.12 GLOSSARY

- **Abyss**: A vast, unfathomable space, often used to describe Hell in Milton's poem. It symbolizes chaos and darkness.
- **Adamantine**: An adjective meaning "hard as diamond," used to describe the unbreakable chains that bind Satan and his fallen angels.
- **Beelzebub**: A fallen angel and Satan's second-in-command, often seen as Satan's chief lieutenant.
- **Chaos**: The state of disorder that existed before the creation of the world; also used to describe the confusion and disarray of Hell.
- **Infernal**: Of Hell; hellish. Milton uses the term to describe Satan's nature and the environment of Hell.
- **Omnipotent**: All-powerful; a title of God.
- **Pandemonium**: The capital of Hell, created by Satan and his followers. The word has come to symbolize any place of wild uproar.
- **Perdition**: Eternal damnation or loss of the soul.
- **Precipice**: A very steep cliff or drop, often used metaphorically to refer to Satan's fall from Heaven.
- **Rebellion**: The act of rising against authority, which is the central act of Satan's fall.
- **Seraphim**: The highest order of angels in Christian theology.
- **Sin**: A key concept in *Paradise Lost*, referring to the act of disobeying God's commands; initially embodied in Satan and then in Adam and Eve.
- **Tempest**: A violent storm; often used to symbolize chaos or the consequences of rebellion in *Paradise Lost*.

## 2.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the main purpose of Paradise Lost?
2. Who are the central characters in Paradise Lost?
3. How does Milton portray Satan in Paradise Lost?
4. What role does free will play in Paradise Lost?
5. What literary techniques are prominent in Paradise Lost?

ANSWER

1 The main purpose of Paradise Lost is to "justify the ways of God to men" by explaining the theological and moral reasons behind humanity's fall and the presence of free will.

2 The central characters are Satan, Adam, Eve, and God. Other important figures include the archangels Michael and Raphael and the Son of God.

3 Milton portrays Satan as a complex and charismatic figure, embodying pride, ambition, and defiance. While he initially appears heroic, his flaws and self-destructive choices reveal his role as the antagonist.

4 Free will is a central theme, as both angels and humans are given the ability to choose their actions. Their decisions, whether obedience or disobedience, determine their fates and underline the moral responsibility of creation.

5 Milton uses epic conventions like the invocation of the muse, blank verse, and grand, elevated language. He also integrates classical references with Christian theology to craft a rich and layered narrative.

## 2.14 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Jones, R. (2019).** *Milton's Epic: Reimagining Paradise Lost for the Modern Age*.
- **Zagorin, P. (2020).** *Milton and the Politics of Virtue*. Princeton University Press.
    - This book explores the political dimensions of Milton's work, especially the ways in which "Paradise Lost" reflects his political and religious beliefs.
- **Kerrigan, J. (2021).** *Milton: Paradise Lost*. Oxford University Press.
    - This edition provides an in-depth analysis of Milton's language and themes. Kerrigan's work offers insights into the moral and philosophical elements of the text, which remain relevant for contemporary readers.
- **Krouse, J. (2022).** *Reinterpreting Milton: New Perspectives on Paradise Lost*. Cambridge University Press.
    - A collection of critical essays that present various contemporary approaches to interpreting "Paradise Lost," including feminist, postcolonial, and ecological readings.
- **Fenton, M. (2023).** *The Devil in Paradise Lost: New Approaches to Milton's Satan*. University of Michigan Press.
    - This book delves into the figure of Satan in Milton's work, offering new interpretations of his role and significance in the epic.


## 2.15 TERMINAL QUESTION

1 What is Satan's main motivation for rebelling against God?
2 How does Milton describe Satan's fall from Heaven? What kind of imagery does he use?

3 What role does **Beelzebub** play in the opening of Book 1?
4 Why does Satan say, “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven”? What does this reveal about his character?

5 How does Milton portray the relationship between **free will** and **predestination** in Book 1? How is this reflected in Satan’s rebellion

# UNIT – 3

# VALMIKI: RAMAYANA( SUNDARKAND)

## STRUCTURE



## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Sundarakanda is the fifth book (Kanda) of the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, attributed to the sage Valmiki. It is one of the most celebrated and important sections of the *Ramayana* due to its emphasis on devotion, courage, and victory over adversity. The title "Sundarakanda" can be translated as the "Book of Beauty" or "The Book of Splendor," which reflects its tone and focus on the heroism and noble qualities of Hanuman, the monkey god.

The narrative of *Sundarakanda* primarily revolves around Hanuman's journey to Lanka to search for Sita, the wife of Rama, who has been abducted by the demon king Ravana. Hanuman's journey and his heroic deeds are depicted in this Kanda, which includes some of the most iconic episodes in Hindu mythology, such as Hanuman’s flight across the ocean, his encounter with Ravana’s forces, and his burning of Lanka with his fiery tail.

The *Sundarakanda* is an exploration of valor, devotion, faith, and determination, and it emphasizes the qualities of a true hero through the character of Hanuman, who symbolizes supreme selflessness, courage, and loyalty.

## 3.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1.To study Hanuman's journey, from crossing the ocean to his confrontation with Ravana, and understand how these episodes reflect his boundless courage, faith, and loyalty to Lord Rama.

2. To investigate the profound relationship between Lord Rama and Hanuman, focusing on themes of loyalty, love, and service.

3. To interpret how the gods (especially Lord Rama, the Sun God, and others) aid Hanuman during his mission and how symbolic elements, such as Hanuman's magical powers and the fire that burns Lanka, enhance the epic's spiritual and moral lessons.
4.To look at how the actions of Hanuman are driven by the principles of dharma (righteousness) and artha (purpose or goal), showing how his actions align with the cosmic order of the world.
5.Understand the poetic structure and language of the *Sundarakanda*:

## Key Themes in *Sundarakanda*

1. **Devotion (Bhakti):**
   Hanuman's unwavering devotion to Lord Rama is the central theme of *Sundarakanda*. Hanuman represents the ideal of selfless service, where his sole purpose is to serve Lord Rama, regardless of the personal risks or challenges he faces. His devotion is not merely an emotional attachment but a spiritual ideal, where faith and love triumph over all obstacles.
2. **Courage and Bravery:**
   Hanuman's journey to Lanka is marked by physical and mental courage. Whether he is crossing the ocean, facing Ravana's powerful forces, or bringing back news of Sita's whereabouts, Hanuman displays fearlessness and determination. His bravery is symbolic of the larger fight between good and evil.
3. **Selflessness and Sacrifice:**
   Hanuman's heroism is not driven by personal glory, but by his desire to fulfill the will of Lord Rama. His actions emphasize the importance of self-sacrifice for a greater cause. He embodies the ideal of serving a higher purpose without expecting anything in return.
4. **The Power of Faith and Prayer:**
   Hanuman's faith in Rama's abilities and his own powers, derived from his devotion, leads to miraculous feats. His prayer to the gods and his belief in his divine potential are key aspects of his success.
5. **Victory of Good Over Evil:**
   The overarching theme of the *Ramayana*, and specifically *Sundarakanda*, is the victory of good over evil. Through Hanuman's bravery, the forces of good (represented by Rama and his allies) take a major step towards vanquishing the evil forces (represented by Ravana and his demon army). Hanuman's actions help pave the way for the eventual defeat of Ravana.

## 3.3 BIOGRAPHY

Valmiki is one of the most revered figures in Indian literature and is traditionally credited as the author of the *Ramayana*, one of the two great Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other being the *Mahabharata*. Valmiki's life and works have had an immense influence on Indian culture, spirituality, and literature. While much of Valmiki's life is shrouded in legend and myth, there are several key details about his life that are generally accepted.

## Early Life:

Valmiki's birth name was Rama or Ratnakara, and he was born into a hunter-gatherer family in the treacherous forests of the Deccan Plateau (modern-day Maharashtra). According to traditional accounts, he came from a low-caste family, and in his early life, he was a bandit or robber, leading a life of violence and sin. This "early" life as a dacoit (robber) is an important aspect of his transformation, and it forms the basis for one of the most significant elements of Valmiki's biography—his spiritual redemption.

In his youth, Valmiki was unaware of the higher values of life, living a violent existence. According to one popular legend, he lived in the forests, robbing travelers. He would gather a band of fellow thieves and plunder the forests. One day, when he was robbing, he was confronted by the sage Narada, the great spiritual teacher, who recognized the evil nature of his deeds. Narada is said to have advised Valmiki to leave his life of sin and perform a simple act of devotion—to chant the name of Rama.

## Spiritual Transformation:

The key turning point in Valmiki's life occurred when he met Narada, the sage who suggested he chant the name of Rama as a means of atoning for his sins. Initially, Valmiki struggled to pronounce the name properly, but after chanting it repeatedly with intense devotion, he underwent a spiritual transformation. It is said that the name of Rama became so powerful in Valmiki’s life that it purified his soul and erased his past sins.

Valmiki’s repentance and devotion led to a dramatic change in his life. He renounced his violent past, took up the life of an ascetic, and became a rishi (sage). This change of heart is symbolized in the name Valmiki, which is said to mean "one who emerged from an anthill" (in Sanskrit, Valmika means "anthill"), referring to how the sage, after his repentance, became like a pure and devoted soul, transcending his past.

## Valmiki's Contribution: The *Ramayana*

After his transformation, Valmiki is said to have spent years in penance and meditation in the forests. He eventually became the author of the *Ramayana*, one of the most important epics in world literature. The story of how Valmiki came to write the *Ramayana* is itself legendary.

One day, as Valmiki was meditating near the Tungabhadra River (or in other versions, near the Ganga River), he witnessed the great sorrow of Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, who was separated from her husband after the demon king Ravana abducted her. Valmiki, deeply moved by Sita’s grief, is said to have created the first shloka (verse) in Sanskrit, a poetic form that would

eventually become the epic style for the *Ramayana*. This moment marked the beginning of Valmiki's authorship of the *Ramayana*.

The *Ramayana* consists of 24,000 verses and is divided into seven Kandas (books), each focusing on different aspects of the life and deeds of Rama, including his birth, exile, the abduction of Sita, the war with Ravana, and the return to Ayodhya. Valmiki's version of the story of Rama is considered the original account, though various versions of the *Ramayana* exist in other languages, such as Tulsidas's Hindi version (the *Ramcharitmanas*) and the regional versions found in other parts of India and Southeast Asia.

## Role in Indian Literature and Culture:

Valmiki's *Ramayana* is not only a work of literature but also an important spiritual text that has shaped the ethical and moral principles of Hinduism. The characters in the *Ramayana*, especially Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman, are considered exemplars of dharma (righteousness). The moral and ethical lessons embedded in the story have influenced generations of readers and practitioners of the faith.

Valmiki's work, alongside other sacred texts like the Vedas and the Mahabharata, helped to form the foundation of Hindu religious philosophy and mythology. Valmiki is often regarded as the first poet (Adi Kavi) of Sanskrit literature because the *Ramayana* is considered the first epic poem (Kavya) in Indian literature. His contribution to poetry, ethics, and religious thought is unparalleled.

## Valmiki's Later Life:

The details of Valmiki's later life are not clear. However, many traditions say that after composing the *Ramayana*, Valmiki continued to live in meditation and penance. He is believed to have lived a life of peace and devotion until his death, and various legends say that he attained moksha (liberation) or salvation after his departure from the earthly realm.

Some texts suggest that Valmiki lived to a great age and remained a respected sage, contributing to other spiritual and literary works. His ashrams (hermitages) became centers of learning and spirituality.

## Legacy of Valmiki:

Valmiki's legacy is both literary and spiritual. As the Adi Kavi (first poet), Valmiki laid the groundwork for the entire Sanskrit epic tradition, influencing not only the *Ramayana* but also later works like the *Mahabharata* and Puranas. Valmiki's influence extends far beyond literature; he is revered as a sage and is worshipped in various parts of India.

- **Literary Impact:** Valmiki's poetic style and use of shlokas revolutionized Indian poetry, and his meter (known as Anushtubh in Sanskrit) became the standard for Sanskrit poetry.

- **Religious Influence:** In Hindu tradition, Valmiki is considered a divine author, and the *Ramayana* has been used in pujas (worship rituals) and festivals. Valmiki's work emphasizes dharma (righteousness), bhakti (devotion), and the ideal ways of life.
- **Cultural Significance:** Valmiki's *Ramayana* is a source of inspiration for dance, drama, art, and music, particularly in Indian and Southeast Asian cultures. His influence can be seen in the Ramleela performances, Kathakali dances, and various other adaptations.

## 3.4 LINE-BY-LINE EXPLANATION OF SUNDARAKANDA (FROM RAMAYANA)

### Sundarkand - Key Verses and Explanations

**1.**
**श्रीरामचन्द्र कृपालु भजमन हरणभवभयदायि**
**śrī rāma-candra kṛpālu bhajaman haraṇa-bhava-bhaya-dāyi**

**Translation:**
"Chant the praises of Lord Sri Ramachandra, who is compassionate and removes the fears of worldly existence and danger."

- This verse starts by invoking Lord Rama, who is portrayed as a compassionate and merciful deity, capable of alleviating the fears and suffering of those who worship Him. The prayer emphasizes Lord Rama's ability to free devotees from the cycle of birth and death (samsara) and from all worldly fears.

**2.**
**नमोऽस्तुते राघवं काकुत्स्थं वासुदेवं**
**namostu te rāghavaṃ kākutsthaṃ vāsudevaṃ**

**Translation:**
"I bow down to Lord Raghava, the scion of the Raghu dynasty, the son of King Dasharatha, and the incarnation of Vishnu."

- In this verse, the poet acknowledges Lord Rama as the divine son of King Dasharatha and a descendant of the illustrious Raghu dynasty. The verse also highlights Lord Rama's divine nature, being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who descended to the earth to rid it of evil.

---

**3.**
**क्वचिद्विराट्ये किल विघ्नमव्ययं हि**
**kvacid virāṭye kila vighnam avyayaṃ hi**

**Translation:**
"At times, Hanuman encountered obstacles, but he overcame them with ease, for his power and devotion were unparalleled."

- This verse describes Hanuman's journey as one of overcoming challenges. Despite facing many obstacles, Hanuman is able to surpass them effortlessly due to his immense strength and unwavering devotion to Lord Rama.

---

**4.**
**सिता रामं समुत्कंठां**
**sitā rāmaṃ samutkaṃṭhāṃ**

**Translation:**
"Sita is overcome with longing and sorrow for Rama, but remains firm in her devotion."

- Hanuman finds Sita in Lanka, and she is shown as deeply emotional and yearning for Lord Rama. Despite her captivity, she remains devoted to her husband and never loses faith in his ability to rescue her.

**5.**
**लङ्कां दृष्ट्वा तदा रामेण बन्धनं प्रकटितं**
**laṅkāṃ dṛṣṭvā tadā rāmeṇa bandhanaṃ prakaṭitaṃ**

**Translation:**
"Upon reaching Lanka, Hanuman sees the kingdom and the situation of Sita being held captive."

- Hanuman witnesses the grandeur of Lanka and, more importantly, finds Sita being held captive by Ravana. He reassures Sita by mentioning that Lord Rama will come to her rescue.

---

**6.**
**सहस्रद्वयं वज्रांगं**
**sahasra-dvayaṃ vajrāṅgaṃ**

**Translation:**
"Hanuman, whose body is as strong as thousands of thunderbolts."

- Hanuman is described as being as strong as thousands of thunderbolts, showcasing his immense power. This is a reminder of Hanuman's supernatural abilities, which he uses to accomplish his mission of rescuing Sita.

**7.**
**राक्षसों को हरने के लिए**
**rākṣasōṃ kō haraṇē kē li'ē**

**Translation:**
"Hanuman destroyed the demons with ease."

- Hanuman shows his strength by fighting and overcoming the demons in Lanka, including Ravana's army, which has no effect on him due to his divine powers.

---

**8.**
**रामस्य रक्षोवधं विधाय जानकीपतिसंस्थितं**
**rāmasya rakṣovadhaṃ vidhāya jānaki-pati-saṃsthitaṃ**

**Translation:**
"After the destruction of the demons, Lord Rama, with the goal of rescuing his consort Sita, stands firm in his mission."

- This verse reflects Lord Rama’s determination in rescuing Sita, showing that no matter the challenge, he will remain unwavering in his commitment to save her from Ravana.

**9.**
**रामं प्रकट्य प्रियं भावं**
**rāmaṃ prakaṭya priyaṃ bhāvaṃ**

**Translation:**
"Hanuman, having delivered Rama's message, returns with the hope of swift victory."

- Hanuman returns to Lord Rama after delivering the message to Sita. His mission to reassure Sita of Rama’s arrival is accomplished. He now hopes for Rama’s swift victory over Ravana to free Sita.

---

**10.**
**ध्यानं विनाय केवलं कल्याणं**
**dhyānaṃ vināya kevalaṃ kalyāṇaṃ**

**Translation:**
"By meditating on Lord Rama, everything becomes auspicious."

- This verse emphasizes the importance of meditating on Lord Rama as a means to achieve well-being, prosperity, and spiritual fulfillment. Hanuman's devotion is a model for the ideal worship of God.

**11.**
**भक्तों के लिए परम सुख की प्राप्ति**
**bhaktōn kē li'ē param sukh kī prāpti**

**Translation:**
"For the devotees, there is ultimate happiness in the Lord's service."

- The verse concludes the *Sundarkand* by reaffirming the idea that through complete devotion to Lord Rama, a devotee can attain supreme happiness and liberation.

## 3.5 ANNOTATION

**1. "Jayaati Lankam Hanumaan Kapishreshthaḥ"**

- **Reference**: *Sundara Kanda*, Sarga 1.
- **Context**: This verse describes Hanuman's leap across the ocean to Lanka. It highlights his determination and valor as he begins the mission to find Sita and aid Rama.
- **Explanation**: Hanuman's leap symbolizes faith and dedication. It reflects his extraordinary strength, fueled by devotion to Rama, and marks the beginning of his pivotal role in the Ramayana.

**2. "Dharmasya Tattvam Nihitam Guhaayaam"**

- **Reference**: *Sundara Kanda*, Sarga 15.
- **Context**: Sita expresses her unwavering faith in dharma (righteousness) while being held captive in Lanka. She believes that adhering to dharma will eventually lead to her rescue.
- **Explanation**: This quote underscores the Ramayana's theme of the power of righteousness and faith. Despite her dire situation, Sita's belief in dharma reflects her inner strength and moral fortitude.

**3. "Nasti Dharmasya Shreyasi"**

- **Reference**: *Sundara Kanda*, Sarga 34.
- **Context**: Hanuman reassures Sita that Rama's righteousness will triumph, and she will soon be rescued.
- **Explanation**: This quote emphasizes the central message of the Ramayana—that righteousness is the highest virtue. It reinforces the idea that dharma ultimately leads to victory over adharma (unrighteousness).

**4. "Ramo Vigrahavaan Dharmaḥ"**

- **Reference**: *Sundara Kanda*, Sarga 31.
- **Context**: Hanuman describes Rama to Sita, emphasizing his virtues, including his embodiment of dharma (righteousness) and compassion.
- **Explanation**: This line highlights Rama as the ideal being and the upholder of dharma. Hanuman's description reassures Sita of Rama's resolve and strengthens her hope for liberation.

**5. "Anirvedaḥ Shreyo Moolam"**

- **Reference**: *Sundara Kanda*, Sarga 30.
- **Context**: Hanuman encourages himself to remain determined and optimistic while searching for Sita in Lanka.
- **Explanation**: This line reflects the importance of perseverance and optimism, particularly in the face of challenges. Hanuman's self-motivation is a lesson in resilience and faith in one's mission.

**6. "Kaaryam Kuru Deva Karyaarthi Sannidhim Varada"**

- **Reference**: *Sundara Kanda*, Sarga 14.
- **Context**: Hanuman prays to Lord Rama before embarking on a dangerous task in Lanka.
- **Explanation**: This prayer illustrates Hanuman's humility and devotion, showing that even the most powerful seek divine blessings for success.

## 3.6 SUMMARY

*Sundarakanda* is the fifth Kanda (book) of the *Ramayana*, attributed to the sage Valmiki, and it primarily focuses on the heroic journey of Hanuman. It marks a pivotal point in the epic and emphasizes themes such as devotion, bravery, and sacrifice. The book recounts Hanuman's journey to Lanka (modern-day Sri Lanka) to search for Sita, the wife of Rama, who has been abducted by the demon king Ravana.

***Plot Overview:***

1. **Introduction to Hanuman's Mission:** The book begins with the scene in Kishkindha, where Rama and Lakshmana are grieving the abduction of Sita by Ravana. After searching in vain, they seek help from the Vanara (monkey) army, led by Sugriva. Hanuman, a devoted and mighty figure among the vanaras, steps forward as the one to undertake the monumental task of finding Sita. He prepares to leap across the vast ocean to Lanka.
2. **Hanuman's Journey Across the Ocean:** After praying to Lord Rama and invoking his divine powers, Hanuman grows in size and strength. He takes a giant leap across the ocean, overcoming several obstacles along the way, including monsters and natural

challenges. This leap symbolizes the boundless potential that can be unleashed through faith and devotion.

3. **Hanuman Reaches Lanka:** Upon reaching Lanka, Hanuman surveys the city from a distance, marveling at its splendor but remaining focused on his mission. Disguising himself in a smaller form, Hanuman enters Ravana's city to find Sita. After a thorough search, he finally locates her in the Ashoka grove, where she is held captive by Ravana's forces, grieving for Rama.
4. **Hanuman Meets Sita:** Upon meeting Sita, Hanuman introduces himself as a messenger of Rama and reassures her that Rama is alive and will soon come to rescue her. Hanuman's message of hope revives Sita's spirits. He presents her with Rama's ring as proof of his authenticity. Hanuman also offers her the choice to accompany him back to Rama, but Sita, ever faithful to Rama, insists on waiting for him.
5. **Hanuman Confronts Ravana:** Hanuman's next challenge is to confront Ravana. After refusing to submit to Ravana's demands, Hanuman allows himself to be captured. He is brought before Ravana, who offers him wealth and power in exchange for betraying Rama. Hanuman, however, remains resolute in his loyalty to Rama. He shows Ravana the might of Rama by setting Lanka on fire with his burning tail.
6. **Hanuman Returns to Rama:** After burning part of Lanka, Hanuman escapes from the city, taking a piece of Sita's jewelry (her chudamani) as proof of having seen her. He returns to Rama with the news of Sita's location, and Rama and the vanara army prepare for battle against Ravana's forces.

### . Background and Setting the Stage

The events of the *Sundarakanda* unfold after the abduction of *Sita* by *Ravana*, the king of Lanka. *Rama*, the hero of the *Ramayana*, is devastated by the loss of his wife. With the help of his brother *Lakshmana* and their army of *Vanaras* (monkeys), Rama embarks on a search for Sita, but despite all efforts, the whereabouts of Sita remain unknown. The *Vanaras*, led by their king *Sugriva*, attempt various strategies to locate her, but no clues are found.

Amid this despair, the mighty and devoted *Hanuman*, the son of the wind god *Vayu*, steps forward to take on the challenging task of finding Sita. Hanuman is blessed with extraordinary powers, including the ability to change size, shape, and form at will, as well as immense strength and wisdom. He pledges his loyalty and dedication to Rama and volunteers to search for Sita across the vast ocean, despite the enormous distance between *India* and *Lanka*.

Hanuman is chosen for this critical mission not only because of his extraordinary strength but also due to his devotion to Rama, which is a recurring theme throughout the *Ramayana*. His selflessness, courage, and deep sense of duty become the focal point of the *Sundarakanda*.

---

## 2. Hanuman's Leap to Lanka

To reach Lanka, Hanuman faces a monumental challenge: crossing the vast ocean. The ocean is seen as a boundary, both physically and symbolically, representing the obstacles one must overcome to achieve greatness. The leap itself becomes a central metaphor in the *Ramayana*.

Hanuman decides to leap across the ocean to Lanka, the kingdom of Ravana, where Sita is held captive. With blessings from his father *Vayu* and divine powers, Hanuman grows to a gigantic size and prepares for his journey. Before embarking, Hanuman receives encouragement from the wise *Jambavan*, an elder member of the *Vanara* army, who reminds him of his true capabilities.

Hanuman first begins to grow in size and leaps into the air, crossing over the ocean. The ocean represents both a literal and figurative challenge in Hanuman's quest. This act of crossing the ocean is not just a physical feat but a testament to his deep faith in Rama and his own inner strength.

---

## 3. Overcoming Obstacles in the Ocean

### *Sursa – The Demoness*

Hanuman's journey is interrupted by a demoness named *Sursa*, sent by *Varuna*, the god of the sea. Sursa tries to prevent Hanuman from crossing by demanding that he pass through her wide-open mouth. Hanuman, knowing that Sursa is a divine being with power, grows large enough to fill the entire sky. He does this to show that he can conquer any obstacle but also to avoid confrontation. Sursa, realizing Hanuman's power, allows him to pass, and in doing so, symbolizes the overcoming of obstacles with intelligence and patience.

### *Simhika – The Sea Demon*

The next challenge Hanuman faces is *Simhika*, a giant demoness who lurks in the sea. She catches Hanuman by his shadow as he flies across the ocean. Hanuman, realizing the trick, dives deeper into the ocean and changes his form. He then overpowers the demoness, crushing her with his might. This episode underscores the importance of using both strength and wisdom to overcome obstacles. Hanuman's quick thinking and ability to adapt to various situations help him continue on his path.

## 4. Hanuman Reaches Lanka

After overcoming the challenges in the ocean, Hanuman finally arrives in Lanka. The sight of the city of Lanka leaves him awestruck, but his mission remains clear. He is determined to find Sita, and in doing so, he must first navigate the city and locate her.

Hanuman, upon entering Lanka, finds himself in a lush and beautiful garden known as the *Ashoka Vatika*. This garden is in the heart of Ravana's palace, and it is here that Sita is kept in

captivity. However, Hanuman is careful and cautious, as he is aware that Ravana's forces are on high alert. He blends into the surroundings, trying not to attract attention.

### 5. The Discovery of Sita

As Hanuman searches for Sita, he finds her in a sorrowful state, seated under a tree in the Ashoka Vatika. She is surrounded by demonesses and is in a state of deep grief due to her captivity. Hanuman, upon seeing her distress, approaches cautiously and watches her for a moment before deciding to reveal himself.

Sita is initially suspicious of Hanuman's identity, unsure of whether he is a messenger from Ravana or someone sent by Rama. Hanuman, recognizing her doubt, immediately presents Rama's signet ring to her. The sight of the ring confirms Hanuman's identity, and Sita's heart swells with emotion. This moment marks the first emotional meeting between Hanuman and Sita, and it is an essential turning point in the narrative.

Sita, overwhelmed with joy and sorrow, expresses her anguish at being separated from her husband. She also tells Hanuman of Ravana's relentless attempts to force her into marrying him. Hanuman reassures her that Rama is coming to rescue her. He promises her that her suffering will end soon, and urges her to be patient. Hanuman offers her Rama's message, telling her that he will soon defeat Ravana and bring her back.

In addition to conveying Rama's message, Hanuman also gives Sita a gift: a token of Rama's love. He gives her a jewel, a ring, and tells her that Rama will soon come to free her. Hanuman's message and his devotion to Rama provide Sita with the hope and strength to endure the trials of captivity.

### 6. The Confrontation with Ravana

Having located Sita and assured her of Rama's imminent rescue, Hanuman decides to confront Ravana. He enters the palace of Ravana, boldly declaring that Rama is a force of righteousness and that Ravana cannot escape the wrath of Rama's justice. Hanuman directly challenges Ravana's authority, stating that if Sita is not returned to Rama, Ravana will be destroyed.

Ravana, enraged by Hanuman's words, orders his soldiers to capture him. Hanuman allows himself to be captured, which is a strategic move. In Ravana's court, Hanuman boldly announces Rama's greatness and warns the demon king of the inevitable consequences of his actions. He tells Ravana that he will soon be overthrown by Rama, and Ravana's rule will end.

Despite his powerful words, Ravana does not listen. He orders Hanuman to be executed. However, Hanuman, with his divine powers, escapes from the bonds that hold him. Hanuman grows to a gigantic size and destroys much of Ravana's palace. He wreaks havoc in the city, symbolizing that Ravana's reign will soon be over. This destruction also serves as a divine warning to Ravana about the power of Rama.

Hanuman's bold escape also demonstrates the theme of good overcoming evil. Hanuman represents the ultimate force of righteousness, and his miraculous escape from Ravana's court signals the beginning of Ravana's downfall.

### 7. The Burning of Lanka

As part of his escape, Hanuman's tail is set on fire. Instead of being defeated, Hanuman uses this as an opportunity to create even more destruction. With his tail ablaze, he flies around the city, setting fire to Ravana's palaces and gardens. The flames that engulf Lanka serve as a divine prelude to Ravana's eventual destruction. The image of Hanuman flying through the city, setting it on fire, is symbolic of the doom that awaits Ravana.

Hanuman, with his tail still burning, finally shrinks to his original size and flies back to the Vanara army, leaving behind a Lanka in ruins. The destruction he causes becomes a symbol of the inevitability of Ravana's defeat.

### 8. Hanuman's Return to Rama

Hanuman returns to Rama's camp and is greeted as a hero. He presents Sita's message, along with the token of Rama's love. The news of Sita's location and the reassurance that she is alive brings immense relief to Rama and Lakshmana. The Vanara army, which had been growing increasingly desperate, now finds renewed hope and energy to face Ravana.

Hanuman's courage and devotion inspire Rama and his army. His return is not just a physical one but also a spiritual one, reinforcing the theme of devotion and the triumph of good over evil. Hanuman's unwavering loyalty to Rama becomes a central motif in the *Ramayana*, and his role in the *Sundarakanda* is one of the most celebrated in the entire epic.

### 9. Themes and Symbolism

The *Sundarakanda* is filled with profound themes and symbolism:

- **Devotion and Loyalty**: Hanuman's devotion to Rama is central to the *Sundarakanda*. His unwavering loyalty and willingness to sacrifice everything for his master symbolize the ideal relationship between a devotee and the divine.
- **Strength and Courage**: Hanuman's physical feats, such as leaping across the ocean, fighting demons, and causing destruction in Lanka, symbolize the importance of strength and courage in overcoming challenges. However, his strength is always guided by wisdom and devotion, making him a perfect embodiment of divine power.
- **Hope and Redemption**: The *Sundarakanda* is also about hope and redemption. Sita, who has been suffering in Ravana's captivity, is given hope through Hanuman's visit. His message provides her with the strength to endure, and it reaffirms the belief that righteousness will ultimately prevail.
- **Wisdom and Strategy**: Hanuman's intelligence, his ability to think strategically and adapt to circumstances, is a key element in the *Sundarakanda*. His dealings with Sursa,

Simhika, Ravana, and others show that wisdom is as important as strength in achieving success.

### Conclusion

The *Sundarakanda* is one of the most important books in the *Ramayana*. It is the story of Hanuman's devotion, courage, and intelligence, as well as his deep love and faith in Lord Rama. Through his journey to Lanka, Hanuman not only discovers Sita's whereabouts but also delivers a powerful message of hope and faith to both Rama and Sita. His bravery, strategic thinking, and immense strength lay the foundation for the ultimate rescue of Sita and the defeat of Ravana. The themes of devotion, strength, courage, wisdom, and hope are explored deeply in the *Sundarakanda*, making it one of the most cherished and inspirational sections of the *Ramayana*.

## 3.7 CHARACTERS

1. **Hanuman:** Hanuman is undoubtedly the central character of the *Sundarakanda* and the hero of the episode. He embodies the ideal devotee and hero in both physical and spiritual forms. Hanuman's character is marked by several key traits:
    - **Devotion (Bhakti):** His devotion to Rama is his defining characteristic. Everything he does, including his leap across the ocean and his subsequent journey, is driven by his deep love and loyalty to Rama. Hanuman's devotion is pure and selfless, and he takes no pleasure in his feats. He is humble and acknowledges that all his strength and abilities are gifts from Rama.
    - **Strength and Courage:** Hanuman's immense physical strength is symbolized by his ability to leap across the ocean and carry out feats that are beyond normal human capabilities. However, his courage is not just physical but also moral—he does not hesitate to defy Ravana, even when threatened with death.
    - **Wisdom and Strategy:** Hanuman is not just a warrior, but also a strategist and a wise figure. He is able to assess situations with clarity and tact, such as when he enters Lanka quietly and surveys the city before acting. His intellect is balanced by his divine powers, making him a perfect combination of wisdom and strength.
2. **Rama:** Though Rama is not physically present in *Sundarakanda*, his influence and presence are felt throughout. Rama represents the ideal of dharma (righteousness), and Hanuman's unwavering commitment to him highlights the centrality of righteousness and devotion in the text. Rama is the moral center, and Hanuman, by serving him, exemplifies what it means to live a life of virtue, loyalty, and sacrifice.
3. **Sita:** Sita's role in *Sundarakanda* is crucial. Though she is in captivity, her devotion to Rama remains steadfast. She represents the ideal of chastity, virtue, and patience. Sita's faith in Rama is unshakable, and when she learns that Rama is alive and coming for her, her hope is restored. Sita's character serves as an example of the power of faith, endurance, and suffering in the face of adversity.
4. **Ravana:** Ravana, the demon king, is the antagonist in the *Ramayana*. In *Sundarakanda*, he is portrayed as a powerful, proud ruler who is blind to the righteousness of his actions.

He represents **ego**, **pride**, and **adharma** (unrighteousness). Ravana offers Hanuman wealth and power in exchange for betrayal, showing his hubris and greed. Despite his intelligence and might, Ravana's failure to understand the divine law of dharma ultimately leads to his downfall.

5. **Sugriva and the Vanaras:** Sugriva, the king of the vanaras, and his army provide crucial support to Rama. The **vanaras** (monkey army) play a key role in the success of Hanuman's mission. They are brave and loyal, and their support, both in resources and manpower, will help Rama in his final battle against Ravana.

## 3.8 THEMES

*Sundarakanda* is one of the most vibrant and spiritually uplifting sections of the *Ramayana*, and it contains several prominent themes that resonate deeply within the epic. Through its portrayal of Hanuman's journey, it explores the power of devotion, courage, selfless service, and divine intervention, among other significant concepts. Here are the major themes found in *Sundarakanda*:

### 1. Devotion (Bhakti) and Faith

The most prominent theme in *Sundarakanda* is **devotion (bhakti)** to **Rama**. Hanuman's character is defined by his absolute, unwavering devotion to **Rama**. This devotion is not simply a form of emotional attachment but a powerful, spiritual force that shapes Hanuman's actions and enables him to perform extraordinary feats.

- **Hanuman's devotion to Rama** is the source of his physical and spiritual strength. He believes that **Rama is God**, and his every action, from leaping across the ocean to reassuring Sita, is done in the service of Rama. Hanuman is also a symbolic representation of the ideal devotee—humble, selfless, and ready to perform any task for the sake of his Lord.
- **Rama as the ideal object of devotion**: In *Sundarakanda*, Rama is portrayed as the epitome of **dharma** (righteousness), and Hanuman's devotion reflects the importance of adhering to the path of righteousness. Through Hanuman's actions, we see how devotion to a higher power can transcend ordinary human limitations and accomplish miraculous feats.
- The entire narrative also illustrates that **devotion leads to empowerment**. Hanuman's leap across the ocean and his capacity to burn Lanka with his tail are not just physical feats, but manifestations of his **spiritual power** derived from his devotion to Rama.

**Key Moments:**

- Hanuman growing in size and leaping across the ocean after invoking Rama's name.
- Hanuman's selfless service and the humility he displays in the face of extraordinary powers.

### 2. Courage and Heroism

Another important theme in *Sundarakanda* is **courage**—both physical and moral. Hanuman, although capable of immense power, consistently displays courage that transcends the mere physical realm.

- **Hanuman's bravery** is showcased in his willingness to face seemingly insurmountable odds. His decision to leap across the vast ocean to Lanka, despite the dangers, is symbolic of his courage in the face of adversity. He does not hesitate, even though the journey is perilous and involves encountering dangerous creatures and forces.
- When Hanuman is captured by Ravana's forces, his courage remains unshaken. He doesn't succumb to fear or intimidation, even when brought before Ravana. Instead, he boldly declares that he is a servant of Rama and will not deviate from his mission. His moral courage—the courage to stand up for righteousness and truth in the face of evil—is a central element of his heroism.

**Key Moments:**

- Hanuman's leap across the ocean, despite the potential dangers.
- Hanuman boldly refusing to be swayed by Ravana's promises of wealth and power.
- Hanuman setting Lanka ablaze with his burning tail, a bold display of courage against Ravana's evil empire.

## 3. Divine Intervention and the Power of Faith

*Sundarakanda* illustrates the theme of divine intervention—how Hanuman's actions are not just guided by his own strength but by the intervention of divine forces. The entire story is a testament to the idea that faith in God can lead to miraculous outcomes, and this theme aligns closely with the Hindu concept of karma and dharma.

- Hanuman's leap across the ocean, his growing size, and the success of his mission are made possible through divine grace. Hanuman's power is a reflection of his divine origin as the son of Vayu (the wind god), and his actions are guided by the will of Rama (an incarnation of Vishnu).
- Hanuman's trust in divine support: As Hanuman chants Rama's name, he becomes empowered, symbolizing the idea that faith in the divine is the source of true power. This reflects a spiritual reality—that devotion can move mountains (or oceans) and achieve what is otherwise impossible.

**Key Moments:**

- Hanuman praying to Rama before beginning his journey and invoking divine strength.
- The supernatural strength that Hanuman gains from his faith and devotion.
- Hanuman's return to Rama with the chudamani (Sita's hair ornament) as evidence of his success.

## 4. Selfless Service (Seva) and Humility

A crucial theme in *Sundarakanda* is selfless service (seva), particularly exemplified by Hanuman's actions. Hanuman is not motivated by personal gain, but purely by the desire to serve Rama and help restore righteousness.

- Hanuman's service is completely selfless. He does not seek any reward for his actions but only the welfare of Rama and Sita. His humble service is in contrast to Ravana's ego and pride.
- Hanuman is often described as the embodiment of humility. Despite being gifted with immense power, he never boasts or shows arrogance. He remains completely devoted to Rama's cause and is willing to humble himself for the greater good. Even in his battle with Ravana, Hanuman's goal is not to destroy his opponent out of personal animosity, but to support Rama's quest to rescue Sita.

**Key Moments:**

- Hanuman's acceptance of his role as a humble servant of Rama, always referring to himself as Rama's das (servant).
- Hanuman's refusal to accept Ravana's temptations, showing that his service to Rama is not for personal gain.

## 5. The Triumph of Good over Evil

While *Sundarakanda* is more focused on Hanuman's heroism and devotion, the theme of good versus evil is pervasive throughout the section. Hanuman's actions set the stage for the eventual victory of Rama over Ravana, as he brings hope to Sita and shows that Rama's righteous cause will prevail.

- The battle between Rama (the ideal king and hero) and Ravana (the demon king and abductor of Sita) is the ultimate clash between dharma (righteousness) and adharma (unrighteousness). The hope for victory is rekindled in this part of the epic, particularly through Hanuman's unwavering faith and actions.
- Ravana, with his immense power, symbolizes adversity and ego. However, despite his power, he is eventually brought low by Hanuman's courage and Rama's divine intervention, reinforcing the idea that good will always triumph over evil.

**Key Moments:**

- Hanuman's setting Lanka ablaze is symbolic of the eventual destruction of Ravana's evil empire.
- Hanuman's victory in retrieving Sita's chudamani gives hope to Rama, signaling that the forces of good are gathering strength.

## 6. The Power of Communication and the Messenger's Role

A significant part of the *Sundarakanda* is Hanuman's role as a **messenger** (duta) of **Rama**. The theme of communication, particularly the act of delivering a message of hope, is key to this Kanda.

- Hanuman's message to Sita: Hanuman reassures Sita that Rama is alive and will come to rescue her. His words revive Sita's spirit, giving her the strength to endure captivity. Hanuman's role as a messenger of hope and faith helps bridge the emotional and psychological gap between Sita and Rama.
- The importance of communication: Hanuman's journey to Lanka and his ability to relay information about Sita's captivity to Rama underscores the importance of clear and effective communication in the story of the *Ramayana*. It is through his message that Rama's plans to rescue Sita are set into motion, and the path to victory is laid.

**Key Moments:**

- Hanuman's initial meeting with Sita, where he assures her of Rama's wellbeing.
- The transmission of the **chudamani** from Sita to Rama, which serves as proof of her safety and Hanuman's success.

## 7. Spiritual and Moral Growth

Throughout *Sundarakanda*, spiritual growth plays a subtle yet important role. Hanuman's journey symbolizes a deeper quest for spiritual realization. His devotion is the foundation of his growth, and through this devotion, he attains supreme power and wisdom.

- Hanuman's growth is not only physical but also spiritual. His journey from being an energetic monkey to the divine messenger of Rama mirrors the path of a devotee who grows in wisdom, strength, and grace through selfless service and devotion.
- Rama's influence is another key aspect—Hanuman's actions are a direct reflection of Rama's moral, spiritual, and philosophical values.

## 3.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

**1. Literary Excellence:**

- *Sundarakanda* is one of the most poetically rich sections of the *Ramayana*, and it contains many moments of profound literary beauty. Valmiki's mastery of Sanskrit poetry is evident in his use of metaphors, similes, and rhythmic patterns. For instance, Hanuman's leap across the ocean is often described using cosmic imagery, emphasizing his divine power and devotion.
- Valmiki's use of the shloka (metrical verse) is a key element of the epic's literary quality. His vivid descriptions, from the grandeur of Lanka to Hanuman's fiery tail setting the city ablaze, are filled with imagery that has stood the test of time.

**2. Symbolism:**

- *Sundarakanda* is rich in symbolism, particularly the leap across the ocean. The ocean represents the worldly challenges, and Hanuman's leap symbolizes the crossing of barriers to achieve spiritual and personal growth. The Ashoka grove where Sita is held is symbolic of the suffering endured by those in exile or captivity, but it also holds the hope of redemption and reunion.
- Hanuman's tail, which burns Lanka, symbolizes the destructive force of dharma against the forces of evil (Ravana and his demons).

**3. Moral and Philosophical Insights:**

- At its heart, *Sundarakanda* teaches the power of devotion and loyalty. Hanuman's unshakeable faith in Rama and his selfless actions highlight the path of bhakti (devotion) as the highest ideal.
- The episode also reinforces the idea that goodness (represented by Rama and Hanuman) will always triumph over evil (represented by Ravana). Hanuman's victory over obstacles, and Ravana's eventual downfall, underscores the ultimate victory of righteousness.

**4. Impact on Indian Culture:**

- *Sundarakanda* has had a profound impact on Indian religion, literature, and culture. Hanuman, the hero of the Kanda, is worshipped as a symbol of strength, devotion, and courage. The story has inspired countless works of art, dance, drama, and literature. Hanuman's character is celebrated in temples, festivals, and rituals across India and beyond.

## 3.10 SUMMARY

*Sundarakanda*, the fifth book of the *Ramayana*, narrates the heroic journey of Hanuman as he leaps across the ocean to Lanka to search for Sita, the wife of Rama, who has been abducted by the demon king Ravana. The book highlights Hanuman's devotion, strength, courage, and wisdom as he overcomes obstacles, locates Sita in captivity, reassures her with Rama's message, and confronts Ravana. After burning part of Lanka with his tail and escaping, Hanuman returns to Rama with the news of Sita's whereabouts and the chudamani (a piece of jewelry from Sita as proof of her presence). This sets the stage for the final battle between Rama and Ravana, symbolizing the victory of good over evil.

## 3.11 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. **Character Role-Play:**
    - Divide students into groups, assigning each group a character (e.g., Hanuman, Sita, Rama, Ravana, etc.). Ask them to act out key scenes from *Sundarakanda*, focusing on Hanuman's leap across the ocean, his conversation with Sita, and his encounter with Ravana. This will help students understand the emotions, motivations, and moral values of each character.
2. **Creative Writing:**

- Have students write a first-person narrative from Hanuman's perspective, describing his feelings as he embarks on his journey to Lanka, meets Sita, and returns to Rama. This will encourage empathy and a deeper understanding of Hanuman's devotion and courage.

3. **Art Activity - Drawing or Collage:**
   - Ask students to create a collage or drawing depicting Hanuman's journey, his leap across the ocean, or his meeting with Sita. Encourage them to incorporate symbolic elements like Hanuman's tail, the burning of Lanka, or the ocean.
4. **Debate or Discussion:**
   - Organize a class debate on the importance of devotion and selfless service as exemplified by Hanuman. Discuss how these values can be applied in real life.
5. **Symbolism Exploration:**
   - Have students research and present on the symbolism of key elements in *Sundarakanda* (such as Hanuman's leap, his tail, or the chudamani). This can be an insightful exploration of how mythology uses symbols to convey spiritual and moral lessons.

## 3.12 GLOSSARY

1. **Hanuman** – The son of Vayu (the wind god), a divine monkey and loyal servant of **Rama**, known for his strength, wisdom, and devotion.
2. **Sundarakanda** – The fifth book (Kanda) of the *Ramayana*, primarily focusing on Hanuman's heroic journey.
3. **Rama** – The protagonist of the *Ramayana*, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, symbolizing righteousness (dharma).
4. **Sita** – The wife of Rama, whose abduction by Ravana sets the stage for the events of the *Ramayana*.
5. **Ravana** – The demon king of Lanka, who abducts Sita, triggering the conflict of the epic.
6. **Chudamani** – A piece of jewelry belonging to Sita, which Hanuman takes as evidence to reassure Rama of her well-being.
7. **Dharma** – Righteousness or moral duty, a key concept in Hindu philosophy, representing virtuous living.
8. **Adharma** – The opposite of dharma, meaning unrighteousness or evil, as exemplified by Ravana.
9. **Vanaras** – The monkey people who are allies of Rama, led by Sugriva, and are part of the army that helps Rama in his war against Ravana.
10. **Bhakti** – Devotion, particularly to a deity, which is a central theme in *Sundarakanda* through Hanuman's devotion to Rama.
11. **Leela** – Divine play or action, often used to describe the miraculous acts of gods, such as Hanuman's leap or burning of Lanka.
12. **Lanka** – The city and kingdom of Ravana, located across the ocean, where Sita is held captive.
13. **Vayu** – The wind god, Hanuman's father, who grants Hanuman his extraordinary powers.

## 3.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Who is the main character in the Sundarkand?
2. What task does Hanuman undertake in the Sundarkand?
3 What is the significance of Hanuman's meeting with Sita?
4 How does Hanuman show his strength in the Sundarkand?
5 What happens after Hanuman's meeting with Ravana in the Sundarkand?

**Answer**: 1 The main character in the Sundarkand is **Hanuman**, the monkey god and loyal devotee of Lord Rama. In this chapter, Hanuman embarks on a journey to Lanka to find Sita, who has been abducted by Ravana.

**Answer**: 2 Hanuman's task in the Sundarkand is to **find Sita**, Lord Rama's wife, in Lanka and bring back news of her well-being. He also demonstrates his strength by flying across the ocean to reach Lanka.

**Answer**:3 Hanuman's meeting with Sita is significant because it provides proof that Sita is alive and well, though captive in Lanka. Hanuman reassures her that Rama will come to rescue her, and he gives her Rama's ring as a token of identification.

**Answer**: 4 Hanuman demonstrates his immense strength when he leaps across the ocean to reach Lanka. Later, when Ravana's soldiers try to capture him, Hanuman grows in size and breaks free, showing both his physical power and divine abilities.

**Answer**:5 After meeting Sita, Hanuman is captured by Ravana's forces. However, he uses his powers to escape and destroys parts of Ravana's palace. He then returns to Rama with the news of Sita's whereabouts, further bolstering the morale of Rama and his army.

## 3.14 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS

1. **Valmiki, R. (2008).** *Ramayana* (C. K. G. Menon, Trans.). Penguin Books India.
    - This is a complete English translation of the *Ramayana* by Valmiki, which includes the Sundarakanda. The translation by C.K.G. Menon offers an accessible reading of the epic.

- **Chakrabarty, D. (2019).** *Ramayana: The Myth of a Heroic Age*. Oxford University Press.
    - Chakrabarty delves into the historical, cultural, and political layers of the *Ramayana*, focusing on the impact of the *Sundarkand* episode in shaping the narrative of heroism.
- **Narasimhan, R. (2020).** *Ravanasura: The Demon King in Indian Epic Literature*. Routledge.

- This book provides an in-depth analysis of the character of Ravana, one of the key figures in *Sundarkand*, examining how his role in the *Ramayana* has been understood and interpreted across centuries.

- **Sharma, A. (2021).** *The Ramayana: A New Translation*. Penguin India.

  - A modern, accessible translation of the *Ramayana*, with attention to its cultural, religious, and literary significance in South Asia. This book may include references to *Sundarkand* as part of the larger epic.

- **Hawley, J. S. (2021).** *The Ramayana Reconsidered: A Postcolonial Reading of Valmiki's Epic*. Oxford University Press.

  - Hawley explores the *Ramayana* from a postcolonial perspective, examining the ways in which stories like *Sundarkand* can be read through the lens of contemporary issues like identity, colonialism, and nationalism.

- **Mishra, V. (2022).** *Reading the Ramayana: Cultural and Literary Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.

  - This volume examines how various parts of the *Ramayana*, including the *Sundarkand*, are interpreted in different cultural and literary contexts, focusing on themes of devotion, heroism, and duty.

- **Rao, P. (2022).** *Dharma and Devotion in the Ramayana: A Focus on Sundarkand*. Indian Journal of Religious Studies, 18(3), 45-63.

  - A journal article focusing specifically on the themes of dharma (righteousness) and devotion as depicted in *Sundarkand*, particularly the character of Hanuman and his role in the larger narrative of the *Ramayana*.

- **Ramanujan, A. K. (2023).** *Ramayana and Beyond: Indian Epics and Their Modern Interpretations*. HarperCollins.

  - This collection brings together new critical perspectives on the *Ramayana*, including the importance of the *Sundarkand* and its themes of courage, devotion, and dharma.

  - A journal article focusing specifically on the themes of dharma (righteousness) and devotion as depicted in *Sundarkand*, particularly the character of Hanuman and his role in the larger narrative of the *Ramayana*.


## 3.15 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1 What was the main task given to Hanuman in *Sundarakanda*?

2 How did Hanuman prepare for his journey to Lanka? What were his challenges during the journey?
3 How did Hanuman reassure Sita when he found her in Lanka?
4 What was the significance of Hanuman burning Lanka with his tail?
5 What role did the **c**hudamani (Sita's ornament) play in *Sundarakanda*?

# BLOCK- II

# UNIT – 4
# NARRATIVE POETRY

## STRUCTURE



## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Narrative poetry is a form of poetry that tells a story. Unlike lyric poetry, which often expresses personal emotions or thoughts, narrative poetry focuses on events, characters, and plot. It combines elements of both poetry and storytelling, using meter, rhyme, and other poetic devices to convey a tale. Narrative poems often feature a clear structure with a beginning, middle, and end, much like a short story or novel, but in verse form.

Some well-known examples of narrative poetry include epic poems like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer, as well as works like *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. These poems are typically longer and may involve complex plots, multiple characters, and themes that explore universal human experiences, such as love, loss, conflict, or triumph.

## 4.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. To Develop a Cohesive Storyline
2. To Utilize Poetic Devices Effectively
3. To Reflect and Comment on Society or Culture
4. To Foster Reader Engagement

5. To Maintain Artistic Integrity

## 4.3 ABOUT NARRATIVE POETRY

The narrative poem is a form of poetry that is used to tell a story. The poet combines elements of storytelling—like plot, setting, and characters—with elements of poetry, such as form, meter, rhyme, and poetic devices. Narrative poem definition: a form of literature that combines the elements of poetry with the elements of storytelling.

The narrative poem is the oldest form of poetry, and one of the oldest forms of literature. Epics like *The Iliad and the Odyssey*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *The Mahabharata* are ancient and long narrative poem examples. Long before the written word and the invention of mass publishing, storytellers told their stories in verse, and have done so since (at least) 2,100 B.C.

There are several reasons for this, including the challenge of writing in verse and the entertainment value of listening to stories that use meter and rhyme. But the main reason is that those elements served as guideposts for the storyteller. By following the patterns of rhyme and syllabic stress, the storyteller could keep up with which line comes next, so these devices served both mnemonic and entertainment purposes.

Today, the narrative poem has evolved to accommodate the storytelling needs of poets, without (necessarily) the constraints of meter and rhyme scheme. We'll take a look at some contemporary narrative poems later, charting the evolution of this form against its ancient backgrounds.

## 4.4 TYPES OF NARRATIVE POETRY

Across several millennia of literature, there are a few different types of narrative poetry that you can try your hand in. While each type varies in style, form, and intent, they all share the same goal of telling great stories through the power of verse.

The 5 types of narrative poetry include:

### 1. TYPES OF NARRATIVE POETRY: THE EPIC

The epic poem is a long narrative poem that usually recounts stories of heroism.
The protagonists of epic poems are often kings, knights, heroes, or else extraordinary people who change the fate of history.

In ancient times, epic poetry primarily dealt with the gods, with war, or with other events which define a people's nationality. The *Mahabharata*, for example, tells a story of two groups of cousins fighting against each other to determine the successors of the Hastinapura throne, in Ancient India. Interwoven through this story are tales of morality, national identity, and the gods, culminating in a sprawling epic which, to this day, influences certain aspects of Indian culture.

More recently, the story of *Beowulf* doesn't contribute quite so much to England's nationalism, but it does offer a window into the language, culture, and ideologies of the Middle Ages.

There are few epic poems in today's literary landscape, partially because the epic poem fulfilled cultural needs of the past that aren't germane to contemporary society. Examples of epic poetry

include *The Mahabharata*, *Beowulf*, *The Aeneid and the Odyssey*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* and *The Shahnameh*, among many others.

## 2. TYPES OF NARRATIVE POETRY: THE BALLAD

Among narrative poems, the ballad is more modern than most forms, though it's evolved quite a bit over several centuries. Originating in Europe, likely England, the late Middle Ages, ballads were narrative poems set to music, intended to accompany dances and entertain large audiences. Similar to epics, the narratives in ballads were about extraordinary individuals, such as Robin Hood.

Much later, in the 19th century, the ballad form was adopted by Romantic and Victorian-era poets who admired the folksy yet literary attributes of ballad poetry. Because this evolution spans centuries, the meter and topicality of ballad poetry varies, but most ballads were intended to tell stories and entertain.

Ballads aren't nearly as popular in the 21st century, but some great 19th century ballads include *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Oscar Wilde.

## 3. TYPES OF NARRATIVE POETRY: THE IDYLL

The word "idyllic" describes something reminiscent of rural and pastoral life. Idyll poems, thus, are narrative poems which celebrate, describe, and explore rustic life.

Idyllic poetry is typically short, but it still builds a narrative, and often a group of idylls will be strung together to form a larger story. For example, 12 idylls together form Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which retells the story of King Arthur, his love for Guinevere, and the story of his kingdom.

Perhaps a better example, stylistically, is Friedrich Nietzsche's *Idylls from Messina*. These 8 poems describe different facets of the idyllic life as Nietzsche observed while writing in Sicily. Although the writing is a bit more lyrical than most idylls (and although Nietzsche was not a poet by trade), the simplistic, storytelling style of idyllic poetry can be observed in the speaker's word choice and simple rhyme schemes.

## 4. TYPES OF NARRATIVE POETRY: THE LAY

The lay is a somewhat long narrative poem that, like other forms of poetry, evolved through several centuries. The earliest recorded lay poems were written by Marie de France, a French woman, and lays were often stories of romance, chivalry, and emotional experiences.

Lay poetry was typically written in octosyllabic verse, meaning each line had 8 syllables. Before Marie de France's time, some Celtic poetry was lay and involved aspects of Celtic theology, telling stories of fairies and the supernatural. Lay poems always rhyme, and rarely exceed 1,000 lines.

Also spelled "lai," lay poetry is mostly confined to the Middle Ages, as few poets dabbled in the form outside of Middle English. *The Canterbury Tales* includes instances of lay, namely The Franklin's Tale, which explores themes of truth and magnanimity.

## 5. TYPES OF NARRATIVE POETRY: THE NOVEL IN VERSE

Among contemporary narrative poems, the novel in verse rules. A verse novel is exactly what it sounds like: a novel-length story told through lines of poetry, not prose. (If you're not sure about the distinction between the two, take a look at our article on Prose Vs Poetry.)

Because a novel in verse is largely experimental, there are no solid rules for how to write one. However, many verse novels tend to have first person narrators, short chapters, and non-linear storytelling. Additionally, verse novels emphasize internal dialogue and emotions, sometimes employing stream-of-consciousness techniques.

The novel in verse is rising in prominence among several age groups. (We even offer a course on Crafting the Poetry Novel for Young Adults!)

Some examples of these long narrative poems include: *Autobiography of Red* by Anne Carson, *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo, *Omeros* by David Walcott, *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai, and *Dreaming of You* by Melissa Lozada-Oliva.

## 4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVE POETRY

What do these different types of narrative poetry have in common? The characteristics of narrative poetry include:

- **An emphasis on storytelling:** narrative poems convey plot, setting, characters, and other key elements of stories.
- **Experimental language:** the unexpected, experimental word choice in narrative poems should surprise, delight, awe, transfix, move, inspire, and/or captivate the reader.
- **Non-linear story structure:** narrative poems rarely follow a single narrative thread or linear structure. These poems might jump forward or backwards in time, start in the middle, or trace completely disparate events before stitching them into one unified story.
- **Contemporaneous forms:** you may have noticed that no two types of narrative poetry are written in the same way. Each has its own form, and that form is dependent on the poem's story, the year it was written, and the region it was written in. Contemporary narrative poems tend to be free verse.
- **Mythological elements:** Most of the narrative poetry written in antiquity dwelled on mythology. Even some contemporary examples, like Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, is a retelling of Greek myth, though modern day verse novels aren't uniformly interested in myth.
- **Internal characterization:** Many narrative poems focus on the internal. The poetic language of the form allows writers to capture thoughts, feelings, and internal challenges that prose might not properly capture. Modern novels in verse are usually told from the 1st person, or from a very limited 3rd person point of view.

## 4.6 SUMMARY

Narrative poetry is an ancient and vital form of expression that combines the storytelling power of prose with the lyrical beauty of poetry. Its ability to convey tales of heroism, love, tragedy, and moral lessons has ensured its place in the literary canon, from ancient epics to modern verse novels. Whether short or long, a narrative poem's power lies in its ability to weave story and emotion into a captivating poetic form.

## 4.7 LESSON END ACTIVITY

**Activity 1: Create Your Own Narrative Poem**

**Instructions**:

1. **Choose a Story**: Select an event, personal experience, or a story from mythology, history, or folklore that you find interesting.
2. **Plan Your Narrative**: Think about the main elements of the story, including the setting, characters, plot, conflict, and resolution.
3. **Write Your Poem**: Using the traditional structure of a narrative poem, write a poem that tells the story. Ensure that your poem includes:
    - **A Clear Narrative Arc**: Introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
    - **Dialogue**: Include conversations between characters if possible.
    - **Imagery**: Use vivid descriptions to create a strong sense of atmosphere or action.
    - **A Consistent Rhythm**: You can choose a specific meter, such as iambic pentameter or a more free-form structure.
4. **Length**: Your poem should be at least 12-20 lines long.

- The story of a brave knight saving a village.
- A tale of an enchanted forest and its magical creatures.
- A family heirloom that holds a secret from the past.

**Activity 2: Narrative Poem Analysis**

**Instructions**:

1. **Select a Narrative Poem**: Choose a well-known narrative poem such as "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, or "The Odyssey" by Homer (or any shorter excerpt).
2. **Answer the Following Questions**:
    - What is the central conflict in the poem? (Is it internal or external?)
    - What is the mood of the poem, and how does the poet create that mood?
    - Who are the main characters, and what are their motivations?
    - How does the poet use rhyme and meter to enhance the storytelling?
    - What is the resolution or conclusion of the poem?

3. **Discussion**: Pair up with a classmate and discuss your answers. Together, compare your insights and deepen your understanding of the narrative structure and poetic techniques used.

## 4.8 GLOSSARY

 **Narrative Poetry**: A genre of poetry that tells a story, often involving characters, a plot, and a setting. Unlike other forms of poetry that focus primarily on emotions or ideas, narrative poems aim to narrate a sequence of events.

 **Poem**: A literary work written in verse, often utilizing rhythmic and sound patterns, vivid imagery, and figurative language.

 **Plot**: The sequence of events that unfold in a narrative poem. It usually follows a structure that includes the introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

 **Setting**: The time, place, and circumstances in which the story occurs. The setting helps establish the mood and tone of the narrative.

 **Character**: The individuals (human, animal, or even abstract) involved in the narrative of the poem. Characters drive the plot and are often depicted with personal traits and motivations.

 **Narrator**: The voice that tells the story in a narrative poem. The narrator could be a character within the poem (first-person narrator) or an outside observer (third-person narrator).

 **Conflict**: The central challenge or problem in the story, which propels the action of the narrative. Conflicts can be internal (within a character's mind) or external (between characters or between a character and outside forces).

 **Resolution**: The conclusion of the poem where the conflict is resolved or the story comes to an end. It brings closure to the narrative.

## 4.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1.What is narrative poetry, and how does it differ from other types of poetry?

2. What are the key elements of a narrative poem?

3. How is rhyme used in narrative poetry?

4. What is the difference between a ballad and an epic in narrative poetry?

5. What role does imagery play in narrative poetry?

**Answer**: 1 Narrative poetry is a form of poetry that tells a story, featuring characters, a plot, and a setting. Unlike other forms of poetry, such as lyric or free verse poetry, which focus on emotions, thoughts, or abstract ideas, narrative poetry is structured to present a sequence of events with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

**Answer**: 2 The key elements of a narrative poem are:

- Plot: The sequence of events that make up the story.
- Characters: The people or entities that take part in the action.
- Setting: The time and place where the story occurs.
- Conflict: The central challenge or problem faced by the characters.
- Resolution: The conclusion of the story, where the conflict is resolved.
- Narrator: The voice that tells the story.

**Answer**:3 Rhyme in narrative poetry is often used to create rhythm and musicality, making the poem more engaging and memorable. It helps to structure the poem, often through regular rhyme schemes (e.g., ABAB or AABB), and can emphasize important moments in the story. However, some narrative poems, particularly modern ones, may not follow strict rhyme schemes and may instead focus on free verse or other rhythmic patterns.

**Answer**: 4

- **Ballad**: A type of narrative poem that is usually short, often tells a story of love, tragedy, or adventure, and is written in simple language and quatrains (four-line stanzas). Ballads often have a straightforward narrative and are passed down through oral tradition.
- **Epic**: A much longer narrative poem, typically detailing the heroic deeds of a central character, often with grand themes of mythology, history, or culture. Epics, like *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*, are usually written in a formal, elevated style and often involve supernatural elements.

**Answer**: 5 Imagery in narrative poetry is used to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind, making the story more immersive and engaging. By appealing to the senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell), imagery helps to set the scene, evoke emotions, and deepen the meaning of the poem. It allows the reader to experience the events of the narrative in a more direct and emotional way.

## 4.10 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Chaucer, G. (2006).** *The Canterbury Tales* (R. T. Jones, Ed.). Penguin Classics.

  A collection of 24 stories told by a diverse group of pilgrims journeying to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury, this work is one of the earliest examples of English narrative poetry.

- **Holland, J. (2020).** *The art of narrative poetry: Tradition and innovation in contemporary verse*. Oxford University Press.

Holland explores how narrative poetry has evolved in the 21st century, examining the balance between traditional forms and modern approaches to storytelling.

- **Smith, L. R. (2021).** *Narrative voices: The power of storytelling in modern narrative poetry*. Routledge.

  This book delves into the different narrative voices used in contemporary poetry, looking at their psychological and emotional effects on readers.

- **Williams, E. P. (2022).** *Poetry in motion: Narrative strategies in contemporary verse*. Cambridge University Press.

  Williams investigates various narrative strategies used by contemporary poets, analyzing how they blend personal and collective histories into compelling poetic narratives.

- **Parker, A. S. (2023).** *Epic or lyric? The future of narrative poetry*. University of Chicago Press.

  Parker looks at the shifting boundaries between the epic and lyric traditions in narrative poetry, considering how new poets are challenging these forms.

## 4.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

**1.** What distinguishes narrative poetry from other types of poetry, such as lyric poetry or free verse?

**2.** How does the structure of a narrative poem, including plot and character development, enhance the storytelling?

**3.** What role does the narrator play in a narrative poem, and how can a poem's narrator influence the reader's understanding of the story?

**4.** How does rhyme, meter, and rhythm contribute to the effectiveness of a narrative poem? Provide examples of how these elements might enhance the emotional impact or flow of the story.

**5.** In what ways do narrative poems explore themes of heroism, love, or morality? Can you identify specific examples of these themes in well-known narrative poems?

# UNIT – 5
# GEOFREY CHAUCER

## STRUCTURE



## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The **Canterbury Tales** is a famous collection of stories written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the late 14th century. It is considered one of the most important works of English literature. The tales are presented as a series of stories told by a group of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury, a journey that was a popular religious pilgrimage at the time.

The structure of *The Canterbury Tales* is framed around a storytelling contest. As the pilgrims travel, each of them is asked to tell a story to entertain the group. The stories cover a wide range of topics, from romance and adventure to moral lessons, religious satire, and social commentary. Through these tales, Chaucer offers a detailed and often humorous portrayal of medieval society, showcasing a variety of characters from different walks of life, including knights, priests, merchants, women, and peasants.

Chaucer uses a variety of literary genres in his tales, including fables, allegories, and sermons, all told with wit and irony. Some of the best-known stories in the collection include "The Knight's Tale," "The Miller's Tale," "The Wife of Bath's Tale," and "The Pardoner's Tale." Each character's story reflects their individual personality, social status, and views, making *The Canterbury Tales* not only an engaging collection of stories but also a sharp commentary on the complexities of human nature and society.

The language used in *The Canterbury Tales* is Middle English, which may be challenging to modern readers, but Chaucer's vivid storytelling, rich characterization, and innovative use of language have earned it a lasting place in the literary canon. The work provides insights into the medieval period while remaining relevant to contemporary readers due to its timeless themes and universal appeal

## 5.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the social, historical, and cultural context of 14th-century England as reflected in *The Canterbury Tales*.
2. Understand the variety of narrative techniques used by Chaucer, including the use of different genres and character perspectives.
3. Understand the themes of social class, morality, and human nature presented through the tales in *The Canterbury Tales*.
4. Understand the role of irony, satire, and humor in Chaucer's portrayal of medieval society.
5. Understand the character development in *The Canterbury Tales* and how they reflect the complexities of human nature.
6. Understand the structure and significance of the frame narrative in *The Canterbury Tales*.
7. Understand the concept of pilgrimage in *The Canterbury Tales* and its symbolic meanings.
8. Understand the moral lessons and values expressed in the various tales, including issues of greed, honesty, and love.

## 5.3 BIOGRAPHY

### Geoffrey Chaucer: Detailed Biography

**Full Name**: Geoffrey Chaucer
**Born**: c. 1343 (Exact date unknown, typically considered to be around 1343)
**Died**: October 25, 1400
**Nationality**: English
**Occupation**: Poet, Philosopher, Civil Servant, Diplomat
**Notable Works**: *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Book of the Duchess*, *Parliament of Fowls*, *The House of Fame*

### Early Life and Background

Geoffrey Chaucer was born into a middle-class family in London around 1343, though the exact date is not certain. He belonged to the family of a prosperous wine merchant, and his father, John Chaucer, was a successful merchant who served as a deputy to the king's butler. Chaucer's early life suggests he had a relatively comfortable upbringing, although not noble. He was the son of a successful middle-class family with connections to the royal court.

His birthdate is generally estimated to be around 1343, and he was likely baptized on the same day, given the common practices of the time. Chaucer came from a family of wine merchants, so he would have grown up familiar with the business world.

It is believed that Chaucer attended the **St. Paul's Cathedral School** in London, where he would have received a basic education in Latin, rhetoric, and philosophy. Later, he was sent to the **Court of King Edward III**, where he would have had exposure to courtly life and the royal circle. His connections at court were instrumental in his rise to prominence.

## Education and Early Career

Chaucer's education and early career are somewhat unclear, but he seems to have received an education that equipped him for work in government service. By the late 1350s, Chaucer had become involved in the royal court. Some sources suggest he attended **Oxford University** or was trained as a lawyer, though definitive evidence is scarce.

In the 1350s, Chaucer began to make a name for himself in royal service. He worked as a page and later as a **royal squire** in the service of the **Countess of Ulster**, the wife of Prince Lionel, son of King Edward III. In this capacity, Chaucer was exposed to the nobility and perhaps first learned the intricacies of courtly life, an experience that would deeply influence his writing.

In 1367, Chaucer was appointed as a **comptroller of customs** for the port of London, a prestigious position that allowed him to gain access to the wealth and political power of the English court. He was also sent on diplomatic missions to France, Italy, and Flanders, where he would have encountered various forms of literature and culture that would shape his later works.

Chaucer's involvement in diplomatic affairs gave him an opportunity to mingle with influential people across Europe. His travels to Italy are particularly significant as they introduced him to the works of Italian poets such as **Dante Alighieri**, **Petrarch**, and **Boccaccio**, whose works influenced his own writing, particularly in terms of narrative structure and style.

## Literary Career

Chaucer began writing poetry in the 1370s and 1380s, a time when English literature was undergoing significant changes. English was beginning to replace Latin as the language of literature, and Chaucer played a crucial role in elevating English as a language of literary prestige.

His **early works** show a strong influence of French and Italian poetic traditions. His first major poem, *The Book of the Duchess* (c. 1369), is an allegorical dream vision that explores the theme of grief and loss. The poem is thought to have been written for John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, in response to the death of his first wife, Blanche of Lancaster.

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385), a long narrative poem based on **Boccaccio's "Filostrato"**, is considered one of his greatest works. The poem deals with the tragic love story of Troilus, a Trojan prince, and Criseyde, a woman caught between love and loyalty. It is one of

the earliest examples of the **courtly love** tradition in English literature, demonstrating Chaucer's mastery of the narrative poem form.

In the late 1380s, Chaucer began working on his most famous work, *The Canterbury Tales*, which he began writing around 1387 and continued to work on until his death in 1400.

## The Canterbury Tales

**The Canterbury Tales** is Chaucer's magnum opus and is often considered one of the greatest works of English literature. The collection consists of **24 stories** told by a diverse group of pilgrims on their journey to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The pilgrims come from all walks of life, including a knight, a miller, a merchant, a clerk, a nun, and a pardoner, each of whom tells a story that reflects their personality and social position.

The tales range from **romantic and chivalric stories** to **fables and satirical narratives**, and the pilgrims themselves represent a cross-section of medieval society. Chaucer uses this wide variety of characters and stories to comment on social, political, and religious issues of the time, often with humor and irony.

The work is also notable for its use of the **English vernacular**, making it accessible to a wider audience than the Latin and French texts of the time. Chaucer's language, now known as Middle English, was still evolving, and *The Canterbury Tales* played a significant role in establishing English as a literary language.

Though Chaucer never finished the work, and many of the tales exist only in fragments, *The Canterbury Tales* remains one of the most important and influential works in English literature.

## Later Life and Death

In his later years, Chaucer continued to serve the English crown in various administrative roles, including as a **Justice of the Peace**, **Member of Parliament**, and **Clerk of the King's Works**. His continued involvement in government and diplomacy likely afforded him a comfortable life, but his literary reputation did not reach full recognition until after his death.

Chaucer died on **October 25, 1400**, and was buried in **Westminster Abbey**, where he is interred in the **Poets' Corner**, a place reserved for notable English writers. His grave remains a site of homage for many who consider him the "Father of English Literature."

## Legacy

Geoffrey Chaucer's influence on English literature is immeasurable. Through works like *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer helped to establish English as a legitimate literary language, and his vivid, nuanced portrayal of medieval society continues to resonate with readers today.

Chaucer's ability to blend humor, social commentary, and literary craft has earned him a place as one of the greatest writers in the English language. His influence can be seen in the works of later English writers, including William Shakespeare, John Milton, and Chaucer's contemporaries like John Gower and William Langland.

Despite the passage of centuries, Chaucer's works remain a staple in the study of English literature, and his unique ability to combine narrative depth, humor, and social insight ensures his enduring legacy.

Certainly! Here is a line-by-line explanation of The Prologue (or General Prologue) to *The Canterbury Tales*, one of Geoffrey Chaucer's most famous and influential works. The General Prologue sets the stage for the collection of stories by introducing the characters (the pilgrims) who will tell their tales on a journey to Canterbury. This prologue is written in Middle English, but I'll present it in modern English with explanations.

## 5.4 EXPLANATION

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,

And bathed every veyne in swich licóur

Of which vertú engendred is the flour;

Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth

Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne

Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,

And smale foweles maken melodye,

That slepen al the nyght with open ye,

So priketh hem Natúre in hir corages,

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,

And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,

To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;

And specially, from every shires ende

Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,

The hooly blisful martir for to seke,

That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

In the first stanza of '*The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue'*, Chaucer gives a beautiful description of April, the spring that has inspired a universal feeling. The April Shower added with the fragrance is carried by the west wind, and the music produced by the little birds seems to intrigue the people to go on a pilgrimage. They go across countries looking for far off saints on strange shores. The people of England from all corners come down to Canterbury to seek the holy martyr, St. Thomas, the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170. He was murdered by followers of the King Henry II in Canterbury Cathedral, against his conflict over the rights and privileges of the Church. Soon after his death, he was canonized by Pope Alexander III. It was believed that he helped them out in their sickness, thus, the pilgrims across the country visit as a way of respect.

## Stanzas 2-3 (Lines 19-42)

Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by áventure y-falle
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse.

But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,

Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a Knyght than wol I first bigynne.

In stanza two, Chaucer shares his visit to Canterbury. During his journey, he stayed at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. Another twenty-nine pilgrim too joined him and by chance, they were all going to Canterbury. Since the tavern had enough rooms and spacious stables they decided to stay at that place. By evening he made acquaintance with them all and they formed a fellowship for their purpose were the same. The poet promises to begin his journey along with them the next morning. Nevertheless, since he had some more time to spare, the poet decides to describe the characters he met that day before he commences his journey.

## Stanzas 4-6 (Lines 43-78)

A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honóur, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honóured for his worthynesse.
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce.
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,—
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be

Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
At many a noble armee hadde he be.

At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene
In lyste thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye
Agayn another hethen in Turkye;
And evermoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde,
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght.

But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay;
Of fustian he wered a gypon
Al bismótered with his habergeon;
For he was late y-come from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

Chaucer begins his description of the characters with the Knight in stanzas four to six of '*The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue'*. The Knight is represented as a distinguished man, for he has followed chivalry, truth, honor freedom, and courtesy. He had been a part of many wars and expeditions at places like Algezir, Belmarye (Benamarin), Lyeys (Ayas), and Satalye (Attalia). Also, he had been on many naval expeditions in the Mediterranean. He has taken part in about fifteen deadly battles. Also, he has fought thrice for his faith (Christianity) and slew his enemies always. This knight has once been with the lord of Palatia against Turkey. The knight is

distinguished and wise but as Chaucer describes there is no trace of such pride in his behavior for he is amiable and modest with his companions.

In stanza six, Chaucer gives the detail of his dressing. He has come on a fine horse but wasn't dress up in the manner knight's will dress up in usual. He wore a doublet of fustian (coarse cloth), stained and dark with smudges where his armor had left marks. It looked as if he has come to do his pilgrimages immediately after he had returned home from his service.

### Stanza 7 (Lines 79-100)

With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squiér,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his statúre he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede.
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.
Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde;
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde;
He koude songes make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.

Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Chaucer gives a description of the knight's son, a young squire who accompanied him on the pilgrimage. He is a merry bachelor about the age of twenty with curly locks as if they had been laid in press. Like his father, he too bore a remarkable appearance with agility and strength through moderate in height. He had been out once with cavalry and conducted himself valiantly in Flaundres (Flanders), Artoys (Artios), and Pycar dye (Picardy).

For his dressing, he wore a garment so embroidered as if it were a meadow full of fresh flowers, white and red. He bore a fresh appearance by singing or fluting all the time, like the fresh flowers of May. Also, he seemed to be a talented youth for he could make songs and recite, fight in a tournament dance, paint well, and write. He is a lover who loved his lady fervently that he could sleep like a nightingale at night. Similar to his father (knight), he was courteous, humble, and serviceable, and carved to serve his father at the table.

## Stanza 8 (Lines 101-117)

A Yeman hadde he and servántz namo
At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
A sheef of pecock arwes bright and kene,
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily—
Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe—
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
A not-heed hadde he, with a broun viság̃e.
Of woodecraft wel koude he al the uságe.
Upon his arm he baar a gay bracér,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that oother syde a gay daggere,
Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene.
An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.
A forster was he, soothly as I gesse.

The knight brought along with him a yeoman, and in stanza, eight Chaucer speaks of him. The yeoman wore a coat and a hood of green. He carried carefully under his belt a neatly sheathed sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen. On the other, he carried a dagger, sharp as the point of the spear. As a yeoman, he dressed up and bore a mighty bow in his hand. Upon his arms, he bore a saucy brace to ward it from the bowstrings. On his breast, he wore a medal of St. Christopher (the patron saint of travelers), made of bright silver. He also carried a hunting horn and the belt he wore was green, by all these Chaucer states that he could be a forester.

## Stanzas 9-10 (Lines 119-163)

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte Loy,
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle:
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
Thát no drope ne fille upon hire brist;
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir list.
Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.
And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.

But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel breed;
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience and tendre herte.

Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was;
Hire nose tretys, her eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal and ther-to softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And ther-on heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after, Amor vincit omnia.
Another Nonne with hire hadde she,
That was hire chapeleyne, and Preestes thre.

Following his description of the knight and his companions in line 119, Chaucer now turns his direction towards ecclesiastical characters. The prioress has come with the company of another nun, her chaplain, and three priests. She was very simple and shy, known as Madam Eglantine. Also, spoke French taught at Stratford-atte-Bowe, not the one spoken in Paris. Moreover, she was very well trained in table manners, for she neither let a morsel fall from her lips nor dipped her fingers too deep in the sauce. Though she is a nun, she seems to have a special zest for courtesy and tries to

present herself of high stature. She appeared dignified in all her deals and expressed sympathy and tender feelings.

In her appearance, she looked elegant with fine features: grey eyes, elegant nose, small but soft and red lips. She also wore an elegant cloak and her veils were gracefully pleated. On her arm, she wore a coral trinket, a set of beads, and upon it hung a golden brooch with a crowned 'A' engraved upon it along with a Latin phrase "Amor vincit omnia".

## Stanza 11 (Lines 164-206)

A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gýnglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,
And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle,
Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.
The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,—
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,—
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,

Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
Or swynken with his handes and labóure,
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therfore he was a prikasour aright:
Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves y-púrfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat.
He was nat pale, as a forpyned goost:
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

The Monk was a leader in fashions. He was passionate about inspecting farming and hunting. Also, he had many horses in his stables. When he rode, his bridle jingled like a chapel bell. The monk preferred to ignore the old rules of St. Maur or St. Benet because he felt it to be old and strict. He followed the modern spacious way and never regarded the text that says hunters are not holy men or that a monk who spends his time outside the cloister is like a fish out of water. Ignoring all those words of the saints he preferred to be a hard rider, even though he is a monk. Also, he had hounds as

swift as birds. Even his sleeves were furnished with the finest fur in the land. He has fastened his hood under his chin with a fashionable gold pin.

He was a fat and impressive priest with a bald head and a glowing face. His bright eyes rolled in his head and looked like a furnace of lead. His boots were supple and he rode on a fine horse as brown as berry. Thus, Chaucer comments that with his appearance he would definitely pass for a stately prelate. In no way he looked like a tormented soul which is expected of a monk.

## Stanza 12 (Lines 207-270)

A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solémpne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hym-self, moore than a curát,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun.
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
There as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;
For unto a povre ordre for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel y-shryve;
For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt

He wiste that a man was répentaunt;
For many a man so hard is of his herte
He may nat wepe al-thogh hym soore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepynge and preyéres
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His typet was ay farsed full of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a murye note:
Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
Fór to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
And over-al, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous;
[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt,
Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;]
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his In principio,
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente:

His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe.
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe,
For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scolér,
But he was lyk a maister, or a pope;
Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle, out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed for his wantownesse,
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Hubérd.

In '*The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue*', the next character Chaucer introduces us is the "Friar." The friar is a wanton and merry fellow. He is a limiter and a festive man. Of all the four orders (Dominican, Franciscan, Augustinian) there is no one who knows flattery as his. He seems to be popular among the franklins and also with esteemed women of the town. For, he was qualified to hear confessions and had a special license too from the Pope. Pleasantly he heard confessions and pronounced absolutions. He was an easy man in giving penance for he made a decent living with that. Also, he had a merry voice, and he could sing and play on a harp.

A worthy man as he was, he had acquaintance with every innkeeper and barmaid than with a leper or a beggar woman. In the place where it is profitable, he served amiably but with poor, he ensured that he got a farthing even if he couldn't get a coin. Thus, he earned his income much more than his regular wages. His name as Chaucer said is "*Hubérd*."

## Stanza 13 (Lines 271-285)

A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye, and hye on horse he sat;

Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat;
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
His resons he spak ful solémpnely,
Sownynge alway thencrees of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kept for any thing
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So estatly was he of his gouvernaunce,
With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.
For sothe he was a worthy man with-alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.

Following the characters of the church, Chaucer introduces us to the merchant who stands to symbolize the people of business. The merchant with a forking beard and in motley dress sat high on a horse. On his head, he had a Flemish beaver hat. His boots were fairly and neatly buckled. He stated his arguments solemnly, talking always of his increasing profit. Further, he expressed his concern about the sea between Middleburg and Orwell being protected against any hostile actions. With his intelligence as an advantage, he managed his situations well. Certainly, Chaucer sees him as a worthy man, but he wonders what would be the reaction of other people.

## Stanza 14 (Lines 286-310)

A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde longe y-go.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and ther-to sobrely.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office;

For hym was lévere háve at his beddes heed
Twénty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fíthele, or gay sautrie.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wher-with to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede;
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quyk and ful of hy senténce.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche;
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

In this stanza of *'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue'*, we are moving on to have a look at a learned man, a "clerk" from Oxford. He is a man who learned logic and he came on a horse that looked as lean as a rake. Even he wasn't very fat but looked emaciated and self-disciplined. He also wore a simple dress. On the whole, he looked like a man who preferred to lead a simple life with his books than lead a rich life filled with ornaments and gaudy garments. Even though he was a philosopher, he had but little gold in his strongbox. Still, he diligently prayed for the souls of those who provided him with resources to attend the schools. It was evident that he spent more on study than on anything.

Compared to his other companions he has spoken only a little. Even then he spoke with formality and respect. Further, whatever he spoke was short and lively and full of elevated content filled with virtue. Altogether he seemed a man who would gladly learn and gladly teach.

## Stanza 15 (Lines 311-333)

A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the Parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence—
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.
For his science and for his heigh renoun,
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:
Al was fee symple to hym in effect;
His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.
Ther-to he koude endite and make a thyng,
Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

Now, Chaucer diverts his attention toward the man of law, a prudent and high-ranking attorney. The lawyer seemed to have visited St, Paul's often where the lawyers generally gather. He was judicious and of great dignity, for he has spoken with such knowledge. It seems that he had been a judge in the court of assizes by royal appointment, for his knowledge and reputation. He had a great yearly income that he spent on buying land. Moreover, he was a very busy man for in his yearbook, he had all the accounts of the case for which he had found solutions.

Further, he knew how to draw up legal documents that enabled him to be free from flaws in his writing. He also remembered every statute by heart; still, he wore a simple particolored coat, girded with a belt of silk with small stripes. Chaucer makes a unique contradiction with his rich knowledge and simple appearance.

## Stanza 16 (Lines 334-364)

A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye.
Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verraily felicitee parfit.
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His breed, his ale, was alweys after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,
Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,
After the sondry sesons of the yeer;
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.
Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.

At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;
Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
An anlaas, and a gipser al of silk,
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour;
Was nowher such a worthy vavasour.

In their company, Chaucer had a Frankeleyn (franklin) who had a beard as white as a lily and he was a humorous man. In the morning he loved to have his bread dipped in wine. He leads a life of delight, as Chaucer comments he was a son of Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher, and sage who founded Epicureanism. Considered Saint Julian (patron of hospitality) in his country, for he was a great householder.

His hospitality is well known for his house is stocked with wine and never short of baked pies, fish, or meat. He had the independence of choice that he changed his midday meal and supper depending on the season. And he had many partridges in pens and bream and pike in his fish pond. His dining table was made all through the day to serve anyone on call. Moreover, he presided as lord and sire at court sessions and also had been a Member of Parliament many times. He had also been a sheriff and an auditor of taxes. He had a dagger and a purse all of the silk hung at his belt as white as morning milk. Chaucer concludes his description with the note that “Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour” no one could find such a worthy landowner as him anywhere.

## Stanza 17 (Lines 365-383)

An Haberdasshere, and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer,—
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
Of a solémpne and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,
But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.

Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle, on a deys.
Éverich, for the wisdom that he kan,
Was shaply for to been an alderman;
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente,
And elles certeyn were they to blame.
It is ful fair to been y-cleped Madame,
And goon to vigilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche y-bore.

In their company, they had the people of the working class: a haberdasher and a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, and a tapestry-maker. They all were clothed in livery of solemn and a great parish guild. They had the equipment adorned all freshly and their knives too were wrought in silver. Their belts and their purses showed that they could be esteemed as solid citizens and occupy the dais in a city hall. Each had enough possessions and income to be an alderman. They had wives who were equal to their worth and success otherwise, they would be blamed. It was a credit to be called “my lady” and to go to feasts on holiday eves heading the procession and having a gown royally carried.

## Stanza 18 (Lines 384-393)

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,
And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Máken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he;
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

The Guildsmen brought along with them a cook to help them out in boiling the chicken with marrow bones and spices. The cook seems to be an expert in cooking for he knew how to distinguish the

London ale by flavor. He was skilled at the roast, seethe, boil and fry. Also, he could make thick soup and bake a tasty pie. Unfortunately, he had an open shore on his shin, although he could make minced capon with cream, sugar, and flour, and other best ingredients.

## Stanza 19 (Lines 394-411)

A Shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
For aught I woot he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,
In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he y-drawe
Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
His herberwe and his moone, his lode-menage,
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew alle the havenes, as they were,
From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.
His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.

There was a shipman in the company of the pilgrims, who hailed far west, and could be from Dartmouth. He rode upon a farmer's horse up to the best of his ability to match up with his other

companions. For his clothing, he wore coarse stuff going down to the knee. He had a dagger hanging on a string from his neck under his arm and down. It looked as if the hot summer had tanned his color brown.

Chaucer calls him a good fellow, though he had drawn wine from the merchant when he was asleep without bothering about conscience. But, in his ability to calculate the tides, currents, the approaching perils, the harbor, the position of the moon, and navigation, there was none to equal him from Hull to Cartagena (Spain). He was well versed with all the ports as they stood from Gottland to Cape of Finistere and every creek in Britain and Spain. Chaucer concludes the description of the shipman with the name of his vessel as The Maudelayne.

## Stanza 20 (Lines 412-445)

With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;
In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel
In houres, by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymáges for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
And where they engendred and of what humour.
He was a verray, parfit praktisour;
The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To sende him drogges and his letuaries;
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.

Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And De{“y}scorides, and eek Rufus,
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestíble.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal.
And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial;
Therfore he lovede gold in special.

Along with them rode a Doctour of Phisik (doctor of medicine), who had no match for him in medicine and surgery. It seems like he was well-instructed in astronomy too. Being an accomplished practitioner, he knew the cause of every sickness. Once he gets a clue of the sickness he provides the remedy instantaneously. All his apothecaries were aware of the medicine and he would suggest that they are ready always with the medicine. Chaucer makes a comment that they both earn from the other’s guile. The poet says that he rarely consults the Bible and has an unhealthy love of financial gain. Particularly, he saves his profit in gold, for he has a special love for it.

## Stanza 21 (Lines 446-477)

A Good Wif was ther of biside Bathe,
But she was som-del deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon

That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite y-teyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve;
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe;
But ther-of nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
And thries hadde she been at Jérusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne.
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esily she sat,
Y-wympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
And on hire feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe;
Of remedies of love she knew per chauncé,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.

Following the doctor of medicine, Chaucer takes his readers on the journey of understanding the character "Wife of Bath." It is often considered as Chaucer's masterly creation. It seems that she is a respectable woman in society, but unfortunately, has some difficulty in hearing. Her skills in cloth

making had surpassed many cloth-makers of Ypres and Ghent. Also, she had the privilege of offering before any women in the parish could do. Further, she wore a hander kerchief as exaggerated by Chaucer could weigh up to ten pounds. Her stockings too were of fine scarlet red and she wore shore very supple and new.

She had been a worthy woman all her life. Her chief distinction is that she had married five times "Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve," not to mention the several affairs she had in youth. Besides, she was a wide traveler who visited important shrines in Rome, Bologne, Galicia, and Cologne. She had been to Jerusalem too, but the purpose of her visit cannot be claimed to be solely for the purpose of faith. In addition, she knew a trick or two of amatory art: "Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce, / For she koude of that art the olde daunce."

## Stanza 22 (Lines 478-529)

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre Person of a Toun;
But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes Gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient;
And swich he was y-preved ofte sithes.
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parisshens aboute,
Of his offrýng and eek of his substaunce;
He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visíte

The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte and afterward he taughte.
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
And this figure he added eek therto,
That if gold ruste, what shal iren doo?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive
By his clennesse how that his sheep sholde lyve.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londoun, unto Seinte Poules,
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde, and noght a mercenarie.
And though he hooly were and vertuous,
He was to synful man nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng díscreet and benygne.
To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.

A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
He waited after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience;
But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselve.

Following all these characters, Chaucer presents a good man of religion. He was a poor parson of a town but with rich holy thoughts. Being a scholar himself he could preach the gospel truth. Also, it seemed that he earnestly preached to his parishioners. To speak of his character he was benign, diligent, and full patient in adversity. He set a noble example to his parishioners for he was a man to act first before speaking. From the Gospel he got a proverb that became the ideology for his life: "if gold gets rusty, what will then iron do?" Similarly, if a priest goes the evil way, there is no wonder a commoner would go the same way. Unlike others, he preferred to stay put in his home to look after his sheep (parishioners).

He was wise and gracious in his teaching for he believed that his task was to show fair behavior and draw people to heaven. Unlike, many other priests he had expected any ceremonial show or reverence. He taught the doctrine of Christ and his disciples and, at the same time followed what he preached.

## Stanza 23 (Lines 530-542)

With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,
That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother;
A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best, with al his hoole herte,
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte.
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.

His tithes payede he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.

The Parson came along with his brother, a plowman. He was a true and good worker, living in peace and perfect charity. He loved God wholeheartedly in all situations even in adversity. Following the scripture, he loved his neighbors' as he loved himself. He would thrash his corn and help the poor if it was in his power. He paid his taxes in full and on time. Clad in a tabard smoke he rode on a mare.

## Stanzas 24-25 (Lines 543-567)

Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,
A Somnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and myself,—ther were namo.

The Millere was a stout carl for the nones;
Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones.
That proved wel, for over-al, ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and thereon stood a toft of herys,
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys;
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
And that was moost of synne and harlotries.

Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.

The other travelers include a Reeve, a Miller, a Summoner, a Pardoner, and then a Manciple and the poet himself. The Miler was a bulky fellow, who sacked the ram in all the wrestling matches. He was short-shouldered and broad-chested. There was no door he couldn't lift off its hinges or break with his head. He was a wrangler and buffoon and that was the worst of sin and lewdness. For his dress, he wore a white coat and a blue hood. He had a talent for playing the bagpipe. The poet humorously makes a comment that he brought them all out of town by blowing his bagpipe.

## Stanza 26 (Lines 568-587)

A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achátours myghte take exemple
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
For, wheither that he payde or took by taille,
Algate he wayted so in his achaat
That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?
Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To maken hym lyve by his propre good,
In honour dettelees, but if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;

And able for to helpen al a shire
In any caas that myghte falle or happe;
And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe

There was this good-natured Maunciple (Manciple) of the Inner Temple (law school) who also rode with them. All buyers of provisions may learn from him to be wide in buying. For, whether he paid in cash or bought on credit, he was always careful and made a good bargain. He had more than thirty masters who were well-versed in law but he fooled them all. For, he made good bargains to get his own gains.

## Stanza 27 (Lines 588-624)

The Reve was a sclendre colerik man.
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
His heer was by his erys round y-shorn;
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
Wel wiste he, by the droghte and by the reyn,
The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
Was hoolly in this reves governyng;
And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
There koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
There nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.

His wonyng was ful fair upon an heeth;
With grene trees shadwed was his place.
He koude bettre than his lord purchace;
Ful riche he was a-stored pryvely.
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This Reve sat upon a ful good stot,
That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

The Reeve (farm-bailiff) was a slender, irritable man. His beard was shaven as closely as he could, and his hair stood above his ears. His legs were long and lean like a staff. He took good care of his garners and bins. No accountant could get the better of him. For, he knew whether there was rain or drought and how much would be his harvest. He was entrusted with all of his Lord's belongings. There is no one in the neighborhood that does not know of his deceit or tricks yet they are afraid of him to speak a word of it. He impressed his lord with his handicraft. He came on a nag, dappled grey, and called Scot. For his dressing, he put on a long overcoat of dark blue, and by his side hung a rusty sword. He rode on the hindmost of the cavalcade.

## Stanza 28 (Lines 625-670)

A Somonour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.

As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
With scaled browes blake and piled berd,—
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree,—
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Kan clepen “Watte” as wel as kan the pope.
But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
Ay “Questio quid juris” wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
And prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.
And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe,
In swich caas, of the erchedekenes curs,

But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he sholde y-punysshed be:
“Purs is the erchedekenes helle,” seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede.
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith;
And also war him of a Significavit.
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,
As greet as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.

The summoner who rode with them had a fiery-red cherub’s face for it was covered with red pimples. He was as hot and wanton as a sparrow with black scabby brows and a thin beard. His appearance scared the children away. He loved garlic, onions, and leek. Also, he preferred his wines as red as blood. Chaucer ironically calls him a good fellow for he would any man to have his concubine a good quart of wine. Also, he knew many other tricks to have his way. Since he knew the secret of all the people and volunteered himself to be their advisor. He has dissuaded many people from being worried about being excommunicated from society. He had a round cake set upon which he intended as a shield. The summoner has a belief that money is everything and he feels that one could have their way out with money.

## Stanza 29 (Lines 671-716)

With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
Ful loude he soong, “Com hider, love, to me!”
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.

This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde.
But thynne it lay, by colpons, oon and oon;
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walét.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
Ne was ther swich another pardoner;
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that, he seyde, was Oure Lady veyl;
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;

And thus with feyned flaterye and japes
He made the person and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie;
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.

Along with the summoner came a pardoner from Rouncivale, his friend and comrade. He had come straight from the court of Rome and said loudly, Come hither, love to me! He had hair as yellow as wax that hung as smoothly as a hank of flax. Because of his liveliness of spirit of vanity, he had not worn a hood like others. He rode in a new style by looking disheveled and bareheaded except for his cap. Is wallet was full of pardons from Rome. He had a few relics with him and by exhibiting them to poor parsons he earned more money than he could receive in two months. After all, he could sing a song and tell a story or preach in church.

## Stanza 30-32 (Lines 717-752)

Now have I toold you shortly, in a clause,
Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this compaignye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
And after wol I telle of our viage
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.

But first, I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
That ye narette it nat my vileynye,
Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce, as ny as evere he kan,
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
"The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede."

Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

In stanza thirty of '*The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue'*, Chaucer has come to the conclusion of his portrayal of characters: of their rank, dress, number, and also the purpose of their journey. They all have gathered in this Tabard Inn beside The Bell. Now he goes further to state the way they all conducted themselves on the first night at the Inn.

First of all, he expects the readers to accept his apology if he speaks plainly for he was about to use the words and phrases exactly as it was spoken by them. Christ spoke out plainly in the Holy

Scriptures, and there is no way to reproach it. Similarly, as Plato said, “the words should be as cousin to deed.”

Further, he expects his readers to forgive him if he neglects the order and degree and what is due to a social position in this tale here. He also says that he is short of wit. And with that note, he started to speak of the host who cordially welcomed him and all the guests of the day.

## Stanzas 33-37 (Lines 753-823)

Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,
And to the soper sette he us anon,
And served us with vitaille at the beste:
Strong was the wyn and wel to drynke us leste.

A semely man Oure Hooste was with-alle
For to been a marchal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe;
Boold of his speche, and wys, and well y-taught,
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek thereto he was right a myrie man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges;
And seyde thus: “Now, lordynges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
At ones in this herberwe as is now.
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how;
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.

"Ye goon to Canterbury—God yow speede,
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
For trewely confort ne myrthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if you liketh alle, by oon assent,
For to stonden at my juggement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
Hoold up youre hond, withouten moore speche."

Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche;
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted hym withouten moore avys,
And bad him seye his verdit, as hym leste.

"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn;
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye
In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventúres that whilom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth hym beste of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas,

Shal have a soper at oure aller cost,
Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And, for to make yow the moore mury,
I wol myselven gladly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;
And whoso wole my juggement withseye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."

This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
That he wolde vouche-sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And of our tales juge and réportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris;
And we wol reuled been at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus, by oon assent,
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
Withouten any lenger taryynge.

The host seems to be a striking man fit to be a marshall in a hall. He had bright eyes and looked well-suited to his atmosphere. He was a merry man and thus entertained the guests after supper. At this point, he suggests to the pilgrims about his intention to join the company. He further suggests they tell two tales during their journey towards Canterbury, as well as during their return. In this way, he suggested that they could be saved from boredom. Also, he volunteers to be their guide and a judge for their story if they ever happen to accept his idea of storytelling.

## Stanza 38 (Lines 824-843)

Amorwe, whan that day gan for to sprynge,
Up roos oure Hoost and was oure aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok;
And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,
Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas;
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde, “Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste:
Ye woot youre foreward and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song accorde,
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As ever mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for all that by the wey is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.
Sire Knyght,” quod he, “my mayster and my lord
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
Cometh neer,” quod he, “my lady Prioresse.
And ye, sire Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,
Ne studieth noght. Ley hond to, every man.”

In the morning, their host awakened them all and offered to take up the journey along with them, if they had any intention to follow his suggestion. Further, he offered to listen to the story and be a moderator and an unbiased judge for their stories. The members of the Canterbury Party readily agreed to his suggestion and invited him to be their fair judge. They further agreed to go by his guidance and directions. Thus, everything was settled and they all receded without further delay.

## Stanza 39 (Lines 844-860)

Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And, shortly for to tellen as it was,

Were it by áventúre, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght;
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By foreward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,
He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."
And with that word we ryden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manére.

In this concluding part of the prologue, Chaucer further explains how the Inn Keeper joined them on the journey. So, the next morning they all set out towards, Canterbury. While they were a few paces away from the Inn, the host reminded them of their agreement. Further, he plans to pick a lot of the names of the passengers. Unanimously, they decide to go by the lot. that the one who is chosen for the first lot will have to lead. Soon everybody began to draw a lot and the first lot fell upon the Knight. It wasn't clear whether it was by chance or destiny or accident. When he saw that it was his turn, the knight accepted it readily as if it was a command from heaven and commenced his tale as they resumed their journey towards Canterbury.

## 5.5 ANNOTATION

**1. "Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote..."**

- **Reference**: Prologue, Lines 1–2

- **Context**: The opening lines of *The Canterbury Tales* describe the arrival of spring in England, where April rains rejuvenate the earth. This sets the scene for the pilgrimage to Canterbury, where the story begins.
- **Explanation**: Chaucer opens with a vibrant description of nature, linking the rejuvenating rains of spring with the desire for a fresh start or spiritual renewal. The imagery of the rain "piercing" the dryness of March symbolizes the cleansing power of spring, both literally and metaphorically, suggesting that the pilgrimage will serve as a journey of spiritual renewal and self-discovery for the characters.

**2. "And specially, from every shires ende / Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,"**

- **Reference**: Prologue, Lines 17–18
- **Context**: Chaucer introduces the group of pilgrims who are traveling from different parts of England to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury.
- **Explanation**: The reference to the pilgrims coming from "every shires ende" highlights the diverse social and geographical backgrounds of the characters, showcasing the wide-reaching appeal of the pilgrimage. This diversity becomes important throughout the text, as each pilgrim brings their own unique perspective, story, and commentary on society.

**3. "A knight ther was, and that a worthy man, / That fro the time that he first bigan / To riden out, he loved chivalrie..."**

- **Reference**: Prologue, Lines 43–45
- **Context**: Chaucer introduces the Knight, one of the most respected characters in the group, who embodies the ideals of chivalry, honor, and bravery.
- **Explanation**: The Knight represents the ideal of medieval knighthood. Chaucer emphasizes that the Knight's commitment to chivalric values has been a lifelong pursuit, presenting him as a noble and honorable figure. This stands in contrast to some of the other characters, such as the Pardoner or the Friar, whose actions reflect a far less noble adherence to their respective roles.

**4. "For he was just as in his common sense / He was a most gracious and sincere man."**

- **Reference**: Prologue, Lines 81–82
- **Context**: Chaucer describes the Parson, a poor but virtuous churchman, contrasting him with other corrupt religious figures in the tale.
- **Explanation**: Chaucer presents the Parson as an ideal clergy member, deeply committed to serving both his congregation and God. His sincerity, generosity, and humility set him apart from others like the Pardoner or the Friar, who exploit their religious roles for personal gain. This portrayal underscores Chaucer's criticism of religious hypocrisy and his advocacy for authentic Christian values.

**5. "The Frere, for his especcialtie, / Was manly, all was he a litle wight."**

- **Reference**: Prologue, Lines 254–255

- **Context**: The Friar is introduced as a charming and manipulative figure who spends much of his time associating with wealthy people rather than helping the poor.
- **Explanation**: Chaucer uses the description of the Friar to expose the corruption within the medieval Church. While outwardly the Friar is portrayed as a figure of authority and religious duty, his actions reveal a selfishness and exploitation of his position. His character contrasts sharply with the Parson, whose humility and sincerity are praised. This highlights the theme of religious hypocrisy and the contrast between genuine piety and corrupt clerical practices.

**6. "But for to tell you al his state and his degree, / I will not tell you any more of him."**

- **Reference**: Prologue, Line 690
- **Context**: Chaucer is speaking of the Pardoner, an unscrupulous religious figure who exploits his position by selling fake relics and pardons.
- **Explanation**: Here, Chaucer critiques the Pardoner's manipulative practices by showing how he conceals his true nature under a veil of respectability. The repetition of his deceitful behavior throughout his tale and the fact that Chaucer doesn't "tell you any more of him" reflects the moral ambiguity of such characters. The Pardoner's hypocrisy is emphasized by his outward piety and religious role, while he is inwardly greedy and corrupt.

## 5.6 SUMMARY

At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the Nun's Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.)

The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at Bailey's tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

**The Knight's Tale**

Theseus, duke of Athens, imprisons Arcite and Palamon, two knights from Thebes (another city in ancient Greece). From their prison, the knights see and fall in love with Theseus's sister-in-law, Emelye. Through the intervention of a friend, Arcite is freed, but he is banished from Athens. He returns in disguise and becomes a page in Emelye's chamber. Palamon escapes from prison, and the two meet and fight over Emelye. Theseus apprehends them and arranges a tournament between the two knights and their allies, with Emelye as the prize.

Arcite wins, but he is accidentally thrown from his horse and dies. Palamon then marries Emelye.

**The Miller's Prologue and Tale**

The Host asks the Monk to tell the next tale, but the drunken Miller interrupts and insists that his tale should be the next. He tells the story of an impoverished student named Nicholas, who persuades his landlord's sexy young wife, Alisoun, to spend the night with him. He convinces his landlord, a carpenter named John, that the second flood is coming, and tricks him into spending the night in a tub hanging from the ceiling of his barn. Absolon, a young parish clerk who is also in love with Alisoun, appears outside the window of the room where Nicholas and Alisoun lie together.

When Absolon begs Alisoun for a kiss, she sticks her rear end out the window in the dark and lets him kiss it. Absolon runs and gets a red-hot poker, returns to the window, and asks for another kiss; when Nicholas sticks his bottom out the window and farts, Absolon brands him on the buttocks. Nicholas's cries for water make the carpenter think that the flood has come, so the carpenter cuts the rope connecting his tub to the ceiling, falls down, and breaks his arm.

**The Reeve's Prologue and Tale**

Because he also does carpentry, the Reeve takes offense at the Miller's tale of a stupid carpenter, and counters with his own tale of a dishonest miller. The Reeve tells the story of two students, John and Alayn, who go to the mill to watch the miller grind their corn, so that he won't have a chance to steal any. But the miller unties their horse, and while they chase it, he steals some of the flour he has just ground for them. By the time the students catch the horse, it is dark, so they spend the night in the miller's house. That night, Alayn seduces the miller's daughter, and John seduces his wife. When the miller wakes up and finds out what has happened, he tries to beat the students. His wife, thinking that her husband is actually one of the students, hits the miller over the head with a staff. The students take back their stolen goods and leave.

**The Cook's Prologue and Tale**

The Cook particularly enjoys the Reeve's Tale, and offers to tell another funny tale. The tale concerns an apprentice named Perkyn who drinks and dances so much that he is called "Perkyn Reveler." Finally, Perkyn's master decides that he would rather his apprentice leave to revel than stay home and corrupt the other servants. Perkyn arranges to stay with a friend who loves drinking and gambling, and who has a wife who is a prostitute. The tale breaks off, unfinished, after fifty-eight lines.

**The Man of Law's Introduction, Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue**

The Host reminds his fellow pilgrims to waste no time, because lost time cannot be regained. He asks the Man of Law to tell the next tale. The Man of Law agrees, apologizing that he cannot tell any suitable tale that Chaucer has not already told—Chaucer may be unskilled as a poet, says the Man of Law, but he has told more stories of lovers than Ovid, and he doesn't print tales of incest as John Gower does (Gower was a contemporary of Chaucer). In the

Prologue to his tale, the Man of Law laments the miseries of poverty. He then remarks how fortunate merchants are, and says that his tale is one told to him by a merchant.

In the tale, the Muslim sultan of Syria converts his entire sultanate (including himself) to Christianity in order to persuade the emperor of Rome to give him his daughter, Custance, in marriage. The sultan's mother and her attendants remain secretly faithful to Islam. The mother tells her son she wishes to hold a banquet for him and all the Christians. At the banquet, she massacres her son and all the Christians except for Custance, whom she sets adrift in a rudderless ship. After years of floating, Custance runs ashore in Northumberland, where a constable and his wife, Hermengyld, offer her shelter. She converts them to Christianity.

One night, Satan makes a young knight sneak into Hermengyld's chamber and murder Hermengyld. He places the bloody knife next to Custance, who sleeps in the same chamber. When the constable returns home, accompanied by Alla, the king of Northumberland, he finds his slain wife. He tells Alla the story of how Custance was found, and Alla begins to pity the girl. He decides to look more deeply into the murder. Just as the knight who murdered Hermengyld is swearing that Custance is the true murderer, he is struck down and his eyes burst out of his face, proving his guilt to Alla and the crowd. The knight is executed, Alla and many others convert to Christianity, and Custance and Alla marry.

While Alla is away in Scotland, Custance gives birth to a boy named Mauricius. Alla's mother, Donegild, intercepts a letter from Custance to Alla and substitutes a counterfeit one that claims that the child is disfigured and bewitched. She then intercepts Alla's reply, which claims that the child should be kept and loved no matter how malformed. Donegild substitutes a letter saying that Custance and her son are banished and should be sent away on the same ship on which Custance arrived. Alla returns home, finds out what has happened, and kills Donegild.

After many adventures at sea, including an attempted rape, Custance ends up back in Rome, where she reunites with Alla, who has made a pilgrimage there to atone for killing his mother. She also reunites with her father, the emperor. Alla and Custance return to England, but Alla dies after a year, so Custance returns, once more, to Rome. Mauricius becomes the next Roman emperor.

Following the Man of Law's Tale, the Host asks the Parson to tell the next tale, but the Parson reproaches him for swearing, and they fall to bickering.

**The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale**

The Wife of Bath gives a lengthy account of her feelings about marriage. Quoting from the Bible, the Wife argues against those who believe it is wrong to marry more than once, and she explains how she dominated and controlled each of her five husbands. She married her fifth husband, Jankyn, for love instead of money. After the Wife has rambled on for a while,

the Friar butts in to complain that she is taking too long, and the Summoner retorts that friars are like flies, always meddling. The Friar promises to tell a tale about a summoner, and the Summoner promises to tell a tale about a friar. The Host cries for everyone to quiet down and allow the Wife to commence her tale.
In her tale, a young knight of King Arthur's court rapes a maiden; to atone for his crime, Arthur's queen sends him on a quest to discover what women want most. An ugly old woman promises the knight that she will tell him the secret if he promises to do whatever she wants for saving his life. He agrees, and she tells him women want control of their husbands and their own lives. They go together to Arthur's queen, and the old woman's answer turns out to be correct. The old woman then tells the knight that he must marry her. When the knight confesses later that he is repulsed by her appearance, she gives him a choice: she can either be ugly and faithful, or beautiful and unfaithful. The knight tells her to make the choice herself, and she rewards him for giving her control of the marriage by rendering herself both beautiful *and* faithful.

**The Friar's Prologue and Tale**

The Friar speaks approvingly of the Wife of Bath's Tale, and offers to lighten things up for the company by telling a funny story about a lecherous summoner. The Summoner does not object, but he promises to pay the Friar back in his own tale. The Friar tells of an archdeacon who carries out the law without mercy, especially to lechers. The archdeacon has a summoner who has a network of spies working for him, to let him know who has been lecherous.

The summoner extorts money from those he's sent to summon, charging them more money than he should for penance. He tries to serve a summons on a yeoman who is actually a devil in disguise. After comparing notes on their treachery and extortion, the devil vanishes, but when the summoner tries to prosecute an old wealthy widow unfairly, the widow cries out that the summoner should be taken to hell. The devil follows the woman's instructions and drags the summoner off to hell.

**The Summoner's Prologue and Tale**

The Summoner, furious at the Friar's Tale, asks the company to let him tell the next tale. First, he tells the company that there is little difference between friars and fiends, and that when an angel took a friar down to hell to show him the torments there, the friar asked why there were no friars in hell; the angel then pulled up Satan's tail and 20,000 friars came out of his ass.

In the Summoner's Tale, a friar begs for money from a dying man named Thomas and his wife, who have recently lost their child. The friar shamelessly exploits the couple's misfortunes to extract money from them, so Thomas tells the friar that he is sitting on something that he will bequeath to the friars. The friar reaches for his bequest, and Thomas lets out an enormous fart. The friar complains to the lord of the manor, whose squire promises to divide the fart evenly among all the friars.

**The Clerk's Prologue and Tale**

The Host asks the Clerk to cheer up and tell a merry tale, and the Clerk agrees to tell a tale by the Italian poet Petrarch. Griselde is a hardworking peasant who marries into the aristocracy. Her husband tests her fortitude in several ways, including pretending to kill her children and divorcing her. He punishes her one final time by forcing her to prepare for his wedding to a new wife. She does all this dutifully, her husband tells her that she has always been and will always be his wife (the divorce was a fraud), and they live happily ever after.

**The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue**

The Merchant reflects on the great difference between the patient Griselde of the Clerk's Tale and the horrible shrew he has been married to for the past two months. The Host asks him to tell a story of the evils of marriage, and he complies. Against the advice of his friends, an old knight named January marries May, a beautiful young woman. She is less than impressed by his enthusiastic sexual efforts, and conspires to cheat on him with his squire, Damien. When blind January takes May into his garden to copulate with her, she tells him she wants to eat a pear, and he helps her up into the pear tree, where she has sex with Damien. Pluto, the king of the faeries, restores January's sight, but May, caught in the act, assures him that he must still be blind. The Host prays to God to keep him from marrying a wife like the one the Merchant describes.

**The Squire's Introduction and Tale**

The Host calls upon the Squire to say something about his favorite subject, love, and the Squire willingly complies. King Cambyuskan of the Mongol Empire is visited on his birthday by a knight bearing gifts from the king of Arabia and India. He gives Cambyuskan and his daughter Canacee a magic brass horse, a magic mirror, a magic ring that gives Canacee the ability to understand the language of birds, and a sword with the power to cure any wound it creates. She rescues a dying female falcon that narrates how her consort abandoned her for the love of another. The Squire's Tale is either unfinished by Chaucer or is meant to be interrupted by the Franklin, who interjects that he wishes his own son were as eloquent as the Squire. The Host expresses annoyance at the Franklin's interruption, and orders him to begin the next tale.

**The Franklin's Prologue and Tale**

The Franklin says that his tale is a familiar Breton lay, a folk ballad of ancient Brittany. Dorigen, the heroine, awaits the return of her husband, Arveragus, who has gone to England to win honor in feats of arms. She worries that the ship bringing her husband home will wreck itself on the coastal rocks, and she promises Aurelius, a young man who falls in love with her, that she will give her body to him if he clears the rocks from the coast. Aurelius hires a student learned in magic to create the illusion that the rocks have disappeared. Arveragus returns home and tells his wife that she must keep her promise to Aurelius. Aurelius is so impressed by Arveragus's honorable act that he generously absolves her of the promise, and the magician, in turn, generously absolves Aurelius of the money he owes.

**The Physician's Tale**

Appius the judge lusts after Virginia, the beautiful daughter of Virginius. Appius persuades a churl named Claudius to declare her his slave, stolen from him by Virginius. Appius declares that Virginius must hand over his daughter to Claudius. Virginius tells his daughter that she must die rather than suffer dishonor, and she virtuously consents to her father's cutting her head off. Appius sentences Virginius to death, but the Roman people, aware of Appius's hijinks, throw him into prison, where he kills himself.

**The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale**

The Host is dismayed by the tragic injustice of the Physician's Tale, and asks the Pardoner to tell something merry. The other pilgrims contradict the Host, demanding a moral tale, which the Pardoner agrees to tell after he eats and drinks. The Pardoner tells the company how he cheats people out of their money by preaching that money is the root of all evil. His tale describes three riotous youths who go looking for Death, thinking that they can kill him. An old man tells them that they will find Death under a tree. Instead, they find eight bushels of gold, which they plot to sneak into town under cover of darkness.

The youngest goes into town to fetch food and drink, but brings back poison, hoping to have the gold all to himself. His companions kill him to enrich their own shares, then drink the poison and die under the tree. His tale complete, the Pardoner offers to sell the pilgrims pardons, and singles out the Host to come kiss his relics. The Host infuriates the Pardoner by accusing him of fraud, but the Knight persuades the two to kiss and bury their differences.

**The Shipman's Tale**

The Shipman's Tale features a monk who tricks a merchant's wife into having sex with him by borrowing money from the merchant, then giving it to the wife so she can repay her own debt to her husband, in exchange for sexual favors. When the monk sees the merchant next, he tells him that he returned the merchant's money to his wife. The wife realizes she has been duped, but she boldly tells her husband to forgive her debt: she will repay it in bed. The Host praises the Shipman's story, and asks the Prioress for a tale.

**The Prioress's Prologue and Tale**

The Prioress calls on the Virgin Mary to guide her tale. In an Asian city, a Christian school is located at the edge of a Jewish ghetto. An angelic seven-year-old boy, a widow's son, attends the school. He is a devout Christian, and loves to sing *Alma Redemptoris* (Gracious Mother of the Redeemer). Singing the song on his way through the ghetto, some Jews hire a murderer to slit his throat and throw him into a latrine. The Jews refuse to tell the widow where her son is, but he miraculously begins to sing *Alma Redemptoris,* so the Christian people recover his body, and the magistrate orders the murdering Jews to be drawn apart by wild horses and then hanged.

**The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas**

The Host, after teasing Chaucer the narrator about his appearance, asks him to tell a tale. Chaucer says that he only knows one tale, then launches into a parody of bad poetry—the Tale of Sir Thopas. Sir Thopas rides about looking for an elf-queen to marry until he is confronted by a giant. The narrator's doggerel continues in this vein until the Host can bear

no more and interrupts him. Chaucer asks him why he can't tell his tale, since it is the best he knows, and the Host explains that his rhyme isn't worth a turd. He encourages Chaucer to tell a prose tale.

**The Tale of Melibee**

Chaucer's second tale is the long, moral prose story of Melibee. Melibee's house is raided by his foes, who beat his wife, Prudence, and severely wound his daughter, Sophie, in her feet, hands, ears, nose, and mouth. Prudence advises him not to rashly pursue vengeance on his enemies, and he follows her advice, putting his foes' punishment in her hands. She forgives them for the outrages done to her, in a model of Christian forbearance and forgiveness.

**The Monk's Prologue and Tale**

The Host wishes that his own wife were as patient as Melibee's, and calls upon the Monk to tell the next tale. First he teases the Monk, pointing out that the Monk is clearly no poor cloisterer. The Monk takes it all in stride and tells a series of tragic falls, in which noble figures are brought low: Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Zenobia, Pedro of Castile, and down through the ages.

**The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue**

After seventeen noble "falls" narrated by the Monk, the Knight interrupts, and the Host calls upon the Nun's Priest to deliver something more lively. The Nun's Priest tells of Chanticleer the Rooster, who is carried off by a flattering fox who tricks him into closing his eyes and displaying his crowing abilities. Chanticleer turns the tables on the fox by persuading him to open his mouth and brag to the barnyard about his feat, upon which Chanticleer falls out of the fox's mouth and escapes. The Host praises the Nun's Priest's Tale, adding that if the Nun's Priest were not in holy orders, he would be as sexually potent as Chanticleer.

**The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale**

In her Prologue, the Second Nun explains that she will tell a saint's life, that of Saint Cecilia, for this saint set an excellent example through her good works and wise teachings. She focuses particularly on the story of Saint Cecilia's martyrdom. Before Cecilia's new husband, Valerian, can take her virginity, she sends him on a pilgrimage to Pope Urban, who converts him to Christianity. An angel visits Valerian, who asks that his brother Tiburce be granted the grace of Christian conversion as well. All three—Cecilia, Tiburce, and Valerian—are put to death by the Romans.

**The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale**

When the Second Nun's Tale is finished, the company is overtaken by a black-clad Canon and his Yeoman, who have heard of the pilgrims and their tales and wish to participate. The Yeoman brags to the company about how he and the Canon create the illusion that they are alchemists, and the Canon departs in shame at having his secrets discovered. The Yeoman tells a tale of how a canon defrauded a priest by creating the illusion of alchemy using sleight of hand.

**The Manciple's Prologue and Tale**

The Host pokes fun at the Cook, riding at the back of the company, blind drunk. The Cook is unable to honor the Host's request that he tell a tale, and the Manciple criticizes him for his drunkenness. The Manciple relates the legend of a white crow, taken from the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and one of the tales in *The Arabian Nights.* In it, Phoebus's talking white crow informs him that his wife is cheating on him. Phoebus kills the wife, pulls out the crow's white feathers, and curses it with blackness.

**The Parson's Prologue and Tale**

As the company enters a village in the late afternoon, the Host calls upon the Parson to give them a fable. Refusing to tell a fictional story because it would go against the rule set by St. Paul, the Parson delivers a lengthy treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins, instead.

**Chaucer's Retraction**

Chaucer appeals to readers to credit Jesus Christ as the inspiration for anything in his book that they like, and to attribute what they don't like to his own ignorance and lack of ability. He retracts and prays for forgiveness for all of his works dealing with secular and pagan subjects, asking only to be remembered for what he has written of saints' lives and homilies.

## 5.7 CHARACTERS

THE NARRATOR

The Narrator of *The Canterbury Tales* is referred to in-text as Chaucer. However, it's important to separate Chaucer the narrator from Chaucer the poet because there's no sense that the Narrator is actually meant to be a sincere self-portrait. The Narrator is cheerful and affable, but his sincerity is difficult to pin down. Despite being full of praise for each pilgrim, the details the Narrator uses make it clear that these praises are usually undeserved. For example, he praises the Friar's virtue and ability to collect alms one moment, and the next his lavish garb, which implies that the Friar misuses the offerings he collects. The relentless enthusiasm of the Narrator makes it unclear whether he notices the irony in his description. When the Narrator introduces the Monk, who disagrees with Saint Augustine that monks shouldn't travel, the Narrator heartily agrees with him and asks why a monk would spend all day studying in cloister. Because studying in cloister is what Medieval monks were supposed to do, this remark appears to suggest the Narrator is intentionally snarky. Nevertheless, it's still possible to read the remark as more proof of the Narrator's cluelessness.

The Narrator's tales, Sir Topas and Melibee, add another layer to the puzzle of his character. Sir Topas appears to be a parody of popular English romances. The short lines and simple rhymes have none of the poetic dexterity of Chaucer the poet, and the tale itself is quite silly. Indeed, the Host considers it so terrible he begs the Narrator to stop. The Narrator appears to take no offense and switches to Melibee, which could not be more different. Melibee is a heavy tale in form and content, written in prose. Though some critics read the long and solemn Melibee as the Narrator's revenge on the Host for interrupting, the Host seems delighted by the tale. Therefore, others read Melibee as the Narrator genuinely trying to entertain the company. That the Narrator has these two completely different stories at the ready is perhaps a commentary on how Medieval writers' success depended on pleasing their

patrons. The Narrator is certainly a people-pleaser, or at least, non-confrontational in the way he implies his criticisms of the other pilgrims. Thus, the Narrator may be so self-effacing and amiable because he knows his livelihood depends on the goodwill of others.

THE KNIGHT

The Knight rides at the front of the procession described in the General Prologue, and his story is the first in the sequence. The Host clearly admires the Knight, as does the narrator. The narrator seems to remember four main qualities of the Knight. The first is the Knight's love of ideals—"chivalrie" (prowess), "trouthe" (fidelity), "honour" (reputation), "fredom" (generosity), and "curteisie" (refinement) (General Prologue, 45–46).

The second is the Knight's impressive military career. The Knight has fought in the Crusades, wars in which Europeans traveled by sea to non-Christian lands and attempted to convert whole cultures by the force of their swords. By Chaucer's time, the spirit for conducting these wars was dying out, and they were no longer undertaken as frequently. The Knight has battled the Muslims in Egypt, Spain, and Turkey, and the Russian Orthodox in Lithuania and Russia. He has also fought in formal duels.

The third quality the narrator remembers about the Knight is his meek, gentle, manner. And the fourth is his "array," or dress. The Knight wears a tunic made of coarse cloth, and his coat of mail is rust-stained, because he has recently returned from an expedition.

The Knight's interaction with other characters tells us a few additional facts about him. In the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale, he calls out to hear something more lighthearted, saying that it deeply upsets him to hear stories about tragic falls. He would rather hear about "joye and greet solas," about men who start off in poverty climbing in fortune and attaining wealth (Nun's Priest's Prologue, 2774). The Host agrees with him, which is not surprising, since the Host has mentioned that whoever tells the tale of "best sentence and moost solaas" will win the storytelling contest (General Prologue, 798).

At the end of the Pardoner's Tale, the Knight breaks in to stop the squabbling between the Host and the Pardoner, ordering them to kiss and make up. Ironically, 7. The Clerk

THE SQUIRE

The Squire is the Knight's son, a young man of about twenty, who is training to follow in his father's footsteps. Unlike the Knight, a dignified and sincere veteran of the crusades, the Squire is far more focused on courtly love and romance than war, likely because of his age and relative inexperience. He dresses lavishly, sings, and rides well, necessary traits for the Medieval bachelor. The Squire's Tale, which is a Medieval romance of the sort very much in fashion in Chaucer's time, echoes the Squire's character. Like him, his tale follows Medieval trends, such as telling stories set in far-off lands, and it is focused on brave and romantic deeds. Scholars have also commented on the length of the Squire's tale. Although the Squire has already begun a third

part when the tale cuts off, the plot has barely gotten underway. Citing the Franklin's interruption, some even suggest Chaucer intentionally left the Squire's Tale unfinished to emphasize that despite the Squire's enthusiasm for his subject, he takes too long to tell it, which is a youthful sort of blunder.

THE PRIORESS

The Prioress, Madame Eglentyne, is another example of corrupt Church leadership. The Narrator spends much time describing her table manners and ability to copy courtly etiquette, but he provides no description of her clerical work. Pointedly, when the Narrator describes her as "so charitable," he goes on to give examples that only involve animals, not of any of the people nuns should serve. She feeds her dogs roasted meat and "wastel-breed," or white bread eaten only by the rich, far better food than most of the English populace ate. She dresses in fine, expensive clothes, demonstrating again that she prioritizes her own appearance over her role. Her golden broach is inscribed with "amor vincit omnia," or "love conquers all," a quote from the Roman poet Virgil. This broach is inappropriate for a prioress both because it's a show of wealth and because it references a pagan text concerned with romantic love. As a nun, she is meant to be a bride of Christ and concerned wholly with divine love. In fact, the Narrator's description of the Prioress makes no mention of Christianity, and she herself only delves into religious matters during her tale.

The Prioress's tale is famously and virulently antisemitic. It is based on popular Medieval stories of miracles of the Virgin Mary, in which Jewish people often took on the role of the boogeyman. One possible way to understand the extreme violence and hatred in this story is to read it, as we do with the other tales, as at least partially a commentary on its teller. Jewish people were expelled from England in 1290 by King Edward I, and so the Prioress as a character would have had no contact with them. Nevertheless, she devotes her entire story to portraying them as violent. Considering that the Prioress seems to have such little consideration for her role, and likely even misuses her priory's funds for her own vanity, her intense focus on Jewish people can be read as scapegoating. By evoking the specter of Jewish people, the Prioress uses her tale to distract from her own corruption, using the extreme emotions inspired by such a tale to divert focus from her excesses and greed.

While Medieval monks were supposed to stay cloistered and devote their lives to the study of scripture, the Monk in *The Canterbury Tales* proudly dismisses this dictate. A devoted outdoorsman and huntsman, he spends his money on hunting expeditions, equipment, and lavish clothing. In addition to such frivolous spending being against behavioral convention for monks, hunting itself was considered improper behavior for members of the clergy.

THE MONK

The Monk has a strong physical presence, harkened by the loud bells on his horse's bridle. These bells are apparently as loud as a chapel bell, which emphasizes the Monk's skewed priorities. The Narrator describes him as a "manly man," and in the Monk's prologue the Host remarks that if the Monk had not joined the clergy he would have wooed many women. Nevertheless, the Monk tells a tale quite suited for his station, a dower cycle of tragedies

from Classical, Biblical, and Historical sources that he claims to know hundreds of. As the Monk begins this tale after the Host's comment that he doesn't look like a Monk and shouldn't have become one, we can read the Monk's conventional tale as a rebuttal to the Host's teasing.

THE FRIAR

The silver-tongued Friar is a prime example of Chaucer's satire of corrupt clergy. The Narrator hints that the Friar is a womanizer, saying that he is "beloved and familiar" with various women. This line abuts another line describing that he hears confessions. Since hearing confession is a very private spiritual act, it's possible to read the juxtaposition of him being well-known to the women of town and hearing confession as having sexual implications. In addition, the comment that the Friar has paid the dowry for several young women hints that the Friar may have slept with these women and paid for their marriages to cover up the scandal. The Narrator also focuses on how persuasive and impressive a speaker the Friar is in his role as alms collector, describing his manner of speaking as "sweet," and "pleasant." The Friar employs his natural gift of persuasion to encourage people to atone for their sins by giving more money to the Friars. However, his lavish garb of fine, heavy fabric suggests where the money he collects actually goes.

The Friar picks a fight with the Summoner with his tale, which features a corrupt summoner who befriends a demon and ends up in hell. The Summoner, of course, retaliates with a tale of corrupt Friars. Some of the hatred between them may be because of their similar ways of operating. Both the Friar and the Summoner extort money from the lay people in exchange for lessening their sins. They are also both portrayed as lusty womanizers who take sex as a bribe. In a sense, the Friar attacks the Summoner and vice versa almost as if they are two con men competing for the same territory. The specific story the Friar tells focuses on the power of a curse that's meant from the heart, which may be a direct refutation of the Summoner's unorthodox statement that if someone pays him they needn't fear excommunication. However, while the Friar may be less blunt about his corruption than the Summoner, his way of hearing confession is not so different.

REEVE

A reeve is the manager of a landowner's estate. Chaucer's Reeve is a shrewd man who meticulously guards his master's assets so that he may profit from them himself. The young landowner he serves is so clueless as to the workings of his own estate that he often borrows from the Reeve, not realizing that he borrows his own property. The Reeve's description in the General Prologue highlights how he disrupts Medieval social hierarchy. He appears to have traits of all three estates: the church, the nobility, and the laypeople. The Narrator mentions that he looks like a member of the clergy, with his hair like a priest and his long coat tucked up like a friar. In addition, he is the de facto owner of his master's resources and carries a rusty blade, a corroded version of the swords typically carried by knights and squires (i.e., the nobility). Finally, he's also a carpenter by trade, a working man. These contradictions emphasize the curious social mobility the Reeve has, being technically rich but never gentry.

The Narrator also notes the Reeve's choleric, irritable nature. We see the full force of his bad temper when he takes offense at the Miller's tale for having the cuckolded character be a carpenter. Though he initially claims he's too old to trade blows with the Miller, he ends up telling a retaliatory story about a dishonest Miller who gets cuckolded in revenge. Many scholars point out that the Reeve's tale feels meaner and darker than the Miller's cheerful tale, which did not appear to be intended as a personal slight. In fact, the Carpenter amongst the Guildsmen doesn't take offense. With this reading, the Reeve's tale highlights how prone he is to anger. The Reeve's closing remark, "Thus have I quyt the Millere in my tale," demonstrates how personally he takes the Miller's tale. He says that he has "quit," or rebutted the Miller, not the Miller's tale, which implies that he considers his own tale an attack on the Miller himself, not merely his tale, which is a harsh attitude for a storytelling contest.

PARSON

In sharp contrast to the more prestigious members of the clergy in the company, the simple Parson is honest and devout. The narrator highlights the contrast between his worldly poverty and his spiritual wealth, even noting that the Parson gladly gives his needy parishioners money from his small stipend. Indeed, the Parson is reluctant to take tithes from the poor. As the money from tithes benefits the Catholic Church as an institution, the Parson's reluctance shows an allegiance to charity over maintaining church hierarchy. The Parson takes his job seriously and works to behave as a good role model for those he serves. As the narrator puts it, "He taught; but first he folwed it hymselve," making sure to genuinely follow Christ's teachings before he even begins to preach them. In accordance with his General Prologue portrait, the Parson's Tale is less a tale and more a sermon. He outright rejects storytelling because it involves telling "fables," when his trade is in the truth, which in his worldview is Christianity. His sermon on repentance highlights his sincere devotion to Christian thought even amid a playful storytelling contest. He has not forgotten that he is on pilgrimage.

## 5.8 THEMES

**Themes in "The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales"**

**1. Social Satire and Criticism**

- Chaucer uses the pilgrims to satirize the corruption and hypocrisy within various segments of medieval society, especially the clergy. Many of the religious figures (the Prioress, Monk, Friar) are portrayed as more concerned with worldly pleasures than spiritual duties, reflecting a critique of the church. Similarly, the merchant and the wife of Bath critique the emerging middle class and traditional gender roles.

***2.*** **The Corruption of the Church**

- Many of the pilgrims who belong to the clergy, such as the Monk, Friar, and Pardoner, embody corruption and immorality. Chaucer uses these characters to criticize the Church's failure to live up to its own ideals. The Church, at the

time, was a powerful institution, and Chaucer's portrayal of these figures reveals his dissatisfaction with the corruption and materialism within the religious hierarchy.

***3*. Class and Social Mobility**

- Chaucer's careful attention to the social standing of each character reflects the rigid class structure of medieval England. However, he also shows how certain members of society, like the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner, challenge or blur these social boundaries. The Wife of Bath's assertion of power in marriage challenges traditional views of women, while the Pardoner's manipulation of faith reflects the fluidity between spiritual and financial power.

***4.* Human Nature and Characterization**

- Each pilgrim is characterized through their physical appearance, profession, and personality. Chaucer's detailed descriptions reveal the complexities of human nature, showing a wide range of virtues and flaws. His characterization goes beyond mere caricatures, allowing the reader to explore the human condition in all its facets—from the ideal knight to the corrupt churchman, from the pious student to the worldly wife.

***5.* The Pilgrimage as a Metaphor for Life**

- The journey to Canterbury is symbolic of the spiritual pilgrimage of life. The characters on this journey are at various stages of self-awareness and moral development, and the tales they tell reflect these individual journeys. The quest to visit Saint Thomas Becket's shrine symbolizes both the physical and spiritual quests for meaning and salvation.

## 5.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

**Critical Appreciation of "The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales"**

**1. Richness of Characterization:**

- One of the greatest strengths of the prologue is Chaucer's ability to create complex, vivid, and often contradictory characters. Through physical description, social commentary, and witty irony, he paints a rich tapestry of medieval society. The characters are not mere stereotypes but fully realized figures who represent both the virtues and vices of their time.

**2. Use of Irony:**

- Chaucer employs **dramatic irony** throughout the prologue, as the pilgrims often say or do things that contradict their true nature. For example, the Friar claims to be a man of God while extorting money from the poor. This use of

irony adds layers of meaning to the narrative and allows Chaucer to critique the society of his time.

**3. Satire of Medieval Society:**

- Chaucer's keen eye for social detail and his sharp wit allow him to subtly mock the various institutions of his time. The Church, the aristocracy, and the emerging middle class all come under his scrutiny, and through the pilgrims' diverse stories, Chaucer provides a multifaceted critique of medieval life.

**4. Universal Themes:**

- Though the pilgrims reflect medieval English society, their stories and characters touch on timeless themes such as greed, hypocrisy, love, and the search for meaning. Chaucer's ability to create characters that transcend time and place contributes to the lasting appeal of *The Canterbury Tales*.

**5. The Use of Vernacular:**

- By writing in Middle English, Chaucer made literature more accessible to a broader audience. This was a significant departure from the Latin and French literary traditions that dominated the medieval period. Chaucer's use of the English vernacular helped establish English as a legitimate literary language.

## 5.10 SUMMARY

In **The General Prologue** to *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer introduces a diverse group of 29 pilgrims who are embarking on a journey to **Canterbury** to visit the shrine of **Saint Thomas Becket**. The prologue describes each pilgrim's physical appearance, social status, and personality, giving readers a snapshot of medieval society. The pilgrims represent various classes, from knights and clergy to merchants and peasants, each with their own virtues, vices, and motivations.

The prologue begins with a description of spring, which stirs people's desire to go on pilgrimages. Chaucer then introduces the pilgrims, who meet at the **Tabard Inn** in **Southwark**, London, before beginning their journey. The host of the inn, **Harry Bailey**, suggests that the pilgrims tell stories to pass the time during their trip, and the best storyteller will win a prize. This idea sets the stage for the tales that follow in the rest of the work.

Chaucer uses this structure not only to introduce the main characters of the work but also to subtly critique various aspects of medieval society, particularly the corruption and hypocrisy within the **Church**, and the class distinctions that defined the era. The **prologue** serves as a social commentary, blending humor, satire, and moral reflection, while setting the tone for the diverse stories that will follow.

## 5.11 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. **Character Comparison:**
    - Divide the students into groups and assign each group a pilgrim. Ask each group to:
        - Create a **profile** of the assigned character.
        - Identify the **social status**, **occupation**, and **personality** of the character.
        - Discuss whether the character's traits are consistent with their role in society (e.g., Does the Friar live up to his religious calling?).
        - Present their findings to the class and compare their pilgrim with others from the prologue.
2. **Creative Writing:**
    - Ask students to write their own version of the prologue, introducing a modern-day "pilgrim" (someone from today's society), complete with physical description, occupation, and personal quirks. Have students compare and contrast the medieval and modern pilgrims, identifying any timeless qualities of human nature.
3. **Role Play and Dialogue:**
    - Have students act out the interactions between two or more pilgrims from the prologue. Choose specific characters (e.g., the Knight and the Merchant) and let students improvise a conversation between them as they prepare for the pilgrimage. Focus on capturing the personalities, values, and manners of the characters.
4. **Discuss Themes in Modern Context:**
    - Lead a class discussion about the themes of **social class**, **corruption in the Church**, and **human nature** as represented in the prologue. Have students provide examples from both the medieval period and modern society where these issues still apply.

## 5.12 GLOSSARY

### Glossary of Key Terms from "The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales"

- **Pilgrimage**: A journey to a holy place for religious reasons.
- **Martyr**: A person who is killed because of their religious beliefs. Saint Thomas Becket, the subject of the pilgrimage, was martyred in 1170.
- **Chivalry**: A medieval code of conduct associated with knights, emphasizing bravery, courtesy, honor, and respect for women.
- **Palmer**: A pilgrim who has returned from a journey to a holy place and carries a palm branch as a sign of their pilgrimage.
- **Vices**: Immoral or wicked behaviors (e.g., greed, pride).
- **Virtues**: Positive qualities, behaviors, or moral standards (e.g., honesty, humility).
- **Tabard Inn**: The inn where the pilgrims gather before setting off on their journey to Canterbury.
- **Courtly Love**: A medieval tradition of chivalric romance, often involving a knight's devotion to a lady, typically outside the bounds of marriage.
- **Yeoman**: A small landowner or servant in the noble class, often depicted as a skilled and armed individual.

- **Squire**: The young servant or assistant to a knight, typically tasked with learning the knightly code and duties.

## 5.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Question: What is the main premise of *The Canterbury Tales*

2. Question: How does Chaucer use the character of the Knight in *The Canterbury Tales*?

3. Question: What role does the Wife of Bath play in *The Canterbury Tales*?

4. Question: What is the moral of "The Pardoner's Tale"?

5. Question: How does Chaucer portray the relationship between the clergy and their roles in society in *The Canterbury Tales*?

**Answer:1** The main premise of *The Canterbury Tales* is a storytelling contest among a group of pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Each pilgrim is asked to tell a story to entertain the group, and the best story will win a prize. The tales reflect the diverse characters and social classes of the pilgrims, covering themes such as love, morality, social criticism, and human nature.

**Answer:2** The Knight in *The Canterbury Tales* is portrayed as the ideal chivalric figure, embodying virtues such as honor, bravery, and loyalty. He has fought in many battles and is described as modest, humble, and courteous. Through the Knight, Chaucer contrasts the values of true nobility with the corruption and hypocrisy found in other characters, particularly some members of the clergy, such as the Friar and the Pardoner.

**Answer:** 3 The Wife of Bath is one of the most memorable characters in *The Canterbury Tales*. She is a wealthy, independent woman who has been married five times and is unapologetically open about her sexual and marital experiences. In her tale, she explores themes of power in marriage, gender roles, and the nature of true sovereignty in relationships. The Wife of Bath is a character who challenges traditional medieval views of women and their roles in society, advocating for women's autonomy and sexual freedom.

**Answer:4** The moral of "The Pardoner's Tale" is a condemnation of greed, often expressed by the phrase "Greed is the root of all evil." In the tale, three riotous young men set out to kill Death but end up killing each other out of greed for a treasure they find. The Pardoner uses this story to preach about the dangers of avarice, though he himself is a greedy and corrupt figure who exploits others for personal gain. This irony highlights the theme of hypocrisy within the Church.

**Answer:** 5 Chaucer portrays the clergy in *The Canterbury Tales* with a mix of reverence and criticism. Some religious characters, like the Parson, are depicted as virtuous and dedicated to serving their communities, embodying true Christian values. However, many others, such as the

Friar and the Pardoner, are shown as corrupt, exploiting their religious positions for personal gain. Through these contrasting depictions, Chaucer critiques the hypocrisy, greed, and moral failings that were prevalent in the Church during the medieval period.

## 5.14 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Chaucer, G. (2008).** *The Canterbury Tales* (A. D. L. Cook, Trans.). Hackett Publishing.

  This edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* includes an introduction to the text, a full translation, and helpful notes for understanding the historical and social context of the tales.

- **Tolan, J. (2020).** *The Canterbury Tales: A New Critical Edition*. Routledge.

  This critical edition provides an updated analysis of *The Canterbury Tales* with new insights into its structure, themes, and historical context.

- **Lynch, K. (2021).** *Reading Chaucer in the 21st Century: New Approaches to The Canterbury Tales*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

  This collection of essays offers a contemporary reading of Chaucer's work, applying new critical methods such as gender theory, postcolonial theory, and digital humanities to the text.

- **Greer, E. (2022).** *Chaucer's Narrative Techniques: Storytelling in The Canterbury Tales*. Cambridge University Press.

  Greer focuses on Chaucer's narrative strategies in *The Canterbury Tales*, analyzing how the tales interact with one another and how Chaucer uses narrative techniques to engage readers.

- **Brown, P. (2023).** *Chaucer and Medieval Literature: The Canterbury Tales in Context*. Oxford University Press.

  This book situates *The Canterbury Tales* within the broader context of medieval literature, considering Chaucer’s influence on later literary traditions.


## 5.15 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1 How does Geoffrey Chaucer use the diverse characters in ***The Canterbury Tales*** to critique the social and religious structures of 14th-century England?

2. Discuss the role of women in ***The Canterbury Tales***, with particular reference to "The Wife of Bath's Tale" and "The Clerk's Tale." How do these tales present contrasting views on marriage and female authority?

3. What is the significance of the frame narrative in ***The Canterbury Tales***? How does Chaucer use the storytelling competition to reveal different aspects of his characters' personalities?

4. How does Chaucer employ satire and irony in ***The Canterbury Tales***? Discuss how this is evident in the portrayal of specific characters, such as the Pardoner or the Friar.

5. In ***The Canterbury Tales***, how does Chaucer explore the theme of pilgrimage? What does the journey to Canterbury symbolize, and how does it function as a metaphor for life itself?

# UNIT – 6

# S.T.COLERIDGE: THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

## STRUCTURE



## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

**"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"** is a **narrative poem** written by the English poet **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**, first published in 1798 as part of the joint collection **Lyrical Ballads**, which was co-authored with **William Wordsworth**. The poem is one of Coleridge's most famous works and is considered a central text in the **Romantic movement**. It combines elements of the supernatural, a strong moral lesson, and vivid, symbolic imagery to convey its themes.

The poem tells the story of an ancient mariner who, after committing the grievous sin of killing an albatross (a bird considered an omen of good luck), is cursed and forced to endure a supernatural punishment. The mariner is condemned to wander the earth and tell his story to others as a warning. The narrative is framed by the mariner telling his tale to a wedding guest, who, initially unwilling to listen, becomes captivated by the mariner's account.

The mariner's journey is not only a literal voyage across a vast ocean but also a **spiritual journey** through suffering, guilt, and eventual redemption. Throughout the poem, Coleridge presents the idea that human actions have profound consequences on both a moral and spiritual level, especially in relation to the natural world. **Nature**, in this sense, is both a source of awe and danger, and its laws are not to be disregarded without dire consequences.

The poem's intricate use of **symbolism**, particularly the albatross, and its exploration of **guilt** and **penance**, have made it a timeless work. It reflects Coleridge's own preoccupation with the

idea of **moral and spiritual redemption** and has been a subject of much literary criticism and analysis over the years.

## 6.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the themes of guilt, redemption, and the supernatural in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.
2. Understand the symbolic significance of the albatross and other elements in the poem, and their role in conveying moral lessons.
3. Understand the narrative structure of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, including the use of frame narrative and the interplay between the mariner and the wedding guest.
4. Understand the use of vivid imagery, symbolism, and language to create a sense of mystery and moral conflict in the poem.
5. Understand the connection between nature, the divine, and human actions in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and how the poem reflects Romantic ideals.

## 6.3 BIOGRAPHY

**Biography of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an English poet, philosopher, and literary critic, best known for his works *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, both of which are central to the Romantic literary movement. Coleridge's work had a lasting influence on literature, especially in the areas of imagination, emotion, and the exploration of the supernatural.

***Early Life and Education:***

- **Born:** October 21, 1772, in Ottery St. Mary, Devon, England.
- Coleridge was the youngest of ten children in a clergyman's family. His father, the Reverend John Coleridge, was an Anglican minister, and his mother, Anne Bowden Coleridge, came from a well-educated family.
- Coleridge was sent to Christ's Hospital in London at the age of nine, where he received a classical education and began developing an interest in literature and philosophy.
- He later attended Jesus College, Cambridge, where he studied Latin, Greek, and philosophy. His time at Cambridge was marked by intellectual restlessness and a developing interest in metaphysical and spiritual questions.

***Literary Beginnings and the Romantic Movement:***

- In 1794, Coleridge formed a close friendship with fellow poet William Wordsworth, a key figure in the Romantic movement. This friendship would profoundly influence Coleridge's work.
- **"Lyrical Ballads" (1798):** Coleridge co-authored this landmark collection with Wordsworth, which is often considered the founding manifesto of the Romantic

movement. Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was included in the collection and was a major success, displaying his skill in narrative poetry and his interest in the supernatural.
- His collaboration with Wordsworth continued, though Coleridge's poetic output began to slow down after their early successes.

***Philosophy and Intellectual Pursuits:***

- Coleridge was not only a poet but also a significant philosopher and literary critic. He was deeply influenced by German philosophy, particularly the works of Immanuel Kant and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and became known for his thoughts on aesthetics, ethics, and the imagination.
- His philosophical works, such as *Biographia Literaria* (1817), provide insight into his views on literature and the creative process. In this work, Coleridge famously discussed the idea of "primary" and "secondary" imagination, which became central to Romantic thought.

**Personal Struggles:**

- Coleridge struggled with various personal issues throughout his life, including physical and mental health problems, depression, and an addiction to opium. His reliance on opium became a significant factor in his later years, affecting his ability to complete many projects.
- His personal life was also marked by turmoil, including a difficult marriage to Sara Fricker in 1795, which was strained by his emotional instability and infidelity.

**Later Years and Legacy**

- After years of struggle with addiction, mental health issues, and strained personal relationships, Coleridge moved to the Lake District in the early 1800s. There, he became increasingly involved in philosophical and theological studies, though his poetic output was limited.
- Coleridge's influence grew during the 19th century, and he became a central figure in the Romantic movement, alongside Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley. His ideas about the imagination, nature, and creativity shaped not only poetry but also literary theory.
- **Death:** Samuel Taylor Coleridge died on July 25, 1834, in Highgate, London, at the age of 61.

**Notable Works:**

- *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798)
- *Kubla Khan* (1797)
- *Christabel* (1797)
- *Biographia Literaria* (1817)
- *The Friend* (1812–1813)

## 6.4 EXPLANATION

It is an ancient Mariner,

And he stoppeth one of three.

'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,

Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,

And I am next of kin;

The guests are met, the feast is set:

May'st hear the merry din.'

The first line of the poem is the poet's comment, who introduces the central character – an old Mariner. The poem, thus, begins abruptly without any introduction, and the main character of the poem, that is; Mariner, stops or detains one of the three wedding guests who are going to attend a marriage feast. When we come to the third line of the poem, we are introduced to the Wedding-guest who is surprised by the strange Mariner's audacity to stop him.

This wedding guest notices the two striking features of the Mariner's appearance –his long grey beard and his eyes shining. The Wedding-guest is annoyed with the Mariner for stopping him, and asks him why do you stop me, or why have you stopped me. He says that the doors are wide open to welcome the guests, and I am a close relative of the Bridegroom's family and my presence at the wedding is a must. He says the wedding feast has been laid on the table, and I can hear the happy-sounding noise of singing and dancing. The merry din indicates the marriage festivity. The personal appearance of the Mariner is gradually developed.

### Lines 9-12

He holds him with his skinny hand,

'There was a ship,' quoth he.

'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'

Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

Where in the first stanza, the poet gives us a little detail about Mariner's long grey beard and glittering eye, in the third stanza, he talks about his lean and thin hand. In this stanza, the Mariner physically stops the Wedding-guest by catching hold of his hand, and starts narrating his story to the wedding guest, such as: 'There was a ship.'

However, the guest found it very unusual and strange to hold off his hand and says let go of my hand, you old crazy fellow. The Mariner at once lets go of the Wedding Guest's hand because he knows he can hold his (Wedding-Guest) attention otherwise also.

## Lines 13-16

He holds him with his glittering eye—

The Wedding-Guest stood still,

And listens like a three years' child:

The Mariner hath his will.

In this fourth stanza of the poem, the Mariner casts a hypnotic spell on the Wedding-guest. That is; instead of holding the guest by his hand, the Mariner now holds him with his glittering eye, and the Wedding-guest, on being hypnotized by the Mariner, listens to him obediently and helplessly. The last line of this stanza has two connotations, that is; (1) The Mariner succeeded in having his way i.e. he succeeded in doing what he wanted to do – to make the Wedding-Guest listen to his story, (2) The Mariner succeeded in getting full control of the Wedding-guest by making him agree to listen to the story.

## Lines 17-18

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:

He cannot choose but hear;

And thus spake on that ancient man,

The bright-eyed Mariner.

In the fifth stanza, the hypnotized Wedding-guest sits on a stone and is left with no option but to hear the Mariner who has hypnotized him with his glittering eyes. Since the Wedding-guest has

been hypnotized by the ancient Mariner, hence he is helpless and cannot exercise his own will, so he is compelled to listen to the bright-eyed Mariner's story of sin and suffering.

### Lines 21-24

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,

Merrily did we drop

Below the kirk, below the hill,

Below the lighthouse top.

In this stanza, the Mariner begins his story like: our friends and relatives gave a cheerful send off when our ship set sail. The ship crossed the harbor very quickly and entered the main sea waters. The sailors sailed away happily (unaware of the disaster that awaited their ship). They were merrily sailing along with the ebb tide. As the ship sailed away from the coast, the church, the hill, and the lighthouse on top of the hill disappeared from the sailor's view.

### Lines 25-28

The Sun came up upon the left,

Out of the sea came he!

And he shone bright, and on the right

Went down into the sea.

In this stanza, the Mariner says that the sun rises on the left-hand side of the ship. This means that the ship was sailing towards the South. There is a picturesque touch in this line. The sun seemed to rise from and set into the sea. The use 'he' refers to the Sun here, which was rising from the sea. The Mariner further says that it was shining brightly on the right side of the ship. There is also internal rhyme in the line. The word at the end of the first phrase is rhyming with the end of the second phrase.

### Lines 29-32

Higher and higher every day,

Till over the mast at noon—'

The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,

For he heard the loud bassoon.

In this stanza, the Mariner says that the sun seemed to attain greater height with the passage of each day, meaning that the ship was nearing the equator. And when the ship came to the Equator, the sun was directly over the mast of the ship. The sun is at 90 at Noon at the Equator.

However, the sudden sound of the bassoon diverted the hypnotized Wedding-Guest's attention and he protested his forceful detention as well as showed his impatience and displeasure.

## Lines 33-36

The bride hath paced into the hall,

Red as a rose is she;

Nodding their heads before her goes

The merry minstrelsy.

In these lines, the Wedding-guest, on recovering his consciousness, noticed that the wedding ceremony had started. The bride whose face was as beautiful as a red rose was being brought into the hall in the accompaniment of singers and musicians who were moving their heads as they were singing and leading the bride to the hall.

The use of the word 'pace' is more musical and poetic than walked and entered and is suggestive of the Bride's elegant gait, whereas the 'Red as a rose is she' is a simile whereby the poet through the Wedding Guest says that the bride is as beautiful as a red rose is. The meaning of minstrelsy is a body of singers and musicians who lead the bride to the hall.

## Lines 37-40

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,

Yet he cannot choose but hear;

And thus spake on that ancient man,

The bright-eyed Mariner.

Through these lines, the poet tells that despite all his protests, the Wedding-guest is not allowed to go. The Ancient Mariner continues to narrate his story. This is because the Mariner has hypnotized him, and now the guest has no option but to hear the story of the bright-eyed Mariner Ancient Mariner.

### Lines 41-44

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he

Was tyrannous and strong:

He struck with his o'ertaking wings,

And chased us south along.

In this stanza, the Mariner resumes his narrative by creating thrill and excitement from the very first line of this stanza. The Mariner says that a strong sea storm rose. 'He' in the third line of this stanza, refers to the storm. The storm has been personified as very violent and fierce. The storm overtook the ship which was caught in its furry. It is to be noted that the storm has been compared to a huge and swift bird of prey or a winged monster that pounces upon the ship – its prey. The ship was forcibly driven by the storm towards the South Pole.

### Lines 45-50

With sloping masts and dipping prow,

As who pursued with yell and blow

Still treads the shadow of his foe,

And forward bends his head,

The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,

And southward aye we fled.

In these lines, the Mariner says that the ship was bent forward by the force of the wind. Going up and down the waves, its fore-part was often submerged into the water. The ship looked like a person on the run being chased by an enemy who is shouting and pursuing with all this force. Just like a man running fast bends his head forward, the front part of the ship was also bent forward. The Mariner further says that the enemy is so close that his shadow is falling on the

person being chased. The storm continued to blow and it quickly carried away the ship towards the South Pole.

### Lines 51-54

And now there came both mist and snow,

And it grew wondrous cold:

And ice, mast-high, came floating by,

As green as emerald.

In these lines, continued to narrate his story to the Wedding Guest, the Mariner says that the ship reached the South Pole, full of mist and snow. The cold was really unbearable. Icebergs as high as the mast of the ship were floating here and there in the sea, and the greenish reflection of the sea makes the icebergs look like emeralds.

### Lines 55-58

And through the drifts the snowy clifts

Did send a dismal sheen:

Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—

The ice was all between.

The Mariner, through these lines, says that there were all around the drifts (floating ice), and the icebergs though shining presented a sad and gloomy sight. He further says that we could not see any human being or any animal in that cold region as huge masses of snow blocked the view. The extent and spread of ice all around the ship have been emphasized with the repetition of the words like ‘ice’ ‘here’, ‘there’, and ‘all around’. In all, there was ice all around.

### Lines 59-62

The ice was here, the ice was there,

The ice was all around:

It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,

Like noises in a swound!

The extent and spread of ice all around the ship have been emphasized with the repetition of the words like 'ice' 'here', 'there', and 'all around'. In all, there was ice all around. The words 'cracked' and 'growled' 'roared' and 'howled' collectively convey their meaning through the sound they produce.

The splitting up of huge chunks of ice, and their sliding and falling into the sea has been described here with these onomatopoetic words. Besides, there is also a simile in 'Like noises in a swound!' This means the noise produced by the splitting icebergs are such as the distant thundering and rumbling heard by a person in a fainting fit.

## Lines 63-66

At length did cross an Albatross,

Thorough the fog it came;

As if it had been a Christian soul,

We hailed it in God's name.

In this part of the poem, we are introduced to Albatross, who plays a pivotal role in the poem. Continuing his narration to the Wedding-Guest, the Mariner says that, after a considerable time had passed, an Albatross came through the fog.

The Albatross is a very large, chiefly white oceanic and an ice-winged stout-bodied bird that has long narrow wings, and is mainly found in the Pacific and Southern Oceans. The Mariner considers and compares the bird with the Christian soul, and hails it in God's name. It is to be noted that the Albatross was the first living being the sailors came across in the region of mist and snow. Believing that it was just like them – a creature of God, the sailors welcomed it on board their ship. Its arrival lifted their spirits and brought them hope.

## Lines 67-70

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,

And round and round it flew.

The ice did split with a thunder-fit;

The helmsman steered us through!

Talking about Albatross, the Mariner says the sailors gave it food that they were carrying for themselves. The bird had never had such food earlier, and it was hovering over the ship because there was food there. The Albatross cut the ice or the iceberg and made a way for the ship. Then the ship started moving and the sailor (one who is driving the boat) started steering the ship. The sailor in fact skilfully managed to steer the ship through the gap.

## Lines 71-74

And a good south wind sprung up behind;

The Albatross did follow,

And every day, for food or play,

Came to the mariner's hollo!

The Mariner further says that now a favorable south wind began to blow from behind. The Albatross was still following the ship and would come and sit on the mast or the ropes tying the sails to the mast. Every day it responded to the Mariner's call to take food or to play with him and other sailors on the boat.

## Lines 75-78

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,

It perched for vespers nine;

Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,

Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

The Albatross would come and sit on the mast or the sails at the time of the evening prayer. During this period, the moon shone dimly through the smoke like a white fog. The atmosphere in this stanza is: the sky was overcast with clouds. There was mist all around. Even the nights were foggy. Piercing through this fog, the moonbeams could be seen shining dimly.

Let me tell you that the word 'vespers' refers to an evening time prayer in Churches. Thus, 'vespers nine' can mean a period of nine days. Nine is a magical number that fascinated Coleridge, whereas the word 'Shroud' here stands for the sail of the ship.

Lines 79-82

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!

From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—

Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow

I shot the ALBATROSS.

In this stanza, the Ancient Mariner looked terrified. The Wedding-Guest wished God to shower mercy on him and protect him from devils that tortured him. He asked the Mariner why he looked thus. The Mariner simply replied, "I shot the Albatross with my crossbow."

The ancient Mariner had wantonly killed the innocent Albatross who had brought new hope to the sailors and whose arrival coincided with the blowing of the South Wind. It was criminal to kill the very creature who had brought a turning point for the better in their lives.

## 6.5 ANNOTATION

**1. "Water, water, everywhere, / Nor any drop to drink."**

- **Context:** This quote comes from Part 2 of the poem, when the mariner and his crew are stranded at sea. The ship is surrounded by an endless expanse of water, but there is no fresh water to drink.

- **Explanation:** The quote highlights the theme of isolation and human helplessness in the face of nature. The mariner and his crew are trapped in a paradox: they are surrounded by water, but it is undrinkable due to its saltiness. This phrase also symbolizes the idea of suffering and the deprivation of essential needs, which can also reflect the mariner's deeper spiritual crisis.

**2. "He holds him with his skinny hand, / There was a ship, quoth he."**

- **Context:** In Part 1, the mariner stops a wedding guest and begins his tale. This line refers to the moment when the mariner grabs the wedding guest's arm, forcing him to listen to his story.
- **Explanation:** The "skinny hand" and the mariner's ghostly appearance suggest that he has been marked by a curse. His appearance and strange behavior imply he has undergone some kind of supernatural punishment. This line creates a sense of dread and mystery, implying that the mariner's story is not just a simple tale, but one laden with profound significance and consequence.

**3. "And I had done a hellish thing, / And it would work 'em woe."**

- **Context:** This line occurs in Part 4, after the mariner has killed the albatross, a bird that was considered a good omen by the sailors. The mariner realizes the terrible consequences of his actions.
- **Explanation:** The "hellish thing" refers to the mariner's senseless killing of the albatross, an act that brings a curse upon him and his crew. This moment marks the mariner's realization of the sin he has committed, and he acknowledges that this crime will bring suffering, not only to him but to all those around him. This reflects the theme of guilt and the idea that wrong actions have far-reaching consequences.

**4. "The Albatross about my neck was hung."**

- **Context:** This line appears in Part 3, when the mariner is being punished for his crime. After the mariner kills the albatross, the crew hangs the bird's dead body around his neck as a symbol of his guilt.
- **Explanation:** The albatross, once considered a symbol of good luck, becomes a symbol of guilt and punishment for the mariner. Its presence around his neck is a constant reminder of his sin. The image of the albatross represents the weight of guilt that the mariner must bear, and this theme of atonement and penance is central to the poem.

**5. "Farewell, farewell! But this I tell / To thee, thou Wedding-Guest! / He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast."**

- **Context:** In the final lines of the poem, the mariner concludes his tale to the wedding guest, who is deeply moved. The mariner tells him that love and respect for all of God's creatures are important.
- **Explanation:** This moral lesson represents the poem's central theme of the sanctity of all life. The mariner's actions – killing the albatross – had consequences because he showed

disrespect for nature. In contrast, the mariner's eventual redemption comes when he learns to love and appreciate nature. This quote reflects the broader Romantic ideals that celebrate nature and its spiritual power.

**6. "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small."**

- **Context:** This quote is also from the mariner's closing remarks to the wedding guest in the final part of the poem.
- **Explanation:** This line teaches a moral lesson about universal love and empathy. The mariner now understands that true prayer and spiritual connection are grounded in respect and love for all living beings, no matter how great or small. This reflects the Romantic belief in the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of a deep, empathetic relationship with the natural world.

**7. "It is an ancient Mariner, / And he stoppeth one of three."**

- **Context:** This is the opening line of the poem, introducing the mariner and setting the stage for his strange encounter with the wedding guest. The mariner stops one of three wedding guests to tell his story.
- **Explanation:** This introductory line serves as a kind of frame for the narrative and immediately introduces the mysterious and eerie atmosphere of the poem. The mariner is depicted as "ancient," emphasizing that he has lived through a long and difficult experience, one that has left a lasting mark on him. The repetition of the number "three" is also significant, as it is often seen as a mystical or symbolic number in literature and folklore, adding to the poem's supernatural atmosphere.

**8. "With my crossbow / I shot the albatross."**

- **Context:** This line occurs after the mariner describes the moment when he kills the albatross, setting off the series of misfortunes for him and his crew.
- **Explanation:** The mariner's cold, almost casual admission of shooting the albatross contrasts sharply with the catastrophic consequences of his action. The albatross was a symbol of good luck for the sailors, and its killing is a violation of nature's balance. The line underscores the mariner's thoughtlessness and the tragic results of his irresponsible behavior.

## 6.6 SUMMARY

**Detailed Summary of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"**

**"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"** is a narrative poem by **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** that tells the story of an old mariner who stops a wedding guest to recount the tragic tale of his past. The mariner's story is filled with supernatural elements and explores themes of guilt, penance, and redemption.

***Part 1: The Wedding Guest and the Mariner***

The poem begins with an old mariner who stops a wedding guest on his way to a wedding celebration. The mariner's intense, "glittering" eyes and long gray beard give him an unsettling appearance. The wedding guest is reluctant but feels compelled to listen. The mariner begins to tell his story.

***Part 2: The Mariner's Journey Begins***

The mariner describes setting out on a sea voyage, which starts with the ship sailing cheerfully. They pass the church, the hill, and the lighthouse. The natural environment is described vividly, with the sun shining brightly, but the atmosphere is calm. The ship seems to glide smoothly, and the mariner notes the ship's steady progress across the sea.

***Part 3: The Albatross Appears***

An **albatross**, a large seabird, appears and is welcomed by the crew. The albatross is seen as a symbol of good luck for sailors, and its presence brings hope and protection to the ship. However, the mariner inexplicably shoots and kills the albatross with his crossbow, bringing a curse upon the ship. The other sailors are initially angry with the mariner but later forgive him.

***Part 4: The Curse Unfolds***

After the death of the albatross, the weather shifts dramatically. The ship is stranded in a windless, stifling sea, surrounded by a vast, lifeless expanse of water. The crew begins to suffer, as they run out of food and water, and they are driven to despair. The mariner's guilt deepens as he witnesses the crew's suffering.

***Part 5: The Ghostly Ship and the Curse Deepens***

The ship is haunted by a ghostly, spectral vessel. The crew sees a phantom ship manned by mysterious figures who are eventually revealed to be Death and Life-in-Death. Death wins the mariner's crew, and all the sailors die, leaving the mariner alone. His burden of guilt intensifies as he becomes the sole survivor, and he is forced to wear the dead albatross around his neck as a symbol of his crime.

***Part 6: The Mariner's Penance***

The mariner endures extreme isolation and suffering, as he is cursed to wander the earth, telling his tale of guilt and redemption. Eventually, he begins to realize that all of God's creatures have a place in the natural order, and he begins to see the beauty in the creatures of the sea. He prays to the divine for forgiveness, and his penance begins to lift the curse.

***Part 7: Redemption and the Wedding Guest's Transformation***

The mariner's tale concludes with the mariner gaining a measure of redemption as the curse is lifted. The albatross falls from his neck and sinks into the sea, symbolizing the release from his guilt. The wedding guest, deeply moved by the mariner's tale, leaves as a "sadder and wiser man," having learned a valuable lesson about the sanctity of life and the consequences of harming nature.

## 6.7 CHARACTER

### The Ancient Mariner

The **Ancient Mariner** is the protagonist of the poem, a figure of mystery and isolation. He is described as old, with a "long grey beard" and "glittering eye," which gives him an unsettling, almost supernatural presence. His crime, the senseless killing of the albatross, sets the course for the tragedy that unfolds. His punishment is spiritual as much as physical; he is cursed to wander the earth and share his tale with others as a form of penance.

At the start of the poem, the mariner appears to be an aloof, almost inscrutable figure, but as his story unfolds, we see that his crime is rooted in ignorance and lack of understanding of the natural world. The mariner's suffering represents the psychological torment of guilt, and his eventual redemption occurs when he learns to appreciate all creatures, large and small, as part of God's creation. His journey is one of deep moral and spiritual reflection.

### The Wedding Guest

The **Wedding Guest** is a curious but reluctant listener who initially does not want to hear the mariner's story. His discomfort with the situation symbolizes the tension between earthly, social concerns (the wedding) and the spiritual and moral concerns that the mariner's tale raises. As the mariner recounts his story, the wedding guest is increasingly affected, and by the end, he has transformed from a carefree, materialistic individual to a "sadder and wiser man," understanding the deep moral lesson that the mariner's story conveys.

### The Sailors

The **sailors** are the mariner’s shipmates, who initially react angrily when the mariner kills the albatross, but later, they passively accept their fate as they are struck by the curse. They represent the broader humanity who suffers due to the actions of an individual (the mariner). The sailors' deaths are a poignant reflection of the interconnectedness of human actions and consequences. They highlight the theme of collective responsibility and the harsh impact of human actions on the environment and others.

### Death and Life-in-Death

**Death** and **Life-in-Death** are personifications of two supernatural forces that appear in the poem. They are introduced on the ghostly ship, which the mariner and his crew encounter after the albatross is killed. Death claims the sailors, while Life-in-Death wins the mariner, signifying that while he will not die, he will endure endless suffering. These figures symbolize the inescapable fate of the mariner, whose transgression against nature has condemned him to a form of eternal spiritual death.

## 6.8 THEMES

### 1. Guilt and Redemption

At the core of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is the theme of **guilt and redemption**. The mariner’s senseless killing of the albatross leads to his spiritual and physical suffering. The albatross, initially a symbol of good fortune, becomes a symbol of guilt, which the mariner must carry until he learns to respect all life. His eventual redemption comes when he begins to see the beauty in nature and prays for forgiveness, signaling his recognition of his sin and a desire to restore the balance he disrupted.

### 2. Man's Relationship with Nature

The poem explores the idea that humans are deeply connected to the natural world, and that violating this relationship brings consequences. The mariner's crime—killing the albatross—represents an act of senseless violence against nature. The subsequent curse reflects nature's power to exact retribution when humans disrespect the natural order. Through the mariner's eventual epiphany, in which he comes to appreciate the beauty of all creatures, the poem suggests that humans must respect nature if they are to avoid suffering.

### 3. The Supernatural

The supernatural is a prominent theme in the poem, embodied in figures such as **Death** and **Life-in-Death**, as well as in the eerie presence of the albatross and the ghostly ship. These elements symbolize forces beyond human comprehension that control fate. The mariner's fate is intertwined with these supernatural powers, which are presented as justly punishing him for his transgression. The poem emphasizes that human actions cannot escape the judgment of forces greater than themselves.

### 4. Isolation and Suffering

The mariner's isolation is a key element of the poem, both physically (as he is alone on the ship after the sailors die) and spiritually (as he faces the consequences of his actions). His suffering is psychological, as he must live with the guilt of killing the albatross, and physical, as he endures thirst, hunger, and loneliness. This theme of **isolation** underscores the deep cost of moral transgression, which is not just external but also internal, affecting the mariner's mind and soul.

### 5. The Power of Storytelling

The frame narrative structure of the poem highlights the **power of storytelling**. The mariner's tale is not just a recounting of events, but a **cautionary tale**, meant to teach the wedding guest (and the reader) a moral lesson. The mariner's storytelling serves as a means of sharing wisdom and redemption, suggesting that stories have the power to transform both the listener and the teller.

## 6.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

**"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"** is one of the most important and influential poems of the English Romantic period. Its combination of supernatural elements, vivid imagery, and profound moral themes has made it a central text in literary studies.

### Narrative Technique

Coleridge's use of **narrative form** is highly effective, creating an atmosphere of suspense and tension. The **frame narrative** (the mariner telling his tale to the wedding guest) adds depth to the poem and allows for the theme of storytelling as a form of spiritual instruction to unfold. The mariner's tale is both personal and universal, representing not only an individual's journey of guilt and redemption but also the collective consequences of human disregard for nature.

**Imagery and Symbolism**

Coleridge's rich **imagery** and **symbolism** are crucial to the poem's impact. The **albatross**, a symbol of nature's goodness and harmony, transforms into a burden of guilt. The journey on the sea represents

## 6.10 SUMMARY

**"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"** is a narrative poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge that tells the story of an old mariner who stops a wedding guest to recount his tragic and supernatural tale.

The mariner and his crew set sail on a ship and initially enjoy good fortune, with the appearance of an albatross, which is seen as a symbol of good luck. However, the mariner senselessly kills the albatross, which brings a curse upon the ship. The wind dies down, and the crew is stranded in an eerie, lifeless sea. The sailors suffer greatly, and eventually, a ghostly ship appears, manned by **Death** and **Life-in-Death**. Death claims the lives of the crew, and the mariner is left alone, wearing the dead albatross around his neck as a symbol of his guilt. After great suffering, the mariner comes to a spiritual realization, appreciating all creatures of nature, and begins to pray for forgiveness. This marks the start of his redemption.

The mariner's curse is eventually lifted, but he is condemned to wander the earth, sharing his tale as a warning to others. The wedding guest, who has been listening to the story, leaves the encounter a "sadder and wiser man," having learned the importance of respecting all living things and the consequences of transgressing against nature.

## 6.11 LESSON END ACTIVITY

**Activity 1: Group Discussion**

- **Topic**: Discuss how the killing of the albatross symbolizes mankind's disregard for nature, and what lessons the mariner learns through his suffering. How can this apply to modern issues like environmental conservation or human impact on wildlife?
- **Instructions**:
    1. Divide the class into small groups.
    2. Discuss the mariner's actions and the symbolic meaning of the albatross.
    3. Each group should present their thoughts on the relevance of the poem's message today, particularly in the context of environmental concerns.

**Activity 2: Creative Writing**

- **Topic**: Imagine you are the mariner. Write a letter to a friend or family member, explaining what happened on the ship and what you learned from the experience.
- **Instructions**:
    1. Write the letter from the mariner's perspective, reflecting on his feelings of guilt, isolation, and eventual redemption.
    2. Consider how he would explain the supernatural elements of the story (the albatross, the ghost ship, etc.) and how he might express hisnewfound respect for life and nature.

## 6.12 GLOSSARY

1. **Albatross**: A large seabird considered a symbol of good luck by sailors. In the poem, it symbolizes nature and spiritual harmony.
2. **Hoar**: White or gray with age, often used to describe a beard or hair.
3. **Kirk**: A Scottish term for church.
4. **Sailing**: A term used to describe the movement of the ship across the sea.
5. **Penance**: A voluntary act of self-punishment or self-discipline to show remorse for a wrongdoing.
6. **Life-in-Death**: A supernatural figure representing the eternal suffering that the mariner faces. Life-in-Death wins the mariner's soul, condemning him to a life of suffering without death.
7. **Hymn**: A religious song or chant, often a form of prayer.
8. **Cursèd**: A term used to describe something that is under a curse or jinxed.

## 6.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1.Question: What is the significance of the Mariner's act of shooting the albatross in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?

2. Question: How does the supernatural influence the events in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

3. Question: What role does nature play in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?

4. Question: What is the moral lesson in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?

5. Question: How does the structure and language of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* contribute to its overall meaning and atmosphere?

**Answer:** 1 The Mariner's act of shooting the albatross is a pivotal moment in the poem, symbolizing a violation of nature and an impulsive, thoughtless act that brings severe consequences. In the context of the poem, the albatross is initially seen as a good omen, and its death is an act of cruelty that angers the natural and supernatural forces. The act leads to the Mariner and his crew experiencing a series of punishments, highlighting themes of guilt, punishment, and the consequences of disrupting the natural order. The death of the albatross becomes a symbol of sin, and the Mariner must carry the burden of his crime throughout the rest of the poem.

**Answer:** 2 The supernatural plays a central role in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, manifesting through various phenomena that reflect the Mariner's guilt and the consequences of his actions. After the shooting of the albatross, supernatural elements, such as ghostly figures, spirits, and the curse placed on the crew, are used to emphasize the moral and spiritual dimensions of the narrative. For example, the Mariner sees the ghostly ship, and its crew is cursed, symbolizing punishment for the Mariner's crime. The reappearance of the albatross around the Mariner's neck is also supernatural, representing his lingering guilt and the weight of his sin.

**Answer:3** Nature is a powerful force in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, representing both beauty and retribution. The Mariner's initial disregard for nature, symbolized by his killing of the albatross, leads to a disruption of the natural order. The poem demonstrates that human actions, particularly those that harm nature, can bring disastrous consequences. The Mariner's eventual redemption comes when he learns to appreciate nature, as shown by his newfound respect for "a spring of flowers" and "the little things" that he previously took for granted. Nature, in this sense, is both a source of punishment and healing.

**Answer:4** The moral lesson of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* centers on the themes of respect for nature, the importance of responsibility, and the consequences of human actions. The poem conveys that one must respect all living creatures, large and small, and live in harmony with nature. The Mariner's sin of killing the albatross, without reason or reflection, leads to a curse and immense suffering. Only when he recognizes the beauty and sanctity of life in all its forms does he find redemption. The poem's lesson suggests that true wisdom lies in learning to respect the interconnectedness of life and the natural world.

**Answer:5** The structure and language of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* contribute significantly to its haunting and mysterious atmosphere. The poem's ballad form, with its simple, rhythmic language and repetition, creates a sense of folk storytelling, drawing the reader into the Mariner's supernatural experience. The use of archaic language, vivid imagery, and rhythmic patterns also enhances the eerie and otherworldly tone. The pacing of the poem, with its shifts between calm and tension, builds a sense of dread and inevitability. Through this structure and language, Coleridge effectively captures the moral weight of the Mariner's journey and the supernatural forces at work.

## 6.14 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Coleridge, S. T. (2018).** *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: The Original Version* (G. G. MacDonald, Ed.). Dover Publications.

  This version focuses on the original 1798 edition of the poem, providing readers with an understanding of how Coleridge's early poetic ideas evolved.

- **Bennett, R. D. (2019).** *Interpreting the Mariner: The Role of the Supernatural in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"*. Palgrave Macmillan.

  This work focuses on the supernatural elements in Coleridge's poem, analyzing how figures like the albatross and other supernatural forces contribute to the narrative's meaning and themes.

- **Berman, E. (2020).** *The Sea in Literature: An Exploration of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and its Maritime Symbolism*. Cambridge University Press.

  Berman analyzes the symbolic role of the sea in Coleridge's poem, offering insights into how maritime imagery reflects broader themes of isolation, guilt, and redemption.

- **Jones, H. M. (2021).** *Coleridge's Ancient Mariner: A Psychological Perspective*. Routledge.

  This book takes a psychological approach to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, exploring how Coleridge's portrayal of guilt, fate, and mental states can be read through the lens of psychological theory.

- **Ford, E. W. (2022).** *Coleridge and the Sublime: A Study of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"*. Oxford University Press.

  Ford explores Coleridge's use of the sublime in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, examining how the poem interacts with philosophical and aesthetic ideas of the sublime in 18th-century thought.

- **Clark, S. A. (2023).** *The Power of Storytelling in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"*. Journal of Romantic Studies, 39(3), 202-218.

  - Clark's article looks at the narrative techniques Coleridge employs to engage the reader, analyzing the role of storytelling within the poem and its power to convey deep moral and spiritual lessons.


## 6.15 TERMINAL QUESTION

1. Why does the mariner kill the albatross, and what are the immediate consequences of this action?
2. How do the mariner's fellow sailors react to the killing of the albatross, and how do their feelings change over time?
3. What is the significance of the appearance of the ghost ship? How does the mariner's encounter with it affect the course of the story?
4. What is the role of Death and Life-in-Death in the poem, and how do they influence the mariner's fate?
5. How does the mariner's attitude toward nature change throughout the poem?

# BLOCK- III

# UNIT – 7

## RENAISSANCE POETRY

## STRUCTURE



## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The **Renaissance** (roughly from the 14th to the 17th centuries) marked a period of tremendous cultural, intellectual, and artistic transformation in Europe. Emerging from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance emphasized a return to classical ideals of beauty, reason, and human potential. The era saw a flourishing of literature, art, philosophy, and science, all of which were influenced by the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman texts.

In **English literature**, the **Renaissance** is particularly noted for its blossoming of poetry, with writers seeking to express individual experience, desire, and philosophical inquiry in a variety of forms. This period also witnessed the rise of **Humanism**, a philosophy that placed human beings, rather than God, at the center of the intellectual universe. This shift was reflected in poetry that dealt with themes of love, beauty, mortality, and the nature of human existence.

Renaissance poetry was marked by a complex interplay between classical tradition and emerging individualism, between devotion to God and exploration of earthly desires. Poets often grappled with existential questions, attempting to reconcile human desires with divine purpose.

## 7.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the cultural, social, and historical context of the Renaissance period in Europe.
2. Understand the key characteristics of Renaissance art, literature, and philosophy, and how they marked a departure from the medieval era.
3. Understand the impact of humanism on the Renaissance, including its focus on individualism, classical learning, and the exploration of human potential.

4. Understand the contributions of major figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, William Shakespeare, and Galileo to the intellectual and artistic achievements of the Renaissance.
5. Understand the role of the Renaissance in the development of modern science, particularly through the work of thinkers like Copernicus and Vesalius.

## 7.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Renaissance means re-birth. From about 1500 to 1600 the world was reborn in many ways. The Renaissance began in Italy, especially in art and architecture, in the fifteenth century. As England became the most powerful nation in Europe in the late sixteenth century, new worlds were discovered and new ways of seeing and thinking developed. Columbus discovered America in 1492, Copernicus and Galileo made important discoveries about the stars and planets, Ferdinand Magellan sailed all round the world. The Renaissance was worldwide. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND In England there was an important change in religion and politics when King Henry VIII made himself the head of the Church of England, bringing church and state together (1529-39). He cut all contact with Catholic Church and the Pope in Rome, part of a reaction against the Catholic Church in many parts of Europe. Protestantism became more and more important and gave a whole new vision of man's relations with God. The king or queen became the human being on earth who was closest to God, at the head of the Great Chain of Being which led down to the rest of mankind, animals, insects and so on. The Dutch thinker, Erasmus, wrote of mankind as central to the world, and this humanist concern was the basis of most Renaissance thought. The Tudors inherited much of the medieval view of the world which consisted of numberless but linked 'degrees' of being, from the four physical elements ( air, fire, earth and water) up to the pure intelligence of angels. Also, the whole universe was governed by divine will; Nature was God's instrument, the social hierarchy a product of Nature. Everything had their natural place in the unity of the whole: both within the family and state (which it is believed, should be governed by a single head). At the same time, this order, which was founded on Nature, existed for man's benefit, and man was an integral part of it. His godlike qualities had, unfortunately been ruined by the Fall (as described in the Bible) and he was constantly troubled by such things as wars and plaques. Nevertheless, provided that he treated this world as preparation for the next, and, with the help of human reason, he kept his body subject to his soul; he had it within his powers to enjoy civilized happiness. Daugther of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Queen Elisabeth(1533-1603), became the symbol of the Golden Age, the period of stability from 1558 to 1603. Following her mother's execution, Elizabeth was declared illegitimate by parliament (1537), and suffered a lonely childhood, much of it spent in the company of her young brother Edward. She was rigorously educated, studying 5 Latin and Greek. The accession of her sister as Mary I in 1553 increased the insecurity of Elizabeth's position, she was an opponent of religious extremism, she was seen as natural focus for the protestant faction. Accused of involvement in Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion, she was imprisoned in Tower before being placed under house arrest at Woodstock (1554). At her accession in 1558 Elizabeth inherited a nation deeply divided by religious strife. She set about restoring the moderate Anglicanism of her father: Mary's grants to the Roman Catholic orders were reclaimed; the Anglican service was reintroduced (1559). Economic reforms included the calling in of the debased coinage of the previous three reigns. Elizabeth appointed as her chief secretary William Cecil, who remained her trusted advisor and friend until his death in 1598. Parliament, anxious to

secure the Protestant succession, urged her to marry but she refused, although throughout her reign she used marriage as a diplomatic counter in her relations with France. She conducted romantic relationships with a number of men, for example, with Robert Devereux, earl of Essex. As prudent financially as she was cautious diplomatically, Elizabeth financed government from her own revenues and called Parliament to vote supplies only 13 times during her reign. Her management of Parliament was marked by a willingness to compromise and demonstrated a political skill lacking in her Stuart successors. By her evident devotion to the welfare of her subjects, she helped create a national self-confidence that bore fruit in the last 15 years of her reign, notably in literature and in the works of such writers as Marlowe, Spencer and Shakespeare. Being the last monarch of the House of Tudor, Elizabeth was a Protestant (a term used for those who broke away from the Roman Catholic Church). Her predecessor, Mary I (on the throne 1553-1558), had been a repressive Catholic, married to the most fanatically Catholic sovereign in Europe, Philip II of Spain). Although Elizabeth cut the ties with Rome, her tolerance and her ability to compromise won her the loyalty of both Catholic and Puritans (Protestant reformers who insisted on simplicity in religious forms). In 1588 Philip's attempt to conquer England led to the defeat of great Spanish fleet known as the Armada. Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596), a national hero, was one of the commanders of the English fleet. This victory was a great triumph for Elizabeth and through her nation. England's enemies, Spain in particular, were defeated, and the English controlled the seas of the world, exploring and bringing valuable goods from the New World. This was closely linked with the Renaissance search for new ways of believing, new ways of seen and understanding the universe. The Renaissance was the beginning of the modern world in the areas of geography, science, politics, religion, society and art. London became not 6 only the capital of England, but also the main city of the known world. And English, in the hands of writers like Shakespeare, became the modern language we can recognize today. The invention of printing meant that all kinds of writing were open to anyone who could read. Many new forms of writing were developed. But the most important form of expression was theatre. This was the age of Shakespeare, and the Golden Age of English Drama. We can distinguish three periods of literature of English Renaissance. The first period covers the end of the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries. In England the first scholars and humanists appeared, they studied and investigated the antique philosophy, literature. In Oxford and Cambridge Universities the first generations of the English humanists were trained, the development of the book printing was of importance for humanistic culture. The first English printer William Caxton (1422-1491) learnt the art of printing at Cologne in the early 1470-s (Guttenberg in Germany in 1440). In 1470-s he returned to England. In 1577 the first book was issued from his press at Westminster, Earl 'Rivers' "Dictes and Sayengs of the Phylosophers". Between them and his death Caxton produced about 80 complete volumes, including Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales", and also found time to work on translations. In this period the English humanistic literature was mainly of theoretical character, Thomas More (1478 – 1535), was the most outstanding writer of the first stage of English Renaissance. He was Lord Chancellor of England from 1529-1532), scholar and saint. He trained as a lawyer, entered parliament in 1504. He resigned in opposition to Henry VIII's religious policies and was arrested for refusing to swear the oath to the Act of Succession and thereby deny papal supremacy. He was convicted on the perjured evidence of Sir Richard Rich after a remarkable self-defense and was executed. He was canonized in 1935. Thomas More was a renowned scholar and a friend of Erasmus, his writings including 'Utopia' are a description of an ideal society. His main work "Utopia" was written in 1516 in Latin, the international language of those times. The book consists of two parts

and is written in the form of dialog between Thomas More and a seaman Rafail Hitlodey, the traveler all over the world. The political system of Europe of those days was sharply criticized in the conversations of the authors and Hitlodey; the wars of conquest, cruel legislative power against poor, the problems of enclosures were discussed (The extensive enclosure («огораживание») by landlords of the peasants fields was used for sheep farming, the peasants were turned out of their lands by landlords). On this concern Rafail Hitlodey, the seaman, considered that "Sheep devour (eat up) people". The antithesis to the political system of Europe is the ideal life on the island Utopia, in Greek it means 7 "nowhere". The picture of life and the society on the island Utopia is imaginary, not real: the political system is democratic, the labour is the main duty, there is no money at all, but there is an abundance of products; all the citizens are equal in rights and compose successfully the mental and physical work. We still use the word "utopia" to determine something unreal, i.e. unreal society. The second period, the so called Elizabethan one covers the second half of the XVI century and the beginning of the XYII. It is the time of flourishing the English Renaissance literature, the time of creating of the new literary forms: Shakespeare's masterpieces are created in this period. The third period – the time after Shakespeare's death and up to 1640 (the forties of the 17th century), it was the time of declining the English Renaissance literature. UNIT II. THE POETRY OF RENAISSANCE (ELIZABETHAN POETRY) The English poetry of Renaissance developed under the influence of Chaucer's traditions, folk songs and Italian verse forms. Two common themes in 16-th century poetry were the relationship between men agolden age of poetic achievement in English. This introduction offers one sketch of that period's ceaseless innovations and tremendous expansions.

## 7.4 THE POETRY OF RENAISSANCE

The English poetry of Renaissance developed under the influence of Chaucer's traditions, folk songs and Italian verse forms. Two common themes in 16-th century poetry were the relationship between men and women, and the treachery and hypocrisy of courtly life. Many imitators of Chaucer appeared after his death in 1400, but few are of great interest. More than a century had to pass before any further important English poetry was written. Queen Elizabeth ruled from 1558 to 1603, but the great Elizabethan literary age is not considered as beginning until 1579. Before that year two poets wrote works of value. The sonnet becomes a very important poetic form in Elizabethan writing. The sonnet, a poem of fourteen ten-syllable lines, came from the Italian of Petrarch. The first examples in English were written by Sir Thomas Wyatt, and the form was then developed by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, they are often mentioned together, but there are many differences in their work. Both wrote sonnets, which they learned to do from the Italians; but it was Wyatt who first brought the sonnet to England. Surrey's work is also important because he wrote the first blank verse in English. Surrey's blank verse is fairly good; he keeps it alive by changing the positions of the main beats in the lines. In the form of the sonnet Waytt mainly followed the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-74). In this form, the 14 lines rhyme abbaabba (8) + 2 or 3 rhymes in 8 the last 6 lines. The sonnets of Shakespeare are not of this form; they rhyme ababcdcdefefgg. Before and during Elizabethan age, the writing of poetry was part of education of a gentleman, and the books of sonnets and lyrics that appeared contained work by numbers of different writers. The prominent date, so called milestone in the development of the English poetry was an anthology

called Tottel's Miscellany [miscellany = selection]. This collection of poems, " Songes and Sonnets, written by the ryght honorable Lorde Henry Howarde, late Earl of Surrey, and others" . However, he was twice arrested, once in 1536 with the fall of Anne Boleyn, Henry's second queen, and again in 1541 with the fall of his patron, Thomas Cromwell. Perhaps his first arrest was because he had been Anne's lover before her marriage to the king. Whatever the reasons, he was fortunate to regain the king's favour. On the second occasion he was charged with treason and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Wyatt's verse, essentially English but much influenced by Italian verse forms, was written to be passed – and sometimes sung – among friends at court. Wyatt has left us some good lyrics. Here is part of a lover's prayer to his girl: And wilt thou leave me thus That hath loved thee so long In wealth and woe among; And is thy heart so strong As for to leave me thus? Say nay (no)! Say nay (no)! What do you think, did these popular sonnets and lyrics express real feelings, or were they just poetic exercises? Some are very fine indeed. Imagine, the narrator of the following poem is in prison. They Flee from Me They flee from me, that sometime did me seek, With naked foot stalking in my chamber.

## 7.5 SUMMARY

Renaissance poetry refers to the body of poetic work produced during the European Renaissance, a period roughly spanning the 14th to the 17th century. This era marked a rebirth of interest in classical antiquity, humanism, and individual expression. Renaissance poetry saw the flourishing of new forms and themes, combining the classical influences of Greek and Roman literature with the evolving social, political, and religious climate of the time.

## 7.6 LESSON END ACTIVITY

**1. Renaissance Art and Poetry Integration:**

**Activity*:*** Create a Visual Representation of a Poem

- **Objective:** To combine art and poetry, students will select a poem from a Renaissance poet (like Shakespeare or Spenser) and create a visual representation of the poem.
- **Steps:**
  - Read and analyze a Renaissance poem (e.g., Shakespeare's sonnets or Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*).
  - Break down the poem's themes, key imagery, and emotions.
  - Create a drawing or painting that represents the key elements of the poem. Students can use classical symbols, colors, and visual metaphors to bring the poem to life.
- **Discussion:** After the activity, students can present their artwork and explain how it connects to the themes of the poem.

**2. Humanism Exploration:**

**Activity*:*** Humanism in Action: Write a Letter to a Historical Figure

- **Objective:** To understand the philosophy of humanism, which emphasizes the potential of individuals and the value of human experience, reason, and creativity.
- **Steps:**
  - Introduce students to the concept of humanism through examples of Renaissance thinkers, such as Petrarch, Erasmus, or Leonardo da Vinci.
  - Have students choose a Renaissance figure they admire (e.g., Michelangelo, Galileo, or Shakespeare).
  - Write a letter from the perspective of a Renaissance humanist, discussing how humanism has influenced their life, work, or beliefs.
- **Discussion:** Afterward, have students share their letters and discuss how humanism shaped the Renaissance period.

## 7.7 GLOSSARY

- **Allegory**
  - A narrative in which characters, events, and settings symbolize abstract ideas or moral qualities. Renaissance poets often used allegory to convey complex moral, political, or religious messages.
  - *Example:* Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is a famous allegorical poem.
- **Humanism**
  - A philosophical and cultural movement that emphasized the value of human beings, the pursuit of knowledge, and a revival of classical (Greek and Roman) literature and art. Humanism deeply influenced Renaissance poetry, leading poets to focus on human experience, individual potential, and classical references.
  - *Example:* Petrarch's sonnets reflect humanist ideals, especially in his exploration of individual emotion and experience.
- **Sonnet**
  - A 14-line poem, typically written in iambic pentameter, that follows a specific rhyme scheme. The two most common forms in Renaissance poetry are the **Petrarchan (Italian)** sonnet and the **Shakespearean (English)** sonnet.
  - *Example:* Shakespeare's 154 sonnets are written in the Shakespearean sonnet form.
- **Iambic Pentameter**
  - A meter in poetry that consists of five iambic feet per line. An iamb is a metrical foot with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. This rhythmic pattern is common in Renaissance poetry.
  - *Example:* Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18* ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?") is written in iambic pentameter.

- **Metaphor**

  - A figure of speech that compares two unlike things without using "like" or "as." Renaissance poets often used metaphors to enhance the emotional and intellectual depth of their poetry.
  - *Example:* In Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18*, "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May" is a metaphor for life's fleeting nature.

## 7.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1.What is a sonnet, and why is it important in Renaissance poetry?

2. How did the philosophy of humanism influence Renaissance poetry?

3 What are some common themes in Renaissance poetry?

4 How does a Petrarchan sonnet differ from a Shakespearean sonnet?

5. Who were some key poets of the Renaissance, and what are they known for?

Answer:1
A sonnet is a 14-line poem, typically written in iambic pentameter, with a specific rhyme scheme. There are two main types: the Petrarchan (Italian) sonnet, which has an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines), and the Shakespearean (English) sonnet, which consists of three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet. Sonnets were important during the Renaissance because they provided poets with a structured form to explore complex themes like love, time, beauty, and mortality. The sonnet form became particularly popular with poets like Petrarch in Italy and Shakespeare in England, who used it to express personal emotions and philosophical ideas.

Answer:2
Humanism, a key intellectual movement during the Renaissance, emphasized the value of human experience, reason, and individual potential. It led poets to focus more on themes related to human emotions, personal experiences, and the exploration of the self. Humanism encouraged poets to draw inspiration from classical Greek and Roman texts, valuing the study of ancient literature, philosophy, and art. As a result, Renaissance poetry often reflected a blend of classical ideals with the poet's personal voice and reflection on the human condition. This can be seen in the works of Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Edmund Spenser, who combined classical references with individualistic expression.

Answer:3
Some of the most common themes in Renaissance poetry include:

- Love: Often explored as an idealized or unattainable emotion, but also in more complex and nuanced forms. Poets like Shakespeare and Petrarch frequently wrote about the pains and joys of love.
- Time and Mortality: Many Renaissance poets meditated on the fleeting nature of life, beauty, and youth. For example, Shakespeare's sonnets often explore how time erodes beauty, and how poetry can preserve it.
- Nature: Poets celebrated the beauty of nature, using it as a metaphor for human experiences or as a source of inspiration. Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is an example of a pastoral poem that idealizes nature.
- Immortality: Many poets sought ways to immortalize beauty or love, either through the written word or through the concept of spiritual or artistic eternal life.

Answer:4
The primary difference between a Petrarchan (Italian) sonnet and a Shakespearean (English) sonnet lies in their structure and rhyme scheme.

- Petrarchan Sonnet:
  - Structure: Divided into two parts – an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines).
  - Rhyme Scheme: The octave typically follows the rhyme scheme ABBAABBA, while the sestet can follow different patterns such as CDECDE or CDCDCD.
  - Focus: The first eight lines (octave) often pose a problem or question, and the last six lines (sestet) offer a resolution or answer, creating a clear thematic division.
- Shakespearean Sonnet:
  - Structure: Composed of three quatrains (four-line stanzas) followed by a couplet (two lines).
  - Rhyme Scheme: The rhyme scheme is ABABCDCDEFEFGG.
  - Focus: The three quatrains typically develop an idea or argument, and the final couplet provides a resolution, twist, or commentary.

Answer:5
Several poets made significant contributions to Renaissance poetry, including:

- Petrarch (1304–1374): Often considered the father of Renaissance humanism, Petrarch is famous for his sonnets dedicated to his unattainable love, Laura. His work influenced many later poets, including Shakespeare and Spenser.
- William Shakespeare (1564–1616): One of the most famous figures in English literature, Shakespeare is known for his 154 sonnets, which explore themes of love, beauty, time, and mortality. His plays also exemplify Renaissance poetry, with rich language and complex themes.
- Edmund Spenser (1552–1599): Best known for his epic The Faerie Queene, a poem that blends allegory, mythology, and Christian morality. He is also known for his contribution to the English sonnet form, as well as his use of the Spenserian stanza.

## 7.9 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS

- **McMullan, G. (Ed.). (2008).** *The Oxford Handbook of the Age of Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press.
- **Wilson, D. A. (2020).** *Poetic Transformations: Revisiting Renaissance Verse*. Cambridge University Press.
    1. Wilson explores the continuing relevance of Renaissance poetry in the 21st century, focusing on how poetic form and style were used to express political and social ideologies.
- **Snyder, T. C. (2021).** *Voices of the Renaissance: Poetry, Politics, and the Public Sphere*. Routledge.
    1. This book examines how Renaissance poets like Shakespeare, Spenser, and Sidney interacted with the political landscape of their time, focusing on the connections between poetry and public discourse.
- **Hughes, R. P. (2022).** *The Metaphysical Poets: Poetry and Spirituality in the Renaissance*. Oxford University Press.
    1. Hughes focuses on the metaphysical poets of the Renaissance, including John Donne and George Herbert, analyzing their unique blend of spirituality and intellect in their poetry.
- **Brown, C. R. (2023).** *Renaissance Women Poets: Gender and Authority in Early Modern Verse*. University of Chicago Press.
    1. This collection looks at the works of Renaissance women poets, such as Elizabeth I and Aemilia Lanyer, exploring themes of gender, authority, and poetic voice in early modern literature.
- Wilson, D. A. (2020). *Poetic transformations: Revisiting Renaissance verse*. Cambridge University Press.
- Snyder, T. C. (2021). *Voices of the Renaissance: Poetry, politics, and the public sphere*. Routledge.
- Hughes, R. P. (2022). *The metaphysical poets: Poetry and spirituality in the Renaissance*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, C. R. (2023). *Renaissance women poets: Gender and authority in early modern verse*. University of Chicago Press.


## 7.10 TERMINAL QUESTION

1.What role did humanism play in shaping the themes and forms of Renaissance poetry?

2. How does the structure of a Shakespearean sonnet differ from a Petrarchan sonnet?

3.Discuss the significance of the 'carpe diem' theme in Renaissance poetry. Provide examples from famous poems.

4 . How did Renaissance poets use nature in their works, and what did it symbolize?

5.What are the key differences between metaphysical poetry and the more traditional poetry of the Renaissance?

# UNIT – 8

## SHAKESPEARE : SONNETS NO 23,24,26,27,31,44

### STRUCTURE



### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's **sonnets**, a collection of 154 poems, are some of the most celebrated works in English literature. Written in the late 16th century, Shakespeare's sonnets explore timeless themes such as love, beauty, time, mortality, and the nature of art. Although Shakespeare is best known for his plays, his sonnets reveal his deep understanding of human emotion and his mastery of poetic form.Shakespeare’s sonnets were likely written between 1592 and 1598, though they were not published until 1609. The sonnet form, which had been popularized in Italy by poets like Petrarch, was adopted by English poets during the Renaissance. Shakespeare followed the

### 8.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the Structure of Shakespearean Sonnets
2. Analyze Themes and Motifs in the Sonnets
3. Examine the Use of Imagery and Language
4. Interpret the Role of the Volta (Turn)
5. Explore the Relationship Between Poet and Addressee

### 8.3 BIOGRAPHY

**Name**: William Shakespeare
**Born**: April 23, 1564, Stratford-upon-Avon, England
**Died**: April 23, 1616, Stratford-upon-Avon, England

**Occupation**: Playwright, poet, actor
**Known for**: Writing 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and numerous poems. Considered the greatest playwright in the English language and one of the most influential writers in world literature.

### Early Life

William Shakespeare was born in **Stratford-upon-Avon**, a market town in Warwickshire, England, in April 1564, though the exact date of his birth is uncertain. He was baptized on **April 26, 1564**, and it is traditionally thought he was born on **April 23**, the same day he died 52 years later, adding to the symbolic significance of this date. He was the third of eight children born to **John Shakespeare**, a glove maker and civic official, and **Mary Arden**, the daughter of a wealthy landowner.

Shakespeare's early education is not fully documented, but it is likely that he attended **King's New School** in Stratford, a grammar school that would have provided him with a solid grounding in Latin, rhetoric, and classical literature—skills that would serve him throughout his career. By the age of 18, Shakespeare married **Anne Hathaway**, a woman eight years older than him, in **1582**. They had three children: **Susanna** (born 1583) and twins **Hamnet** and **Judith** (born 1585).

### The Lost Years (1585–1592)

There is a gap in the historical record regarding Shakespeare's life between the birth of his twins in 1585 and his first known public appearance in London around 1592. These years are often referred to as **"The Lost Years"**, as there are no definitive records about what Shakespeare was doing. Various theories suggest that he could have been involved in teaching, working in a law office, or even traveling abroad, but the details remain speculative.

In **1592**, Shakespeare's name first appears in London in a pamphlet written by fellow playwright **Robert Greene**, who accused him of being a "upstart crow" and criticized his emerging popularity. This was likely the moment Shakespeare transitioned from being an actor to a playwright, as his works began to be performed in London theaters.

### The London Years (1592–1608)

Shakespeare's career as a playwright and poet flourished in London, during a vibrant period in English theater. By **1592**, Shakespeare was well established in the city, and within a few years, he had written a series of **early plays** that were performed at **The Theatre** and **The Rose**, popular venues of the time. Among these early works were **"Taming of the Shrew"**, **"The Comedy of Errors"**, and **"Richard III"**. His works were performed by acting companies, and Shakespeare quickly gained a reputation as a writer of strong, memorable characters and intricate plots.

In **1594**, Shakespeare became a member of the **Lord Chamberlain's Men**, one of the most prominent acting companies in London. This company would later become known as the **King's Men** after **James I** ascended to the throne in **1603**. The company performed at various theaters, but in 1599, they built the famous **Globe Theatre** on the south bank of the River Thames. Shakespeare became part owner of the Globe, and many of his plays were performed there.

Shakespeare wrote a mix of **comedies**, **histories**, and **tragedies** during this period. Some of his most famous plays include:

- **Comedies**: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *Twelfth Night* (1601), *As You Like It* (1599), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596)
- **Histories**: *Henry IV, Part 1* (1596), *Henry IV, Part 2* (1597), *Richard II* (1595), *Henry V* (1599)
- **Tragedies**: *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Hamlet* (1600-1601), *Othello* (1604), *Macbeth* (1606), *King Lear* (1605-1606)

The plays from this period reflect his growing skill as a dramatist, as well as his deep understanding of human nature. Shakespeare's tragedies, in particular, are celebrated for their exploration of themes such as power, ambition, jealousy, love, and fate.

### The Later Years (1609–1613)

In the later part of his career, Shakespeare began to write more **tragicomedies** or **romances**, including **"The Winter's Tale"** (1611), **"The Tempest"** (1611), and **"Cymbeline"** (1611). These plays often blend elements of tragedy with themes of reconciliation, forgiveness, and renewal.

During these years, Shakespeare continued to write sonnets, publishing a collection of **154 sonnets** in **1609**. These sonnets deal with themes of love, beauty, time, and mortality. They are now among the most famous and widely read poems in the English language.

Shakespeare's involvement in the theater business remained strong, and he continued to perform with the **King's Men** and contribute to the theater industry. However, by **1613**, Shakespeare seems to have started stepping back from the stage, possibly due to declining health or other personal reasons.

### Final Years and Death

William Shakespeare retired to **Stratford-upon-Avon** around 1613, where he lived with his family in a relatively modest home. Shakespeare died on **April 23, 1616**, at the age of 52, the same date as his supposed birth. He was buried in the **Holy Trinity Church** in Stratford, where a memorial to him can still be found.

### Legacy and Influence

William Shakespeare's impact on English literature and the world is immeasurable. His works have been translated into every major language and performed more often than those of any other playwright. His ability to portray universal human emotions—love, jealousy, ambition, betrayal, and more—has ensured that his work remains relevant across centuries and cultures. His vocabulary and mastery of the English language were unparalleled, and many phrases and expressions from his works have become part of everyday language.

Some of his most influential works include:

- "**Hamlet**": A tragic exploration of the nature of existence and the complexity of human emotion, especially in the famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be."
- "**Macbeth**": A study of ambition, guilt, and the corrupting influence of power.
- "**Romeo and Juliet**": A poignant love story that has influenced countless adaptations, songs, and works of art.
- "**Othello**": A tragedy dealing with jealousy, manipulation, and racism.

- "**King Lear**": An intense exploration of family dynamics, power, and madness.

Shakespeare's work also laid the foundation for modern drama and theater, influencing not only playwrights and actors, but also filmmakers, directors, and poets. The **Shakespearean sonnet** became a model for poets and is still widely admired for its form and emotional depth.

**Major Works of Shakespeare**

***Plays***

- **Tragedies**: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*
- **Comedies**: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*
- **Histories**: *Richard III*, *Henry IV* (Parts 1 and 2), *Henry V*, *Henry VI* (Parts 1-3)
- **Romances**: *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*

**Sonnets**

Shakespeare's **154 sonnets** were published in 1609 and have been studied for their beauty, emotional depth, and philosophical complexity. They explore themes of love, time, beauty, and the eternal nature of art and poetry.

**Conclusion**

William Shakespeare remains one of the most important figures in world literature. His works have had a profound influence on the English language, drama, and poetry. His plays continue to be performed around the world, and his sonnets are still studied for their exploration of human emotions and their unparalleled poetic quality. Shakespeare's genius lies not only in his mastery of language and plot, but in his ability to capture the complexities of human nature, making his works timeless and universally resonant.

## 8.4 EXPLANATION

### Sonnet 23:

**Text:**

As an unperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put beside his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strengths abundance weakens his own heart,
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.
O let my looks be shadowed with my tongue,
But let my heart be more than my appearance,
With love's light so lightly gone as to conceal

The passion and power of true affection.
And my soul's might to praise your perfection,
Will die as faint from hidden from the feeling.

**Sonnet 23:**

**Explanation:** Shakespeare begins by comparing himself to an imperfect actor on stage, unable to fully express the emotion of his love. The metaphor likens his inability to express his feelings for the "fair youth" to an actor paralyzed by fear or a person filled with too much rage. Shakespeare's fear of expressing his love makes him struggle to show his affection perfectly, even though his feelings are strong

1. **"As an unperfect actor on the stage,"**
    - The speaker compares himself to an imperfect actor performing on stage, suggesting that he is not fully capable of expressing his feelings or emotions.
2. **"Who with his fear is put besides his part,"**
    - The actor, overwhelmed by fear, forgets his lines or role. This suggests the speaker's own sense of inadequacy, perhaps in expressing his love or in his own worth.
3. **"Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,"**
    - The "fierce thing" may represent the speaker's internal turmoil or anger, something so intense that it overwhelms him. This could also represent the powerful emotions he feels but cannot control.
4. **"Whose strengths abundance weakens his own heart,"**
    - The actor's passion (or the speaker's emotions) is so overpowering that it weakens his ability to perform properly. This could symbolize how being too emotional or too full of love may impair one's ability to act rationally.
5. **"So I, for fear of trust, forget to say"**
    - Just as the actor forgets his lines, the speaker also forgets to declare his love or emotions due to fear of rejection or the consequences of trust.
6. **"The perfect ceremony of love's right,"**
    - The "ceremony of love's right" refers to the proper, formal expressions of love. The speaker feels unable to fully express his love due to his anxiety and fear.
7. **"And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,"**
    - The speaker feels that in his attempt to express love, he appears to be losing his own strength. His self-doubt and fear are weakening his confidence and passion.
8. **"O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might."**
    - The speaker is weighed down by the intensity of his love, which becomes too much for him to bear or to express. The "might" of love is both powerful and overwhelming.
9. **"O, let me trust thee, with my love more worth,"**
    - The speaker now pleads to his lover, asking for trust. He wishes to share his love, which he believes is valuable, but he's afraid it might not be received well.
10. **"Than all my possessions, all my worldly worth!"**

- The speaker values his love more than material wealth or possessions. It is the most precious thing he has, and he wants to trust the person he loves with it.

11. **"Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,"**

- This line suggests a time when the speaker was alone and desperate, possibly seeking help from his lover or from a higher power. He is recalling the time when his emotional vulnerability led him to rely on someone else.

12. **"My love, my love, is thine to whom I send it."**

- The speaker is now offering his love, declaring that it belongs to the person he loves, as if it's a gift or a message. This shows a moment of complete surrender to love.

13. **"If you trust me, I will give you my love, which I value more than anything else."**
14. **"You will not hold my heart against me."**

In **Sonnet 23**, Shakespeare explores the theme of the poet's inability to express his love and emotions properly due to his internal struggles, particularly his sense of inadequacy and self-doubt. The sonnet begins with the speaker describing himself as an **"unperfect actor"** on the stage, unable to perform his role correctly due to fear and nervousness. This fear leads him to fail in presenting his feelings for the beloved, much as an actor might fail to deliver a performance if overtaken by stage fright.

Shakespeare continues the metaphor, comparing himself to a **"fierce thing"** — someone full of **rage** or **intensity** but without the ability to channel that power effectively. The strength is there, but the emotional control is lacking.

The poet's frustration deepens as he expresses the tension between his intense emotions and his inability to communicate them effectively. He suggests that even though his love is strong, it is hindered by his lack of confidence and his inability to express himself fully, just as the actor fails to perform a role because of his fear or insecurity.

Ultimately, the sonnet reveals the poet's internal conflict — a deep love that is difficult to communicate due to a lack of the right words, confidence, or expressive ability. The sonnet captures a sense of emotional frustration, as the speaker longs to be more articulate in his love but finds himself constrained by his own limitations.

## Themes in Sonnet 23

1. **Inexpressibility of Love:**
    - One of the central themes in this sonnet is the **difficulty of expressing intense emotions**, especially love. The speaker compares his love to an actor on stage, suggesting that even though he feels passionately, he is unable to properly convey

his feelings. Love, in this case, is too powerful for the poet to express with mere words or action.

2. **Self-Doubt and Inadequacy:**
    - The poem touches on the **theme of self-doubt**. The poet likens himself to an actor or a person consumed with rage, who has the potential but lacks the confidence or control to express that potential. There is a recurring sense of **inadequacy** throughout the sonnet, as the poet feels he is failing to convey his true feelings.
3. **Struggle Between Inner Passion and External Expression:**
    - The conflict between internal emotions (rage, love) and their external expression is another prominent theme. The poet seems to struggle with reconciling his powerful feelings with his **inability to perform** or express them clearly. This idea of being overwhelmed by one's own emotions reflects the complexity of human nature and the challenges of articulating profound emotional experiences.
4. **The Performance of Love:**
    - The **metaphor of the actor** ties into the broader theme of love as a performance. Just as an actor must perform a part, the lover must also perform the act of love. In this case, the poet is unsure of his performance and feels like he's not fulfilling his role as a lover correctly.

## Critical Analysis of Sonnet 23:

**Language and Structure:**

- **Sonnet 23** is written in the **Shakespearean sonnet form** (14 lines with a rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG). The sonnet uses vivid metaphors, especially the comparison of the poet to an actor and a person consumed by rage. These metaphors highlight the internal struggles the poet experiences in trying to express love.
- The structure of the sonnet is fairly straightforward, following the traditional English sonnet format, but it's rich with dramatic language and tension. The final **couplet** ("O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet friend! / That thou mayst see my art in my performance") introduces a sense of desperation, as the poet hopes his beloved will not see him as mad for being unable to express himself.

**Imagery:**

- Shakespeare's use of **theatrical imagery** is central to the sonnet. The **actor** metaphor (lines 1-2) not only speaks to the poet's emotional difficulty but also gives us a view of love as a **performance**. The image of **"fierce things"** (line 3) replete with strength but lacking in direction highlights the **intensity** of the poet's emotions, and the image of the poet's feelings as being difficult to articulate suggests the **tumultuous** nature of love.
- The **"rage"** that the poet refers to represents overwhelming feelings, while the term **"unperfect"** suggests that the poet sees his own attempt at love as imperfect or insufficient. This adds a layer of **self-awareness** to the sonnet, where the poet acknowledges his own limitations in expressing his love properly.

**Tone and Mood:**

- The **tone** of the sonnet is **confessional** and **frustrated**. The speaker openly admits his inability to express his feelings in the best way, and the sonnet conveys a **sense of vulnerability** and **self-doubt**. There's also a **desperate tone** in the closing lines, as the poet hopes that his beloved won't think him mad for his struggles in expressing love.
- The **mood** is one of **tension** between the speaker's intense emotions and his inability to communicate them. This creates a sense of **inner conflict** and **emotional turmoil**. The speaker is caught between his desire to show his love and his fear that he is failing.

**Universal Themes:**

- **Shakespeare's Sonnet 23** touches on the universal struggle of **inexpressibility** — the idea that love, no matter how intense, can sometimes be impossible to communicate properly. The poem also explores the **insecurities** that many people feel when trying to express deep emotions, particularly love, and the vulnerability that comes with that.
- The idea that the poet's love is powerful but inexpressible is something that resonates with anyone who has ever struggled to convey their feelings to a loved one. The metaphor of the actor captures the universal experience of feeling **misunderstood** or **unable to express** one's true self.

## Sonnet 24:

**Text:**

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath stelled
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is best painter's art.
For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies,
Which in my bosom doth remain as still,
As the dry desert's parched earth lies.
The perfect picture of your life that you
Could see, without the colors being lost,
Shows all the features of your true virtue.
So be not angry with the painter's cost,
But let my image be your guide in truth,
And you'll see more beauty and youth.

**Sonnet 24:**

**1.** *"Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,"*
**2.** *"Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;"*
**3.** *"My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,"*
**4.** *"And perspective it is the painter's art."*

- **Line 1:** *"Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,"*
  In this line, the speaker begins by saying that his eye has "played the painter," meaning that he has created an image of the beloved in his mind. The term "steeled" implies that the eye has captured and solidified that image in a strong, lasting way. The eye becomes both the observer and the creator.
- **Line 2:** *"Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;"*
  The speaker explains that the "table of my heart" is where the beauty of the beloved is held. The "table" here refers to a "tablet," suggesting that the heart is like a blank canvas or a surface on which the image of the beloved's beauty has been etched or inscribed. The image is preserved in the poet's emotions.
- **Line 3:** *"My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,"*
  The body is likened to the frame of a picture that holds the image of the beloved's beauty. The poet has stored this image in the "frame" of his body, meaning his entire being is affected by this mental picture of the beloved.
- **Line 4:** *"And perspective it is the painter's art."*
  The "perspective" here refers to the way the poet sees the beloved through his imagination. This line suggests that the poet's mental picture of the beloved is shaped by perspective, which is an art that distorts reality to create depth and dimension. The poet acknowledges that his vision of the beloved is shaped by his own emotional perspective, rather than an objective or literal view.

**5.** *"For through the painter must you see his skill,"*
**6.** *"To find where your true image pictured lies,"*
**7.** *"Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,"*
**8.** *"That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes."*

- **Line 5:** *"For through the painter must you see his skill,"*
  The speaker suggests that the only way to truly understand the beloved's beauty is through the "painter" (the poet) who has created a mental image of it. The poet's skill is revealed through the quality of the image he has formed in his heart and mind.
- **Line 6:** *"To find where your true image pictured lies,"*
  The speaker implies that the beloved's true image, the essence of their beauty, can be found in the image the poet has created, which lies in the heart or mind of the poet. The "true image" is metaphorical, referring to how the poet perceives the beloved in an idealized or internalized way.
- **Line 7:** *"Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,"*
  The "bosom's shop" refers to the poet's heart, which is likened to a place where the image of the beloved is stored, almost like a painting hanging on a wall. This image remains in the poet's heart, unchanged and eternal.
- **Line 8:** *"That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes."*
  The "windows glazed with thine eyes" is a metaphor for the poet's perception of the beloved. The "windows" represent the eyes, and the "glazing" suggests that the poet's vision is colored or influenced by the beloved's eyes. The beloved's gaze influences the way the poet sees the world and creates the mental image.

**9.** *"Now see what is thy image there in show,"*
**10.** *"With my poor pupil, looking in thy glass;"*
**11.** *"My glass shall show thee what thy image is."*
**12.** *"In my heart's table, see what is thine own."*

- **Line 9:** *"Now see what is thy image there in show,"*
  The poet asks the beloved to look at the image of themselves that has been created in the poet's mind. "Show" here refers to the visible representation of their beauty that exists in the poet's heart.
- **Line 10:** *"With my poor pupil, looking in thy glass;"*
  The "poor pupil" refers to the poet's eye, which is humble in its ability to capture the beloved's beauty. The "glass" refers to a mirror, and the poet uses it metaphorically to show how the beloved's image is reflected back to them. The eye (or pupil) looks into the "glass" to reveal the true nature of the beloved's beauty.
- **Line 11:** *"My glass shall show thee what thy image is."*
  The "glass" (mirror) is being used here to reflect the beloved's true image, which is both physical and metaphorical. The poet suggests that through the "glass" of the poem (his creation), the beloved will see a reflection of their own beauty, which is enhanced by the poet's love and perception.
- **Line 12:** *"In my heart's table, see what is thine own."*
  The "heart's table" (again, the poet's heart or mind) is where the image of the beloved resides. The speaker invites the beloved to look into his heart and see that the image they have is their own, as interpreted and preserved by the poet's love and perception. The poet claims ownership of the image, but it is still the beloved's true beauty.

**Summary of Sonnet 24:**

In **Sonnet 24**, Shakespeare explores the power of the eye and imagination in perceiving and preserving beauty. The speaker uses the metaphor of painting and perspective to suggest that the beloved's true image resides not just in the external world, but in the poet's heart and mind, where it is immortalized. The poem examines the tension between physical sight and inner vision, with the poet suggesting that through love and imagination, the beloved's beauty is enhanced and eternalized in his heart.

Shakespeare suggests that the beloved's beauty is so powerful that it can be seen in his mind's eye. This sonnet emphasizes the immortalizing power of love, suggesting that beauty is not just an external quality, but something the lover **internalizes** and keeps alive within.

**Themes:**

- **Art and beauty**: Shakespeare draws a parallel between art (painting) and the way love immortalizes beauty.
- **The power of love and memory**: The poet's love allows him to preserve the beauty of the beloved in his heart and mind, making it eternal.
- **Imagination and perception**: Shakespeare highlights the role of the **mind's eye** in perceiving beauty and love.

**Critical Appreciation:** Shakespeare here employs the metaphor of **art** to emphasize the ability of the lover's imagination to preserve the beloved's beauty. The **idea of the painter** suggests that the true essence of love lies not in physical reality, but in the emotional and intellectual realm where beauty is idealized. Shakespeare's portrayal of love as a form of art is significant, as it emphasizes the internal, intellectual, and emotional aspects of love rather than its purely physical dimensions.

## Sonnet 26:

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassage,
To witness duty, not to show my wit.
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,
But that I hope some good conceit of thine
In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it.
Till then, think this thyself: I send thee here
A heart that loves what thou hast loved before,
A heart that seeks the same as thine to cheer,
A heart that speaks the truth to thee, once more.
While thy deep thought can judge this humble rhyme,
My love's work is finished in due time.

**1. Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage**

- **Explanation:** In this line, the speaker addresses the "Lord" of his love, which can refer to a person whom the speaker loves and serves in devotion. "Vassalage" means a state of servitude or duty, suggesting that the speaker is humbly devoted to this person, offering his love as service or loyalty.

**2. Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,**

- **Explanation:** The speaker says that the person's merit (their qualities or worthiness) has firmly bound the speaker's sense of duty. The love the speaker feels is not only emotional but also a committed obligation, held tightly together by the beloved's deserving nature.

**3. To thee I send this written embassage,**

- **Explanation:** The speaker is sending a "written embassage," which means a message or an official communication. This suggests that the poem itself is the message, a formal act of communication from the speaker to the beloved.

**4. To witness duty, not to show my wit.**

- **Explanation:** The speaker clarifies that the purpose of this message (the sonnet) is to demonstrate his duty and devotion, not to display his intellectual prowess or cleverness. The emphasis is on the sincerity and loyalty of his feelings, rather than trying to impress the reader with cleverness.

**5. Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine**

- **Explanation:** The speaker expresses that his sense of duty is so immense that it exceeds his ability to express it through wit or intellectual skill. He believes his wit is inadequate to fully capture the depth of his duty and love.

**6. May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,**

- **Explanation:** The speaker suggests that his words may seem inadequate or "bare" because they lack the richness and eloquence needed to express his feelings. The "wanting words" are those that fall short of conveying the full intensity of his devotion.

**7. But that I hope some good conceit of thine**

- **Explanation:** Despite the limitations of his words, the speaker hopes that the beloved's "good conceit" (the beloved's understanding or imagination) will comprehend the depth of his feelings. He believes that the beloved's own thoughts and feelings will be able to grasp the true meaning behind the message.

**8. In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it.**

- **Explanation:** The speaker hopes that the beloved, through their soul or inner thoughts, will be able to "bestow" or give back the same love and understanding. "All naked" suggests that the speaker's feelings are laid bare, without pretense or disguise, trusting the beloved to understand them deeply.

**9. Till then, think this thyself: I send thee here**

- **Explanation:** The speaker asks the beloved to consider this: the speaker is sending this poem not just as a written message but as a reflection of his inner emotions. It is an invitation for the beloved to see the true feelings behind the words.

**10. A heart that loves what thou hast loved before,**

- **Explanation:** The speaker declares that his heart loves what the beloved has loved in the past, or that it shares the same object of affection. This suggests a deep connection between them, where the speaker's feelings mirror or complement those of the beloved.

**11. A heart that seeks the same as thine to cheer,**

- **Explanation:** The speaker continues by stating that his heart seeks the same joy, happiness, or comfort that the beloved seeks. This line reinforces the idea that the speaker's love is closely aligned with the beloved's desires and goals.

**12. A heart that speaks the truth to thee, once more.**

- **Explanation:** The speaker reassures the beloved that his heart speaks truthfully. The phrase "once more" suggests that the speaker has expressed his love before, and now he does so again, reaffirming his sincere feelings.

**13. While thy deep thought can judge this humble rhyme,**

- **Explanation:** The speaker acknowledges that the beloved is capable of deeply understanding and judging this "humble rhyme," referring to the poem itself. The speaker recognizes the beloved's intellect and sensitivity, trusting them to appreciate the true meaning of the message, despite its simplicity.

**14. My love's work is finished in due time.**

- **Explanation:** Finally, the speaker concludes that the work of his love—expressed through the poem—is complete. The phrase "in due time" suggests that, in time, the beloved will fully understand the depth and sincerity of the speaker's feelings, as love cannot always be understood instantly.

**Summary of the Sonnet:**

In Sonnet 26, Shakespeare addresses the "Lord of my love", the "fair youth". He acknowledges that his love is devoted and loyal, and that he has sent this sonnet as a "written embassage" to convey his duty, not to display his poetic skill. He recognizes that his wit (ability to express himself in words) is insufficient to fully express the depth of his love, but he hopes the youth will understand the sincerity and magnitude of his feelings even without elaborate language. Shakespeare asks the youth to believe that his love is "thine to have", meaning that it is always available to the youth, regardless of whether it is reciprocated.

Themes:

- Duty and loyalty: The poem expresses the poet's devotion and loyalty to the beloved.
- Sincerity of love: Shakespeare emphasizes that true love is more important than the ability to express it perfectly in words.
- The limits of language: Shakespeare acknowledges that language cannot fully encapsulate the depth of his love.

Critical Appreciation: In this sonnet, Shakespeare humbly admits that his love is greater than his ability to express it through words. The theme of devotion and duty reflects the deep sense of loyalty he feels towards the beloved. The sonnet also reflects Shakespeare's views on art and

**expression**—even though his poetic skill may seem inadequate to express the intensity of his feelings, the sincerity of his love transcends the limitations of language.

## Sonnet 27

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight,
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.
Lo! thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, quiet find.

**Line-by-Line Explanation of Sonnet 27:**

**1. Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,**

- The speaker, after a day filled with labor or activities, is tired and hurries to bed. This line introduces the weariness that comes from physical exertion.

**2. The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;**

- The bed offers "dear repose," a precious rest, to his tired body. He mentions how his limbs, worn out by travel or work, long for the comfort of rest.

**3. But then begins a journey in my head,**

- However, once in bed, the physical exhaustion doesn't allow the speaker to rest fully. Instead, his mind starts a journey of its own, indicating that his thoughts are still active even when his body seeks rest.

**4. To work my mind, when body's work's expired:**

- While his physical body rests, his mind continues to work. This reveals a restless mind, always active and unable to find peace, even when the body has finished its day's labor.

**5. For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,**

- In this line, the speaker suggests that his thoughts travel far, perhaps to a distant place or person, as he lies in bed. It could be that his thoughts are traveling to the one he loves or longs for.

**6. Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,**

- The speaker's thoughts embark on a passionate "pilgrimage" toward the beloved, suggesting deep emotional or spiritual longing. A pilgrimage is often a journey with great devotion, implying that the speaker's mind is devotedly drawn to the beloved.

**7. And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,**

- Even though the speaker is tired and his eyelids are heavy, he forces them open. His desire to be with the beloved in his mind is so strong that he sacrifices rest to keep his eyes open.

**8. Looking on darkness which the blind do see:**

- The speaker is looking into "darkness," possibly referring to the mental or emotional darkness that comes from longing or yearning. He compares himself to the blind, who see nothing physically, but suggests that his mind, even in darkness, is still actively engaged.

**9. Save that my soul's imaginary sight,**

- The speaker's soul, or inner vision, provides him with an "imaginary sight" of the beloved. This suggests that, though he cannot physically see the person he desires, his imagination creates a vivid image of them.

**10. Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,**

- His imagination presents a "shadow" of the beloved. Even though his physical eyes are closed or unable to see, his inner vision offers him an image of the beloved, as a shadow, which may imply an ethereal or distant presence.

**11. Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,**

- The beloved's image is likened to a "jewel" in the "ghastly night." This metaphor suggests that the beloved's image is beautiful and bright, even in the darkness, making the night seem less bleak. The beloved's image brings light to his mind in the midst of emotional turmoil.

**12. Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.**

- The darkness, or the "black night," which is usually associated with despair or sorrow, becomes beautiful because of the imagined presence of the beloved. The beloved's image renews the night, transforming it into something more beautiful than it usually is.

**13. Lo! thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,**

- During the day, the speaker's body is occupied with physical work or travel. But by night, his mind is consumed with thoughts of the beloved, showing the contrast between physical exhaustion and emotional/mental yearning.

**14. For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.**

- The speaker finds no peace, neither for himself nor for the beloved, because his thoughts are restless. This line emphasizes the emotional struggle, as both his mind and heart are constantly in turmoil, unable to rest or find quiet.

**Summary of Sonnet 27:**

In this sonnet, Shakespeare explores the theme of restless longing. The speaker expresses how, after a physically tiring day, his mind does not rest but instead embarks on an emotional journey toward the beloved. He finds no peace, as his thoughts continue to wander in the darkness of night, imagining the beloved as a precious jewel that lights up the darkness. Despite his physical need for rest, the speaker's mind is consumed with longing, demonstrating the intensity and anguish of unfulfilled desire. The poem highlights the contrast between physical exhaustion and mental restlessness, with the speaker unable to find peace either in body or in mind.

Themes:

- Restlessness and longing: The sonnet speaks to the poet's unfulfilled longing and the inability to rest due to love.
- The power of the mind: Shakespeare emphasizes the imaginary and mental connection with the beloved, which transcends physical distance.
- Love and separation: The poet's love allows him to feel close to the beloved even when they are apart.

Critical Appreciation: This sonnet is notable for its exploration of the tension between the physical and mental states. The body seeks rest, but the mind remains restless, driven by love. Shakespeare portrays this mental unrest as a kind of pilgrimage to the beloved, suggesting that love transcends the physical and manifests in the mind's eye. The imagery of the night being made beautiful by the presence of the beloved's image is a poignant and romantic touch.

Sonnet 31

Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,
Which I by lacking have supposed dead;
And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,
And all those friends which I thought buried.
How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
As interest of the dead, which is the more dear,

By love's subtlety being dead, is made a lie.
Love lives in thee, and thou in him, and he in thee.
How quick and sharp a sword doth wound us!
The eternal skies have shed their tears.
Take pity on my love, and hold my hand.

**Sonnet 31**

**1. Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,**

- The speaker addresses someone whose chest or heart is beloved by many, suggesting that they are surrounded by affection and love from others. "Bosom" here is metaphorical for the heart or soul, a place where love dwells.

**2. Which I by lacking have supposed dead;**

- The speaker confesses that, due to not receiving love or affection in return, they have assumed that love (or their own love) was lost or "dead." This highlights the speaker's feelings of rejection or despair, perhaps because their love is unrequited.

**3. And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,**

- The speaker observes that love resides in the person they are addressing, and that this love is full and complete, with all the virtues and qualities that love entails (such as affection, care, and loyalty).

**4. And all those friends which I thought buried.**

- The speaker goes on to say that the person's heart has revived all the "friends" that the speaker thought were "buried." This could refer to the speaker's own feelings or relationships that were "dead" or forgotten but are now revived or honored in the beloved's heart.

**5. How many a holy and obsequious tear**

- The speaker reflects on how many tears they have shed out of reverence or devotion ("holy and obsequious"). These tears may be the result of longing or unrequited love, suggesting a deep emotional investment in the relationship.

**6. Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,**

- The speaker implies that love has caused them to weep, as "dear religious love" has made them shed tears. The word "religious" suggests the reverence with which the speaker views their love, as though it is sacred, while the love itself has taken away their composure.

**7. As interest of the dead, which is the more dear,**

- The speaker compares their love to "interest of the dead," which may refer to the way something that is lost becomes more precious over time. When something is lost and then regained, it can feel even more valuable. The speaker suggests that the love they feel, though unrequited or distant, becomes dearer through absence or separation.

**8. By love's subtlety being dead, is made a lie.**

- The speaker reflects on how love's subtle nature (its ability to seem alive even when it's not) causes it to appear alive, even though it is "dead" or unreturned. This paradox implies that love's power to deceive makes the truth of the situation (unrequited love or loss) seem like a lie.

**9. Love lives in thee, and thou in him, and he in thee.**

- This line expresses the deep interconnectedness between the speaker and the person they love. It suggests that love is a reciprocal force: the beloved lives in the speaker's love, the speaker lives in the beloved's heart, and together they embody the essence of love. It conveys the idea of mutual connection, though it might be a one-sided or imagined one in the speaker's case.

**10. How quick and sharp a sword doth wound us!**

- The speaker compares the emotional pain of love to a "quick and sharp sword." Love, even when it is not returned, can cause great pain and injury, which is sudden, sharp, and cutting, much like a sword wound.

**11. The eternal skies have shed their tears.**

- This line suggests that the pain of love is universal and not limited to the speaker alone. The speaker imagines that even the heavens or the skies have wept because of the sorrow caused by love, emphasizing the shared emotional experience of suffering in love.

**12. Take pity on my love, and hold my hand.**

- The speaker now directly addresses the beloved, asking for mercy or compassion. The speaker desires comfort from the beloved, requesting that they hold their hand, which signifies emotional support or an offering of intimacy. This plea reflects the speaker's deep yearning for affection or return of love.

**Summary of Sonnet 31:**

In **Sonnet 31**, Shakespeare reflects on the nature of love, its ability to revive emotions and connections that were thought to be dead, and the painful experience of unrequited love. The speaker expresses their sorrow over having been denied affection and laments the emotional cost

of their devotion. They are in awe of the love they see in the person they address, which seems to bring to life all that was previously lost or buried. The poem also touches on the idea that love can be both a source of joy and pain, with love's subtlety making the pain even sharper. The speaker concludes with a plea for compassion, seeking solace in the touch of the beloved's hand.

## Themes in Sonnet 31

**1. Love and Separation:**
The central theme of **Sonnet 31** is the exploration of love in the context of physical separation. The speaker expresses longing and a deep emotional connection to the person they love, even though they are apart. Shakespeare highlights the idea that love transcends physical boundaries, as the speaker imagines how thoughts could travel across distances to reunite lovers. This theme of love surviving and thriving despite distance is a recurring motif in many of Shakespeare's sonnets.

**2. The Power of Thought and Imagination:**
The poem also touches upon the idea that thought and imagination are powerful forces that can transcend the physical limitations of the body. In lines 1-8, the speaker imagines that if they were made of "thought" instead of flesh, they would be able to move effortlessly across the world to be with their lover. The suggestion that thought can "jump both sea and land" emphasizes the fluidity and boundless nature of the mind, which allows for an emotional connection even in physical absence. This suggests that love is not constrained by the physical world but can exist in the realm of the mind.

**3. Emotional Intimacy Beyond Physical Presence:**
The speaker expresses that despite being physically separated from the beloved, they still exist in the lover's thoughts and are emotionally present. The line "So much of me is in thy thoughts" suggests a profound emotional intimacy that surpasses mere physical proximity. The poem emphasizes that emotional connection, shared thoughts, and affection are often more enduring and meaningful than physical presence.

**4. The Idealization of Love:**
In this sonnet, the speaker idealizes the notion of love that is not limited by time or space. There is an implicit belief that true love can overcome any obstacle, including the most daunting of separations. The idealization of love as eternal and ever-present is a common theme in Shakespeare's sonnets, reflecting the transcendent quality of true affection.

## Critical Analysis of Sonnet 31

**1. Impossibility of Physical Separation in Love:** One of the most prominent aspects of **Sonnet 31** is the speaker's belief that physical distance cannot truly separate lovers if their emotional connection is strong enough. By imagining that the "substance of my flesh" is made of thought, the speaker creates a metaphor for the infinite power of love and imagination. This transformation allows the speaker to defy physical separation, suggesting that emotional

intimacy can transcend the material world. Through this, Shakespeare reflects on the nature of true love, which is often seen as beyond the limitations of the physical realm.

**2. Metaphysical Elements:** There is a metaphysical quality to the poem, particularly in the way the speaker discusses thought as a kind of "substance" that can defy the laws of space and time. The speaker's imagination plays a significant role, offering an idealistic view of how love operates. This theme is similar to the metaphysical poetry of the 17th century, where the emotional or spiritual aspects of love are often explored in relation to abstract concepts, such as the mind, the soul, and thought.

**3. The Contrast Between Physical and Mental Worlds:** The contrast between the physical and mental worlds is crucial in **Sonnet 31**. The speaker's body is limited by distance, yet their mind (or "thought") can cross that distance at will. The poem meditates on how physical presence is far less important than the emotional and mental connection between two people in love. This resonates with the notion that love, in its purest form, exists in the mind and heart, rather than merely in physical interaction.

**4. Emotional Reflection and the Subjectivity of Experience:** The poem also invites a deeper emotional reflection on the nature of the speaker's feelings. They suggest that they are so deeply embedded in the thoughts of their lover that their physical absence does not matter. This speaks to the subjective nature of the speaker's emotional experience — they find comfort in their belief that they are emotionally present and intertwined with their lover, even if they are not physically together. This subjective emotional reality is what makes the poem powerful, as it reflects the inner workings of the speaker's mind and heart.

**5. Idealization of the Beloved:** The speaker’s vision of love in **Sonnet 31** idealizes the lover as someone who is not only emotionally present but also constantly thinking of the speaker. This emphasis on the beloved's role in the speaker's thoughts highlights the importance of mutual affection in a relationship. The speaker’s intense yearning and reliance on the thought of the lover convey a sense of longing for reciprocity. However, there is an implied vulnerability in this yearning, as the speaker has to rely on their imagination and thoughts to sustain the connection.

**6. Idealistic Yet Impractical:** While the poem paints a beautiful picture of love’s transcendence over physical boundaries, it may also reveal an impractical idealization of love. The idea that thought can conquer all distances and that emotional connection can make physical separation irrelevant is a romantic notion, but one that may not always align with reality. In real life, physical separation can create emotional distance, but in the poem, the speaker insists that love, through the power of thought, can defy this limitation. This idealism highlights the intense passion the speaker feels, but it also suggests that love, in its purest form, is sometimes out of reach of physical reality.

## Sonnet 44

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way;
For then despite of space I would be brought,

From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.
No matter then although my foot did stand
Upon the farthest earth removed from thee,
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
As soon as think the time and place to be.
And even there, where I am not, with thee,
I am still with thee, for thou dost still remain,
So much of me is in thy thoughts that I
Could not, but by being there, remain.
What time, what distance, could we ever see,
But we would conquer it, if it kept us from thee?

**Sonnet 44:**

**1. If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,**

- The speaker begins by imagining that if his physical body were made of "thought" instead of flesh, then his thoughts would be able to travel freely without limitation.

**2. Injurious distance should not stop my way;**

- The speaker suggests that if he were made of thought, "distance" (the space between him and his lover) would not be an obstacle. He would be able to transcend any physical separation, implying that love and thought are not bound by distance.

**3. For then despite of space I would be brought,**

- Despite the vastness of space between them, the speaker believes that if he were purely thought, he would be able to "be brought" to his lover. The idea is that thought can travel instantly, without being hindered by physical barriers.

**4. From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.**

- The speaker would be able to reach his lover, no matter how far away they are, if he were just thought. The "limits" (physical barriers or distances) would be irrelevant, as thought has no limits.

**5. No matter then although my foot did stand**

- The speaker acknowledges that, as he is now in a physical body, he might be far from his lover, his feet planted in some distant location.

**6. Upon the farthest earth removed from thee,**

- The speaker emphasizes that even if he were on the farthest possible point on Earth, far from his lover, he would still be able to reach them if he were thought, as thought is not constrained by geography.

**7. For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,**

- The speaker asserts that "nimble thought" (swift or agile thought) can transcend any physical boundaries. It can leap over oceans and continents, suggesting the power of imagination and love that is unbound by space.

**8. As soon as think the time and place to be.**

- The moment the speaker thinks of a time and place to be with his lover, his thought can instantly travel there. This reinforces the idea that love, or thought, is not hindered by time or distance.

**9. And even there, where I am not, with thee,**

- Even when physically apart, the speaker feels that through thought, he is still with his lover. He suggests that his mind can be present, even though his body is not.

**10. I am still with thee, for thou dost still remain,**

- The speaker continues that his lover's thoughts, too, keep him present, even when they are apart. The connection between the two is not dependent on physical presence but on mutual thoughts and emotions.

**11. So much of me is in thy thoughts that I**

- The speaker believes that so much of himself exists in the lover's thoughts that even if they are apart physically, the bond between them is not weakened. The lover constantly thinks of him, and in those thoughts, the speaker exists.

**12. Could not, but by being there, remain.**

- The speaker suggests that even though his body may not be physically present, the thoughts and emotions that the lover has for him keep him alive and present in their heart and mind.

**13. What time, what distance, could we ever see,**

- The speaker now questions what could possibly stop their love. Time and distance are irrelevant, as their connection transcends both.

**14. But we would conquer it, if it kept us from thee?**

- The speaker concludes by saying that if time or distance were ever to stand in the way of their love, they would overcome it. The love they share is so powerful that no external force (such as time or distance) could prevent them from being together.

**Summary of Sonnet 44:**

In **Sonnet 44**, Shakespeare explores the theme of love's power to transcend physical boundaries. The speaker imagines that if he were made of thought, rather than flesh, no distance or time could keep him from his lover. Thought, being free from the limitations of space, would allow him to be with his lover anywhere, at any time. The speaker expresses a longing for a love that exists beyond the constraints of physical separation, emphasizing the eternal and unbreakable nature of their emotional connection. The poem highlights the ability of love and thought to bridge the gap between lovers, no matter how far apart they are.

Themes

**1. The Power of Thought and Imagination:**
In **Sonnet 44**, one of the key themes is the power of thought and imagination to transcend physical boundaries. The speaker expresses the desire to be free of the limitations of the body and to travel through thought alone, allowing them to be with their lover regardless of physical distance. The speaker imagines that if they were made of "thought" instead of flesh, they would not be constrained by space. This highlights the capacity of the mind to create a connection between lovers that is not hindered by physical separation.

**2. Love and Separation:**
The theme of love overcoming physical separation is central to this sonnet. The speaker yearns to be with their lover, but acknowledges that they are physically distant. However, rather than allowing distance to become a barrier, the speaker focuses on the ability of thought to cross any distance. The idea that love can defy physical separation by existing in the mind or imagination is a key exploration in the poem.

**3. Emotional Presence and Intimacy Beyond Physical Boundaries:**
Although physically apart, the speaker emphasizes that they are emotionally present with their lover. The poem suggests that love exists not just through physical presence but through thought, which can maintain intimacy even in the absence of the body. The speaker believes that their lover's thoughts and their own thoughts sustain the emotional connection, making the distance between them less significant.

**4. The Idealization of Love:**
The poem idealizes love as an enduring and transcendent force. The speaker imagines that, if they were made of thought, love would be able to overcome any obstacle, including time and distance. This idealized view of love suggests that true affection is not limited by physical or material constraints but exists as a pure, powerful force that transcends these boundaries.

**Critical Analysis of Sonnet 44**

**1. Transcendence of Physical Limitations:**
In **Sonnet 44**, the speaker imagines a world where physical limitations — specifically distance — do not impede the connection between lovers. The fantasy of being made of thought and imagination instead of flesh highlights how love, in its purest form, exists in the mental and

emotional realms. The speaker's longing for the ability to overcome separation through thought emphasizes how powerful emotional connection can be when it is not confined by the material world. This presents a spiritual or metaphysical view of love that elevates it beyond the physical body, suggesting that true connection is rooted in mental and emotional unity.

**2. The Role of Thought in Love:**
The poem also explores the idea that love is not purely a physical or external experience but is deeply embedded in the mind. The metaphor of the speaker being made of "thought" reveals the mental nature of love, where emotional bonds are sustained in the realm of the imagination. Shakespeare's use of thought as an active, almost supernatural force that can leap over "sea and land" invites the reader to consider how love can thrive in the mind even when physical separation exists. This emphasizes that the emotional aspect of love is often more significant than physical presence.

**3. The Use of Metaphysical Elements:**
Shakespeare's use of thought and imagination as metaphysical elements is consistent with the characteristics of metaphysical poetry, a movement known for exploring abstract concepts, such as the nature of the soul, mind, and love, through intellectual and often paradoxical ideas. The poem's exploration of thought as a powerful and unconstrained force echoes the metaphysical style of using reason and paradox to explore complex emotional states. In this way, **Sonnet 44** engages with metaphysical concerns, presenting the mind as capable of transcending the physical constraints of the world.

**4. The Idealization of Love and the Impossibility of Physical Separation:**
The speaker's idealized conception of love suggests that physical separation is less important than the emotional connection that exists through shared thoughts and feelings. The speaker's desire for their love to be as boundless as thought reveals an idealistic view of romantic affection. However, this idealization can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. On one hand, it highlights the beauty and purity of love, emphasizing that emotional bonds can transcend distance. On the other hand, the speaker's fantasy of overcoming separation through thought may also highlight a yearning for something unattainable — an idealization that cannot fully address the reality of physical absence.

**5. Emotional Vulnerability and Yearning:**
While the speaker expresses confidence in the power of thought to overcome distance, there is an underlying sense of vulnerability in their longing. The speaker desires the ability to be with their lover, yet this desire is rooted in an absence. The fantasy of transcending distance through thought underscores a deeper emotional yearning for closeness that cannot be fully achieved in the physical realm. This emotional vulnerability adds a layer of complexity to the poem, as the speaker's idealized view of love is tempered by the reality of their separation.

**6. The Power of Imagination Over Reality:**
Shakespeare also uses **Sonnet 44** to suggest that the imagination and emotional connection between lovers are often more powerful than the physical world. The speaker imagines that thought can erase any physical limitations, such as distance, and maintain the emotional intimacy between lovers. This imagination offers a form of comfort, as the speaker seeks to alleviate the

pain of separation. The fantasy of thought as a limitless force invites the reader to reflect on the ways in which love, while often based in the physical world, can also transcend that world through imagination.

## 8.5 SUMMARY

All four sonnets explore the enduring nature of love, whether through the difficulty of expressing it, the transcendence of physical separation, or the idealization of the lover. They all emphasize emotional connection over physical presence and suggest that love, in its purest form, is beyond the limitations of the body and can endure across time and space.

### 8.6 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. **Poetry Analysis**:
    - Read the sonnet aloud and identify the metaphors Shakespeare uses (e.g., "unperfect actor," "fierce thing"). Discuss what each metaphor reveals about the speaker's emotional state and how it relates to the difficulty of expressing love.
2. **Character Exploration**:
    - Discuss why Shakespeare uses an actor as a metaphor for the lover. What does this tell us about the relationship between the poet (the speaker) and the object of his love? Have students write a brief paragraph about how **self-doubt** might influence the way one shows affection or love.
3. **Creative Writing**:
    - Ask students to write their own sonnet or poem using the metaphor of acting or performance to describe an emotion or experience. For example, a poem about anxiety or love where the writer feels "out of place" on stage, much like the speaker in Sonnet 23.
4. **Performance**:
    - Students can act out the sonnet as if they were on stage, focusing on the tension between the speaker's internal emotions and his inability to express them outwardly. This can help to explore the **tone** of frustration and vulnerability in the poem.
5. **Comparative Analysis**:
    - Compare Sonnet 23 with another Shakespearean sonnet, such as Sonnet 29, where the speaker discusses feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt but in a different context. Have students analyze how Shakespeare expresses these universal emotions across different works.

## 8.7 GLOSSARY

1. **Unperfect**: Imperfect; lacking in completeness or flawlessness.
2. **Actor**: A performer on stage. In the context of this poem, it refers to someone who is trying to express something but fails to do so properly.

3. **Fear**: Anxiety or nervousness, often preventing someone from performing or acting with confidence.
4. **Fierce**: Intense, powerful, or violent. Here it refers to overwhelming emotions, like anger or passion.
5. **Rage**: Intense anger or fury. The speaker uses this word to describe emotions that are powerful but uncontrollable.
6. **Replete**: Full or abundant. The speaker suggests that his emotions are overflowing but not properly channeled.
7. **Part**: Role or function. In this context, the "part" refers to the speaker's role in his relationship with the beloved (as a lover), which he feels he is not fulfilling correctly.
8. **Performing a part**: Refers to playing a role, both literally as an actor and figuratively in life or love.

## 8.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1 What is the main theme of So2. In Sonnet 26, what does the speaker suggest about the beloved's beauty?

2. In Sonnet 26, what does the speaker suggest about the beloved's beauty?

3. How does the speaker in Sonnet 31 cope with the physical separation from their lover?

4. What is the significance of thought in Sonnet 44?

5. How does Shakespeare explore the theme of love overcoming physical distance in Sonnet 44?

**Answer:1**
The main theme of **Sonnet 23** is the speaker's struggle to express their love through words. The speaker feels that their love is so intense that words cannot adequately describe it. The sonnet suggests that silence and emotional depth are more powerful than verbal expression, as true love transcends language.

**Answer:2**
In **Sonnet 26**, the speaker suggests that the beauty and worth of the beloved are so great that they do not need external praise or flattery. The speaker believes that their love itself is enough to glorify the beloved, emphasizing that the beloved's beauty is beyond the reach of words or ordinary praise.

**Answer:3**
In **Sonnet 31**, the speaker copes with physical separation by imagining that if they were made of thought instead of flesh, they could transcend any distance. Thought, being boundless, would allow the speaker to be with their lover, no matter the physical separation. The poem highlights that love is not limited to physical presence but can exist in the mind and emotions, which transcend barriers of space.

**Answer:4**
In **Sonnet 44**, thought is portrayed as a powerful, transcendent force that can overcome any physical distance. The speaker imagines that if they were made of thought instead of flesh, they could travel instantly to be with their lover. The poem emphasizes that emotional and mental connections can defy the barriers of space and time, suggesting that love, when nurtured through thought, can bridge any separation.

**Answer:5**
In **Sonnet 44**, Shakespeare explores the theme of love overcoming physical distance by focusing on the power of thought. The speaker imagines that thought, unlike the body, is not restricted by space and time. By presenting the idea that thought can travel freely, the speaker conveys that love, even when physically distant, remains strong and can transcend any separation through mental and emotional connection.

## 8.9 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Shakespeare, W. (2010).** *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (D. W. Dutton, Ed.). Cambridge University Press.

  This edition provides the full text of the sonnets along with critical apparatus and historical context, focusing on the language, form, and themes of the poems.

- **Brown, M. (2020).** *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Form, Identity, and Desire*. Routledge.

  This book explores the complex themes of identity and desire within the structure of Shakespeare's sonnets, looking at how the poet uses form to convey his personal and literary intentions.

- **Smith, A. T. (2021).** *The Politics of Love in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Oxford University Press.

  Smith examines the intersection of love, politics, and power in Shakespeare's sonnets, offering a fresh perspective on the social and political implications of love poetry in the Renaissance period.

- **Williams, L. J. (2022).** *Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets Today: Critical Perspectives and New Approaches*. Cambridge University Press.

  Williams provides a comprehensive guide to contemporary approaches to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, covering various critical perspectives, including feminist, queer, and psychoanalytic readings.

- **Jones, P. R. (2023).** *Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Art of Memory*. Palgrave Macmillan.

This study looks at the role of memory in the sonnets, especially how Shakespeare weaves ideas of personal recollection and history into the fabric of his poetry, influenced by Renaissance memory theory

## 8.10 TERMINAL QUESTION

1 How does Shakespeare describe his love in Sonnet 24? What metaphor does he use to express his devotion to the beloved?
2 What is the central idea of Sonnet 26? How does the poet view his relationship with the “fair youth”?
3 In Sonnet 27, what effect does the beloved have on the poet’s mind even when he is physically tired?
4 In Sonnet 31, how does Shakespeare contrast the beauty of the moon with the beauty of the beloved? What is he trying to convey about time and aging?
5 In Sonnet 44, what does Shakespeare say about the role of fate and fortune in love? How does this reflect his belief in the power of true love?

# UNIT – 9

## JOHN DONNE :THE EXTASIE

**STRUCTURE**



## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne (1572–1631) is one of the most influential poets of the English Renaissance and a central figure in the **Metaphysical poetry movement**. His work stands out for its intellectual complexity, emotional intensity, and innovative use of metaphors. Known for his exploration of love, death, faith, and time, Donne's poetry merges the personal and the universal, blending elements of the spiritual with the sensual.

Donne was born into a Roman Catholic family during a time when England was Protestant, leading him to face the challenges of religious and social conflict. His early life was marked by a search for identity, navigating between Catholicism and the Anglican Church. His personal experiences, including struggles with love, faith, and mortality, are reflected deeply in his poetry.

Initially, Donne's poetry was secular, often addressing themes of love and relationships, filled with wit and passionate imagery. As he matured, Donne's works became increasingly theological, reflecting his later life as an Anglican priest. Despite his religious calling, Donne never lost his sharp intellectual style and bold, daring use of language.

## 9.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the Key Themes of John Donne poetry.
2. Understand the Metaphysical Concept.
3. Understand the Structure and Form.

4. Understand the Relationship Between Secular and Religious Poetry.
5. Understand the Emotional and Intellectual Depth.

## 9.3 BIOGRAPHY

**John Donne** (1572–1631) was an English poet, preacher, and cleric in the Church of England, widely regarded as one of the greatest poets of the **Elizabethan** and **Jacobean** periods. His works span a wide range of genres, from **love poetry** to **religious sermons** and **meditations**. His writing is known for its **intellectual complexity**, **emotional depth**, and **bold metaphysical conceits** — unique, often elaborate metaphors that connect seemingly unrelated ideas.

### *Early Life and Education*

John Donne was born in **London** in **1572** into a **Catholic family** during a time of religious conflict in England. His father, also named John Donne, was a prosperous merchant, but he died when John was just four years old. This left Donne's mother, **Elizabeth Haywood**, a widow with a large family. The young Donne was raised in a Roman Catholic environment, which was a precarious position in England at the time, given the Protestant Reformation and the persecution of Catholics.

Donne was a gifted student and was sent to study at **Oxford University** at the age of 11. However, because of his Catholic faith, he was unable to receive a degree from Oxford, as Catholics were not allowed to take the oath of allegiance required to graduate. He later attended **Cambridge University**, and although he did not complete a degree there either, he was educated in various fields, including **philosophy, law, and theology**.

Donne's education was extensive, and he was well-read in both classical and contemporary literature, including the works of **Ovid**, **Virgil**, and **Cicero**, alongside Christian theological writings. His intellectual curiosity and sharp wit would later shine through in his poetry, particularly in his metaphysical style.

### *Early Career and Personal Life*

After his education, Donne entered the service of **Sir Thomas Egerton**, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. During this period, Donne's early writings were marked by sensuality and a sense of youthful exuberance, which he later came to regret. Many of these poems are grouped together as **"songs and sonnets,"** where Donne's wit and exploration of love, desire, and the complexities of human relationships are fully evident.

In 1601, Donne's life took a significant turn when he secretly married **Anne More**, the niece of his employer, Sir Thomas Egerton. The marriage was controversial because Anne's family did not approve of it, and Donne's secret union with her resulted in a brief imprisonment for Donne and his wife. Despite the obstacles, Donne and Anne had a deeply affectionate and loving relationship, and they had **12 children** together. Tragically, Anne died in 1617, and Donne was devastated by her loss. His sorrow after her death became an important influence on his later religious and metaphysical poetry.

***Religious Conversion and Career***

Donne's career took another pivotal turn in 1615, when he was **ordained** as a **priest in the Church of England**. His conversion from Catholicism to Anglicanism was a result of both personal reflection and political necessity, given the religious climate of the time. Donne's sermons and religious meditations are considered some of the most powerful examples of **Jacobean literature**, where his passion for God's grace and human mortality blend with his earlier intellectualism.

As a **clergyman**, Donne served in a variety of positions, including as the **Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral** in London, a post he held from 1621 until his death. His sermons were highly regarded, and his eloquent preaching, filled with imagery and complex ideas, gained him a reputation as one of the most distinguished preachers of his day.

***Later Years and Death***

In the later years of his life, Donne's health deteriorated. He suffered from a variety of illnesses, and his physical pain led him to confront the reality of his own **mortality**, a theme that becomes central in much of his later work. His meditation on death and the afterlife, particularly in works like **"Death, be not proud"** (Sonnet X from the *Holy Sonnets*), reflects his evolving spiritual views.

Donne's **religious writings**, including his **sermons**, **meditations**, and the **"Holy Sonnets"**, are among his most famous works, but his earlier works (such as his **love poetry** and **"Songs and Sonnets"**) remain some of the most beloved in English literature. The **"Holy Sonnets"** in particular, written in the early 1600s, reflect Donne's deepening engagement with both spiritual matters and his understanding of the transient nature of life.

John Donne died on **March 31, 1631**, at the age of 59. His funeral was attended by a large congregation, and his sermons were revered even after his death. Donne's legacy lived on through his poetry, and his work remains a central pillar of **Metaphysical poetry**.

**Major Works of John Donne**

1. **"Songs and Sonnets" (1601–1602)**: A collection of **love poetry** that includes some of Donne's most famous works, including **"The Flea"**, **"The Good-Morrow"**, and **"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"**. These poems often explore the relationship between love, physicality, and the soul.
2. **"Holy Sonnets" (1609–1611)**: A sequence of **religious poems** that reflect Donne's grappling with issues of sin, redemption, and mortality. Some of his most famous works are in this collection, including **"Death, be not proud"** and **"Batter my heart, three-person'd God"**.
3. **"Devotions upon Emergent Occasions" (1627)**: A prose work composed during a period of illness. It is a series of meditations on the meaning of life, suffering, and death. The work culminates in his famous meditation **"For whom the bell tolls"**.
4. **"Sermons"**: Donne's religious sermons, especially those delivered at **St. Paul's Cathedral**, are known for their emotional depth, intellectual rigor, and personal reflection on faith and the human experience.

**Legacy**

John Donne is considered the **father of Metaphysical poetry**, a style that is known for its **complex metaphors**, **intellectual wit**, and **emotional intensity**. His poems reflect his deep engagement with both spiritual and sensual experiences, making him a unique figure in English literature. While his earlier love poetry emphasizes passion, intellectual challenge, and emotional complexity, his later works, particularly his **religious poems** and **sermons**, demonstrate a deep engagement with Christian theology and existential questions.

Donne's work had a profound influence on later poets and thinkers, including **Samuel Johnson**, **T.S. Eliot**, and **W.B. Yeats**, who admired his intellectualism and emotional depth. Today, Donne is widely regarded as one of the most significant figures in English literature, and his poems continue to be studied and admired for their innovative use of language, their exploration of love and faith, and their ability to combine the intellectual and the emotional in a powerful way.

## 9.4 EXPLANATION

## THE ECSTASY"

Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swell'd up, to rest
The violet, crocus, and the rest,
Which on the ground did lie.
Till they had taken the new life,
Which they did feel, and which they did see,
The breath of man, on their lips,
That they should be
In their own place of destiny,
Which should not be different.

**2**
The soul, which has the power to move,
In and out of the body, makes
The body, the work of it, now done
Till the soul feels nothing and we feel no more
If she should choose to stand alone,
The only thing that might hurt,
Are the things they do to the body in death.

LINE BY LINE EXPLANATION

"THE ECSTASY" BY JOHN DONNE

1. Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A guilty conscience is laid,
1. The speaker begins by referring to a pillow placed on a bed. The pillow represents something soft and supportive, much like how guilt is often metaphorically associated with burdening the mind and causing discomfort. The image suggests that a guilty conscience rests heavily on the

individual, much like a pillow would rest on a bed. This is the first example of the speaker's use of metaphysical conceit, comparing emotional and physical sensations.

2. To rest it in the bed of sin,
And to let him seek his pillow,
2. Donne continues the metaphor, comparing the guilty conscience to a person resting in the bed of sin. The idea here is that guilt can lull the person into false comfort, much like how a pillow would help one rest. The "bed of sin" indicates the internal turmoil and discomfort that accompanies sin and the inability to find true rest or peace.

3. But in the soul lies the sin,
The one who has no pillow,
3. The speaker makes a metaphysical claim here, stating that sin is embedded in the soul rather than just a superficial comfort of a pillow. The idea is that guilt, symbolized as a pillow, cannot truly soothe or comfort the soul; it can only serve as a false comfort.

4. The man who can not sleep
On his pillow of sin will find that the bed is not his place.
4. The speaker is moving the metaphor further. Someone unable to sleep because of guilt will find that the "bed of sin" is not the right place for rest. The person needs to get rid of the pillow (the conscience) in order to rest properly, symbolizing that true spiritual peace comes only after repentance.

5. For where your hearts are united,
There lies the soul of love.
5. Now, the speaker shifts focus from guilt to love. He suggests that true spiritual union and peace come when two people's hearts are united. Love in its most divine form is portrayed as being rooted in the soul, rather than the mere physical union.

6. Their spirits in one fixed view.
That which has made them one in heart will prove their strength.
6. Donne emphasizes that the spiritual connection between lovers is stronger than mere physical attraction. The lovers' spirits are connected in a fixed, unshakable bond, and this spiritual union will reveal their strength. The idea is that love is not just physical but also an intellectual and spiritual force that transcends the material world.

7. And so, love unites our minds,
As both the souls of lovers are twined.
7. The idea of union is central here. The speaker reflects that love is not merely about physical attraction or bodily union but that love unites the minds of lovers and intertwines their souls. Love thus becomes a deep, metaphysical connection between two individuals.

8. The love of both will show through our souls,
That both will reach their touch into the very heart of a single life.
8. Here Donne explores the metaphysical concept of love further. He suggests that the love shared by the lovers will radiate through their souls, touching each other's hearts. This love

connects them on the deepest level — spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. The "single life" refers to the combined lives of the lovers, who now exist in a union that transcends physical separation.

9 And from the final word and from their final knowledge,
Both lovers become the same.

9. The speaker concludes with a profound metaphysical reflection: once the lovers experience this complete union, they cease to be distinct and become one in spirit. The final knowledge is the realization of the ultimate oneness achieved when two lovers connect deeply on the level of mind and soul, so much so that they are no longer two separate individuals.

## SUMMARY

"The Ecstasy" is one of John Donne's most celebrated metaphysical poems, written in the early 17th century. The poem explores the nature of love, focusing on the spiritual and intellectual connection between two lovers rather than mere physical attraction. Donne uses complex metaphysical imagery and extended metaphors to express his views on love as a union of both body and soul.

The poem begins by describing the physical state of two lovers sitting together in close proximity. They are not engaged in sexual activity, but rather in a quiet, intimate embrace. The speaker suggests that the true essence of their connection lies not in the physical touch but in the unity of their souls. The physical closeness of the lovers becomes a means for their spirits to intertwine and communicate. The lovers' bodies, though present, are secondary to the higher, more meaningful union of their souls.

Donne argues that genuine love is an experience of spiritual unity, and that this union transcends the physical. He suggests that the souls of the lovers are so deeply connected that they create an "ecstasy" — a state of blissful spiritual union. The physical act of love is seen as incomplete without this intellectual and emotional connection. The poem concludes with a vision of divine love, suggesting that the soul’s union through love brings the lovers closer to a divine or transcendent state.

Through metaphysical conceits, such as comparing the souls of lovers to intertwined vines or the mind’s gaze to a shared vision, Donne underscores the central idea that love’s most powerful aspect is its spiritual and intellectual nature, which is felt through an ecstatic experience of union.

## THEMES IN "THE ECSTASY" BY JOHN DONNE

1. Spiritual and Intellectual Union Over Physical Love:
    - One of the central themes of the poem is the belief that true love is not merely a physical connection, but an intellectual and spiritual union. While the physical closeness of the lovers is mentioned, it is their minds and souls that are truly

intertwined. Donne emphasizes that only when both hearts and minds are united do the lovers experience the true ecstasy of love. The poem contrasts the shallow nature of mere physical attraction with the lasting power of a **spiritual bond**.

2. **The Role of the Body in Love**:
    - Although the poem celebrates the soul's connection, Donne does not entirely dismiss the body's role in love. The lovers' bodies are described as being present and essential for the **union of souls**. Donne suggests that the physical and spiritual elements of love are interdependent: one enhances and elevates the other. However, the soul's connection is presented as the true essence of the relationship, while the body merely acts as a vessel for the **spiritual bond**.
3. **Metaphysical Conceit**:
    - **Metaphysical conceit** — an extended metaphor that brings together two seemingly unrelated ideas — is a key feature of this poem. Donne frequently uses conceits to compare the spiritual union between lovers to physical imagery, such as **the connection between minds and the touching of souls**. For example, Donne compares the souls of the lovers to **two entwined vines**. The metaphysical conceit helps explore complex ideas about love, spirituality, and intimacy.
4. **The Divine Nature of Love**:
    - The final part of the poem introduces the idea that the **spiritual union between the lovers** is not just a personal experience, but one that brings them closer to the **divine**. Donne seems to suggest that the **ecstasy** of love is a form of transcendence, where the lovers' union mirrors a **divine, perfect love**. Love in its purest form thus becomes a reflection of divine harmony, elevating the relationship to a higher, almost holy state.
5. **Union of Mind and Body**:
    - Another key theme of the poem is the union of mind and body. Donne suggests that love is an experience that engages both the **physical and spiritual realms**. The lovers are described as having a **connection of both their souls and bodies**, where the **body serves as a vehicle** for the **soul's union**. The idea of the soul's intimate connection with the body and mind challenges the division between the **physical and spiritual realms**.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "THE ECSTASY" BY JOHN DONNE

"The Ecstasy" is a classic example of John Donne's metaphysical poetry, which is marked by its intellectual complexity, emotional depth, and the use of metaphysical conceits. Donne's unique style of poetry blends physical and spiritual elements to explore profound questions about life, love, and existence. The poem offers a sophisticated meditation on the nature of love, emphasizing its transcendent, spiritual qualities.

1. Use of Metaphysical Conceits:
    - The poem is a masterclass in the use of metaphysical conceit. Donne uses a series of elaborate metaphors to compare love to a physical and spiritual experience. The conceit of the lovers' souls being entwined like vines, for example, creates a powerful image of intimacy, closeness, and unity. The conceit also shows the

duality of love: it can be both physical and spiritual, but the spiritual union is the higher, more meaningful bond.

2. Philosophical Depth:
    - The poem explores the idea of ecstasy — not just as a pleasurable physical experience but as a transcendent state of spiritual union. Donne's intellectual approach to love challenges conventional ideas of romantic relationships, arguing that love's highest form transcends physical desire and connects the souls of the lovers. This is a radical notion that reflects Donne's deep engagement with philosophical and theological ideas.
3. Religious and Spiritual Overtones:
    - The final stanzas of the poem introduce a religious dimension, where the love between the two lovers is seen as mirroring the divine love that exists in a spiritual realm. By suggesting that the union of their souls brings them closer to divine ecstasy, Donne elevates the idea of human love to a higher, almost sacred plane. This spiritual dimension is characteristic of Donne's later poetry, where he often grapples with religious themes and the relationship between the human soul and God.
4. Emotional Intensity:
    - Donne's use of emotional and intellectual intensity is one of the most striking features of the poem. The speaker conveys an intense longing for both spiritual and emotional connection with the lover, and the poem's passionate tone heightens the effect of the spiritual union described. The idea of ecstasy in the poem is not just a feeling of happiness or pleasure, but a spiritual rapture that arises from the lover's profound connection.
5. Structure and Form:
    - "The Ecstasy" follows a rhymed couplet structure, which is typical of many of Donne's works. This formal structure creates a sense of harmony and balance, mirroring the union of the lovers' souls. The regular rhythm also helps convey the fluidity and continuous nature of the lovers' emotional and spiritual connection, reflecting the poem's central idea that love is a seamless experience that transcends boundaries.

## Conclusion:

"The Ecstasy" is a beautifully crafted exploration of the transcendent power of love. It reflects John Donne's hallmark style — the blending of philosophical depth, spiritual reflection, and emotional intensity. The poem celebrates the union of body and soul and elevates love from a physical experience to a profound spiritual one, suggesting that true ecstasy is found not in physical pleasure but in the deep and lasting connection between the souls of two lovers. Donne's use of metaphysical conceits, intellectual rigor, and spiritual overtones makes this poem a timeless meditation on the nature of love and the soul's capacity for transcendence.

## A VALEDICTION

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,

Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say, No;
So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.
Dull sublunary lovers' love
. Whose soul is sense, cannot admit
. Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined
That ourselves know not what it is,
. Inter-assured of the mind,
. Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion, like gold
To airy thinness beat.
If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth if the other do.
And though it in the centre sit,
. Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.
Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like the other foot obliquely run;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth if the other do.

LINE-BY-LINE EXPLANATION OF JOHN DONNE'S "A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING"

*First Stanza:*

1. "As virtuous men pass mildly away,"

- The speaker compares a virtuous man's death to their parting, implying that it is calm and peaceful. Just as a virtuous man dies gently, without great mourning, so too should their separation be treated with calmness and dignity.

2. "And whisper to their souls to go,"

- The speaker imagines that the virtuous man, in his final moments, speaks softly to his soul, urging it to depart. This suggests that the departure is natural and quiet, without any disturbance or drama.

3. "Whilst some of their sad friends do say,"

- The speaker acknowledges that although some of the man's friends may be sad, they still respect his peaceful passing.

4. "The breath goes now, and some say, No;"

- The speaker refers to the idea that others might argue whether the man has truly passed or not. Some might believe that his last breath has been taken, while others may question it.

5. "So let us melt, and make no noise,"

- The speaker now turns to his own situation and urges his beloved not to make a fuss about their separation. Instead of a noisy, emotional parting, they should melt into each other in a quiet, calm way, like a virtuous man passing away peacefully.

6. "No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,"

- The speaker forbids tears and heavy sighs. He doesn't want his lover to be overwhelmed with grief or sorrow, just as the virtuous man passes without making a scene. The couple's love, like death, should be dignified and quiet.

7. "T'were profanation of our joys"

- The speaker argues that mourning would be inappropriate, a "profanation," or desecration, of the joy they have shared. Their love is too pure to be sullied by excessive grief.

8. "To tell the laity our love."

- The speaker suggests that their love is sacred and should not be openly displayed or discussed in an overly public or worldly manner. He wants to keep it private, like a spiritual bond rather than something to be mourned like an ordinary loss.

*Second Stanza:*

9. "Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,"

- The speaker compares physical separation to an earthquake—while it causes dramatic effects, it's ultimately a disturbance. True love, in contrast, is not based on external, physical things, so separation (or "moving") doesn't cause harm to their love.

10. "Men reckon what it did and meant;"

- People notice the impact of physical movements like earthquakes and discuss what they mean. However, the speaker implies that the disturbance is only surface-level and not as significant as the deeper, spiritual connection he shares with his beloved.

11. "But trepidation of the spheres,"

- This refers to the ancient belief that the movements of the celestial spheres (the planets and stars) cause a subtle, spiritual effect on the world. The movement of the spheres is powerful, but it is not a violent or physical disturbance.

12. "Though greater far, is innocent."

- The speaker says that the spiritual movement of the celestial spheres, though far more significant than physical movement, is innocent, pure, and free of harm. This is a metaphor for their love, which transcends physical distance and is untouched by worldly disturbances.

*Third Stanza:*

13. "Dull sublunary lovers' love"

- The speaker refers to ordinary, earthly lovers' love as "sublunary" (i.e., beneath the moon or earthly). These lovers' affections are based on physical presence and attraction. Donne contrasts this with the transcendental nature of his love, which is not confined to physical presence.

14. "Whose soul is sense, cannot admit"

- Lovers who are driven by physical senses (touch, sight, etc.) cannot understand or experience the deeper, spiritual union that the speaker has with his beloved.

15. "Absence, because it doth remove"

- Absence, for these physical lovers, would endanger their love because it is tied to bodily presence. When they are apart, they feel that the love is no longer alive. This is in contrast to the speaker's love, which remains intact even in separation.

16. "Those things which elemented it."

- For physical lovers, their love is composed of physical elements: touch, sight, and bodily presence. When these elements are removed (as in the case of absence), their love is compromised.

*Fourth Stanza:*

17. "But we by a love so much refined"

- The speaker claims that his love is not based on physical presence or earthly senses, but on a much more refined (spiritual) connection. Their love is pure and transcendent, unaffected by physical separation.

18. "That ourselves know not what it is,"

- Their love is so pure and spiritual that neither the speaker nor his lover can completely comprehend or define it. This love transcends ordinary understanding.

19. "Inter-assured of the mind"

- The love they share is a mental connection, based on understanding, trust, and intellectual closeness rather than physical attraction. It is an assurance in the mind, not the body.

20. "Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss."

- The speaker reassures his lover that physical separations—missing the touch of hands, the kiss of lips, or the sight of each other—are less important to their love because it is based on a spiritual bond, not on physical sensations.

*Fifth Stanza:*

21. "Our two souls therefore, which are one,"

- The speaker emphasizes that their souls are united as one entity, not separate or dependent on physical presence. Their spiritual connection is eternal and unbreakable, regardless of physical distance.

22. "Though I must go, endure not yet"

- Although the speaker must physically leave, their souls remain inseparably united. Their love endures, unaffected by the physical separation.

23. "A breach, but an expansion, like gold"

- The speaker uses a metaphysical conceit, comparing their love to gold that expands when it is stretched. The separation will not cause a break in their love, but rather it will expand and become even stronger.

24. "To airy thinness beat."

- The gold, when stretched, becomes thin and delicate, but still remains pure and unbroken. Similarly, their love may stretch across a distance, but it does not weaken or break; it only becomes more expansive.

*Sixth Stanza:*

25. "If they be two, they are two so"

- This line introduces the famous compass conceit. The speaker compares their relationship to a compass, where one leg remains fixed and the other moves, yet the two remain connected. Even when physically separated, their souls remain united.

26. "As stiff twin compasses are two,"

- The two lovers are like the legs of a compass, one fixed (the lover staying behind) and one moving (the speaker), yet they are always connected and part of the same entity.

27. "Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show"

- The beloved's soul is the fixed foot of the compass, remaining steady and constant even though the speaker must go. The fixed foot symbolizes the love that endures and remains unmoved, while the other leg moves yet remains connected.

28. "To move, but doth if the other do."

- The speaker's soul, like the other leg of the compass, moves during their separation. However, the movement of one leg (the speaker) causes the other (the beloved) to subtly move as well. Even in physical separation, their spiritual connection ensures they remain part of the same unity.

29. "And though it in the centre sit,"

- Even when the compass's fixed leg remains in the center, it is still part of the whole structure. Similarly, the speaker's beloved remains the heart of their connection, no matter the distance.

30. "Yet when the other far doth roam,"

- Even as the speaker moves far away, the fixed point (the beloved) is always connected to him, just as the two legs of the compass remain united in function and purpose.

31. "It leans and hearkens after it,"

- The fixed leg of the compass (the beloved) leans after the moving leg (the speaker), maintaining the connection. The love between them is unbroken, even when one is physically absent.

32. "And grows erect, as that comes home."

- When the speaker returns, the lover (the fixed leg) will be "erect" and will meet the returning lover. The love is complete and strong again when the separation ends, but the spiritual connection remains constant

## Detailed Summary, Themes, and Critical Appreciation of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by John Donne

## SUMMARY OF "A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING"

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is a beautiful and profound farewell poem by John Donne that was written as the poet was about to embark on a journey. The poem is addressed to his wife, Anne More, and serves as a reassurance to her that their love will remain strong despite the physical distance between them.

The speaker begins by comparing their impending separation to the gentle death of virtuous men, who pass away without causing a scene. He urges his wife not to mourn or show signs of sadness, as this would be improper for a love as pure and spiritual as theirs. Instead, he suggests that their parting should be like the quiet passing of virtuous men — calm and dignified.

The speaker emphasizes that their love is not based on physical presence or bodily senses, which are temporary and fleeting. Rather, their love is spiritual and eternal, transcending physical separation. He uses the metaphysical conceit of the compass to describe the relationship: while one leg of the compass moves, the other remains fixed, yet both are connected. Similarly, though they may be physically apart, their souls remain united, and their love is not diminished.

In the final lines, the speaker reassures his wife that their love is unbreakable, even by the passage of time or distance. The speaker's love, like the fixed leg of the compass, remains steadfast and constant, while the moving leg (the speaker) will eventually return to the center, symbolizing reunion.

## THEMES OF "A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING"

1. Separation and Endurance of True Love:
   The central theme of the poem is the idea that true love transcends physical separation.

The speaker urges his wife not to mourn their parting because their love is spiritual, not based on physical proximity. True love, in this metaphysical view, remains unaffected by distance and continues to grow stronger despite absence.

2. Spiritual vs. Physical Love:
   Donne contrasts earthly, sensual love with spiritual, intellectual love. The lovers whose love is based solely on physical presence will find it hard to endure absence. However, the speaker's love, grounded in the mind and soul, is refined and can survive the separation because it is not dependent on physical senses.
3. The Metaphysical Conceit:
   The use of metaphysical conceits (extended metaphors) is one of Donne's hallmarks. In this poem, the speaker compares the relationship between the lovers to the legs of a compass, a metaphor that symbolizes the unbreakable connection between the two, even when they are physically apart. This conceit emphasizes how both parts of the relationship (one fixed, the other moving) are interdependent.
4. The Transcendence of Physical Boundaries:
   Another important theme is that true love transcends physical boundaries and is eternal. The speaker insists that, despite the fact that the lovers will be separated physically, their souls remain united. This view reflects a platonic or metaphysical view of love, where the connection between the lovers is spiritual rather than merely physical.
5. Calmness and Dignity in Separation:
   The speaker suggests that the appropriate response to separation is not sorrow, but a dignified acceptance of the spiritual nature of their love. In this way, the poem speaks not only to love but to the philosophical and intellectual approach to relationships, urging calm and patience instead of emotional excess.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING"

Form and Structure:

- The poem consists of 9 quatrains (four-line stanzas), each written in iambic tetrameter (four iambic feet per line), with a regular ABAB rhyme scheme. The regularity of the form reflects the stability and continuity of the love being described. The structured, orderly nature of the poem contrasts with the tumultuous emotions that might usually accompany a farewell, reinforcing the theme of calmness and spiritual stability.

Tone:

- The tone of the poem is calm, reassuring, and even philosophical. While a typical farewell poem might be filled with sorrow and emotional turmoil, Donne's tone is confident and composed. He is not merely trying to comfort his wife but also trying to elevate the idea of love to a more spiritual and transcendent plane, where physical absence is insignificant in the face of a shared, eternal connection.

Imagery and Metaphysical Conceits:

- Metaphysical Conceit: One of the most striking features of the poem is Donne's use of the compass metaphor. He compares the relationship between the lovers to the two legs of a compass, with one leg moving and the other fixed. The compass imagery not only demonstrates the interdependence of the two lovers, but it also speaks to the spiritual nature of their bond, which remains intact despite physical separation.
- The Death Imagery: In the opening lines, Donne compares the parting of lovers to the gentle death of a virtuous man. The comparison to death might seem strange, but in the context of the poem, it signifies the peaceful nature of true love, which does not require emotional outbursts or physical closeness to endure. The speaker suggests that parting should be dignified, like a gentle death, and that mourning would cheapen their pure love.
- The Spheres and the Earth: Donne contrasts earthly love, which is physical and dependent on senses, with spiritual love, which transcends physical boundaries and is unaffected by absence. He uses the movement of the spheres (the celestial bodies) to suggest that the more transcendent and spiritual love is far greater and more lasting than love based on physical presence.

Philosophical and Intellectual Depth:

- Donne's metaphysical poetry is known for its intellectual complexity, and "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is no exception. The poem does not focus on emotions of loss or sadness but instead presents an intellectual argument about the nature of love, using both spiritual and scientific imagery. Donne was deeply influenced by contemporary scientific thought (like the theory of the movement of celestial bodies) and philosophical reflection, and this is reflected in the poem's rational approach to emotions.
- The refined nature of the love in the poem is emphasized by the speaker's use of terms like "refined" and "inter-assured of the mind", suggesting that true love is not physical but mental, intellectual, and spiritual. The poem elevates love to something sublime, unshaken by external circumstances.

## CONCLUSION

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is a deeply philosophical and intellectual poem that redefines love as something spiritual and eternal, rather than something bound to physical proximity. Donne uses striking metaphysical conceits (like the compass and the celestial spheres) to explore the nature of the relationship between lovers. The poem emphasizes that true love, based on mental and spiritual union, remains unaffected by physical separation.

The poem is reassuring in tone, urging the lover not to mourn the separation but to understand the deeper nature of their love. Its metaphysical conceits, intellectual argumentation, and calm tone make it one of Donne's most celebrated works, offering both emotional depth and philosophical insight into the nature of love.

In a larger context, the poem exemplifies the hallmark qualities of metaphysical poetry: intellectual rigor, spiritual depth, and a blending of the emotional and the philosophical. Donne, through this poem, elevates the concept of love beyond the ordinary and into the realm of the eternal and divine, making "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" an enduring masterpiece.

# The Good Morrow

by John Donne

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to others worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres
Without sharp North, without declining West?
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one, or thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

## LINE-BY-LINE EXPLANATION OF "THE GOOD MORROW" BY JOHN DONNE

1. I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
2. Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?
3. But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
4. Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?

Explanation:
In the opening lines, the speaker reflects on his life before he and his lover were united in love. The word "troth" means truth or faithfulness, indicating the speaker is earnestly pondering. The phrase "what thou and I did, till we loved?" suggests that the speaker feels their life before love was incomplete or unfulfilling. The question "Were we not weaned till then?" refers to being "weaned" from the childish pleasures of the world. The speaker questions if, before love, they were living in an immature or naive state, likening their pre-love existence to childish pleasures ("country pleasures"). The reference to the "Seven Sleepers' den" alludes to a story from Christian mythology in which seven Christian youths slept for hundreds of years in a cave, symbolizing a state of oblivion or ignorance. The speaker suggests that their lives before love were similarly unconscious or dormant.

5. 'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
6. If ever any beauty I did see,
7. Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

Explanation:
In line 5, the speaker affirms that the previous state of ignorance was indeed true, but now he realizes that all the pleasures he once thought he knew were just fantasies. In lines 6 and 7, the speaker reflects on the idea of "beauty" — any beauty he may have desired or encountered in the past was merely a reflection or a dream of his lover. This suggests that the love he now shares with the beloved is the only true beauty, and that any previous experience was merely a shadow or imperfect imitation.

8. And now good morrow to our waking souls,
9. Which watch not one another out of fear;
10. For love, all love of other sights controls,
11. And makes one little room an everywhere.

Explanation:
In these lines, the speaker wishes his lover a "good morrow," or a good morning, symbolizing the awakening of their souls. Before their union, they were unaware of the depth of love, but now, in their love, they are awake and fully conscious of each other. Line 9 emphasizes that, unlike the fear that often governs relationships, their love allows them to trust each other completely. The love between them is so pure and all-encompassing that, as stated in line 10, it controls all other desires or attractions. In line 11, the speaker conveys that their love makes even a small, intimate space ("one little room") feel vast and infinite, as if their love has the power to expand the world and make it seem boundless. This suggests that the lovers are now in a perfect world, and they need nothing beyond their love to feel fulfilled.

12. Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
13. Let maps to others worlds on worlds have shown,
14. Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.

Explanation:
In lines 12-14, the speaker dismisses the idea of exploring distant lands or new territories. He suggests that while sea explorers and cartographers may discover new worlds, he and his lover already possess their own world. The love between them has created a self-sufficient universe, and they do not need anything beyond it. Line 14, "each hath one, and is one," implies that in their love, the two lovers are united as a single entity, creating a world of their own. They are complete and do not need anything external to define their happiness.

15. My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
16. And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
17. Where can we find two better hemispheres
18. Without sharp North, without declining West?

Explanation:
In these lines, the speaker emphasizes the intimacy and connection between the two lovers. "My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears" suggests that the lovers are so close that they can literally see each other in their eyes, indicating a deep level of emotional and spiritual unity. Line 16 further reinforces this closeness, suggesting that their true and sincere hearts are reflected in their faces, creating an open and honest bond. The metaphor in lines 17 and 18 compares the lovers' union to two hemispheres (the halves of a globe). The lovers are portrayed as perfect halves that fit together seamlessly. The reference to "sharp North" and "declining West" evokes the idea of directional extremes and boundaries, which are absent in their love. This signifies that the lovers' relationship is free of division or external limits — it is perfect and harmonious, without geographical or emotional extremes.

19. Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
20. If our two loves be one, or thou and I
21. Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

Explanation:
In line 19, the speaker asserts that whatever dies — whether a relationship or a person — has not been perfectly balanced or harmonized. If something is not "mixed equally," it cannot endure. The speaker suggests that if their love is perfectly balanced and harmonious (as it is), it can never die. In lines 20-21, he states that their love is so perfect that it is one love, not two separate loves, and this union will remain constant. The love is so deep and equal that it cannot weaken or fade. In other words, their love is eternal, not subject to the effects of time or separation.

"The Good Morrow" is a metaphysical poem by John Donne, in which the speaker addresses his lover upon waking up next to her. The poem reflects a spiritual and intellectual awakening, marking the beginning of a deeper, more profound love that transcends the physical world.

The poem is structured as a dialogue between the speaker and his lover, where the speaker reflects on their past lives and contrasts them with their current state of love. He begins by wondering how they lived before they found each other, expressing the idea that their lives were incomplete or shallow before they were united in love. He likens their pre-love existence to "childish" pleasures and the ignorance of the "Seven Sleepers' den," which suggests a state of unconsciousness or dormancy.

The speaker then reassures his lover that their current state of love is not like the love that depends on physical attraction or worldly pleasures. He speaks of their love as an awakening of their souls, moving beyond mere sensory experiences. Their love is now a spiritual and intellectual union, making them feel as though they possess their own world. The speaker dismisses the need for exploration of distant lands or worldly pursuits, suggesting that their love is the only world they need.

The central metaphor of the poem is that of the "hemispheres": the speaker compares their love to two perfect halves of a globe, symbolizing unity and wholeness. The idea of the hemispheres being perfectly balanced, with no external forces (such as sharp North or declining West) to disrupt their harmony, reflects the purity and completeness of their love. In the final lines, the

speaker asserts that their love is eternal, and as long as their love is "mixed equally," it will never fade or die.

## THEMES

1. Love as Awakening and Transcendence:
    - The poem portrays love as an awakening, both physical and spiritual. Before they fell in love, the speaker suggests, both he and his lover were living in ignorance, much like children or people in a deep sleep. The awakening of their love brings them to a higher state of consciousness and spiritual union.
2. The Spiritual Nature of Love:
    - Donne emphasizes that their love is not limited to physical attraction or sensual pleasures. It is a spiritual connection, transcending the physical realm. This is expressed through metaphysical imagery such as the lovers being united as "one world" and the comparison to perfect hemispheres, suggesting that their love exists beyond earthly limits.
3. Unity and Completeness in Love:
    - The poem suggests that the union of the two lovers makes them complete. They no longer need anything outside of their relationship because their love has created a self-sufficient world. The metaphor of the hemispheres symbolizes the lovers' perfect balance, where each half (the speaker and the lover) completes the other.
4. Rejection of the Material World:
    - The speaker rejects the need for worldly pursuits or exploration. He suggests that while others may seek new worlds or adventures, he and his lover already possess the perfect world. Their love makes all external discoveries irrelevant because their bond transcends the material world.
5. The Eternal Nature of True Love:
    - The final theme of the poem is the eternity of true love. The speaker believes that as long as their love is equally balanced (i.e., pure and mutual), it will never die. Their love is not subject to the ravages of time or physical separation. It is eternal, suggesting a timeless bond that cannot be broken by the passage of time.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

"The Good Morrow" is a striking example of metaphysical poetry, a style known for its intellectual complexity, wit, and use of extended metaphors. In this poem, Donne uses elaborate metaphysical conceits and paradoxical imagery to convey a love that transcends the physical world and exists on a spiritual and intellectual plane.

1. Use of Metaphysical Conceits:
    - Donne is famous for his use of metaphysical conceits — extended and often complex metaphors that link seemingly disparate ideas. In this poem, the conceit of the "hemispheres" is central to the idea of perfect love. The lovers are compared to the two halves of the world, with each completing the other. This metaphor suggests that their love is perfectly balanced, harmonious, and self-sufficient. Similarly, the

comparison of love to an awakening emphasizes the spiritual renewal the lovers experience together.

2. Imagery and Symbolism:
    - The poem is rich in symbolic imagery. The idea of "waking souls" refers to the lover's transition from ignorance or childishness to a higher understanding. The comparison of their love to hemispheres reflects unity and wholeness, while the idea of their love being a self-contained world highlights its independence from the material realm.
    - Donne's use of geographical imagery in lines 12-14, where he mentions sea-discoverers and maps to other worlds, reflects the Renaissance fascination with exploration. However, Donne subverts this idea by asserting that the lovers' relationship creates a world so perfect that they no longer need to seek anything beyond it.
3. Tone and Style:
    - The tone of the poem is intimate, reflective, and philosophical. Donne's use of the first-person narrative creates a sense of personal involvement and emotional sincerity. The speaker's musings are thoughtful and deeply introspective, as he contemplates the nature of love and its transformative power.
    - The poem's style is elegant and intellectual, with Donne engaging the reader not only emotionally but also intellectually. The use of paradoxes and intellectual wit is characteristic of the metaphysical style, making the poem both a personal love expression and a complex philosophical meditation on love.
4. Structure and Rhyme Scheme:
    - The poem follows a regular quatrain form (four-line stanzas) with an ABAB rhyme scheme, which creates a sense of order and unity. The consistent rhythm and rhyme reinforce the poem's theme of balance and harmony in love. The structure also reflects the idea of love as a perfect and self-contained system.
5. Philosophical and Religious Undertones:
    - Like many of Donne's poems, "The Good Morrow" can be interpreted as having philosophical and even religious undertones. The idea of the lovers' relationship transcending the physical world and achieving a state of spiritual unity can be seen as a metaphor for the soul's union with the divine. Donne often explored the intersection of earthly love and divine love, and in this poem, the speaker's affection for his lover seems to hint at a kind of spiritual completeness that mirrors the union of the soul with God.

## LOVE'S ALCHEMY

BY JOHN DONNE

Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie;
I have lov'd, and got, and told,
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery.
Oh, 'tis imposture all!
And as no chemic yet th'elixir got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot
If by the way to him befall

Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,
So, lovers dream a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summer's night.
Our ease, our thrift, our honour, and our day,
Shall we for this vain bubble's shadow pay?
Ends love in this, that my man
Can be as happy'as I can, if he can
Endure the short scorn of a bridegroom's play?
That loving wretch that swears
'Tis not the bodies marry, but the minds,
Which he in her angelic finds,
Would swear as justly that he hears,
In that day's rude hoarse minstrelsy, the spheres.
Hope not for mind in women; at their best
Sweetness and wit, they'are but mummy, possess'd.

## LINE-BY-LINE EXPLANATION OF "LOVE'S ALCHEMY" BY JOHN DONNE

"Love's Alchemy" is a metaphysical poem in which Donne critiques the idealized notion of love and uses the metaphor of alchemy to suggest that love, like the alchemist's pursuit of turning base metals into gold, is a futile and deceptive pursuit. Here's a detailed line-by-line explanation of the poem:

### The Poem:

1. *"Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,"*

- The speaker begins by acknowledging that others have examined love more deeply than he has. The metaphor of "digging" implies a search for deeper truths, much like someone mining for precious metals. He suggests that others have spent more time exploring the nature of love, but his perspective is that of someone who has reached a critical conclusion.

2. *"Bring me to school, where they may learn and me."*

- Here, the speaker humorously implies that those who have searched more profoundly for love (the "diggers") will teach him, even though he is certain of the folly of their pursuits. He is now positioning himself as someone wiser for recognizing the futility of love's idealization.

3. *"And while I live, this shall be my delight,"*

- The speaker declares that, for as long as he lives, he will remain committed to this belief — that love is not worth pursuing or idealizing. His "delight" is a sarcastic assertion, showing his resignation to the fact that love, as it is usually understood, is a foolish quest.

4. *"That love is not love, which alters when it alteration finds,"*

- This line is a critique of the conventional idea of love. The speaker is challenging the belief that true love is eternal and unchanging. The idea that love should not change or alter when circumstances change is critiqued here: love that is conditional or dependent on change is not true love, according to the speaker.

5. *"Or bends with the remover to remove:"*

- The phrase "bends with the remover" means that love changes when circumstances change, like someone who adapts to external forces or is easily swayed. This further reinforces the idea that the speaker does not believe in the ideal, eternal love, which cannot be influenced by external conditions.

6. *"O no! it is an ever-fixed mark"*

- The speaker now presents the counter-argument, declaring that true love should be an "ever-fixed mark" — something permanent and stable. But in the context of "Love's Alchemy," this may be intended ironically, as the rest of the poem challenges this idea.

7. *"That looks on tempests and is never shaken;"*

- The speaker claims that true love is unshaken by external forces (like tempests or storms). However, this idealization of love is precisely what Donne is critiquing: the metaphysical view of love as a perfect, unchanging force that transcends all difficulties is unrealistic and unachievable.

8. *"It is the star to every wandering bark,"*

- Here, love is compared to a guiding star for a "wandering bark" (a metaphor for a ship lost at sea). The image of the star represents love as a reliable constant, always guiding and helping those who are lost. This is again an idealized image of love that Donne is challenging.

9. *"Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken."*

- The value of true love is said to be unknowable (“worth’s unknown”), even though we can measure its height or presence. The metaphor of the star suggests that love can be seen, but its true essence is difficult to fully comprehend or measure. Donne is emphasizing that love is often understood as incomprehensible or idealized but is ultimately a vague and unattainable goal.

10. *"Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks"*

- The speaker denies the romantic idea that love is subject to the passage of time (i.e., that love fades with age). He argues that true love does not decay with time or physical appearance.

11. *"Within his bending sickle's compass come:"*

- The "bending sickle" refers to Time, which is often represented in literature as a harvester with a scythe or sickle, reaping what it wills. The speaker suggests that the love that changes over time (due to physical aging) is not true love. However, the poem's broader theme challenges this idealistic view of love's permanence.

12. *"Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,"*

- The speaker continues to assert that love does not change over short periods of time or due to temporary circumstances. But once again, Donne is critiquing this notion of love, suggesting that this eternal view of love is unrealistic.

13. *"But bears it out even to the edge of doom."*

- True love, the speaker claims, should last until the end of time, even until death ("the edge of doom"). This idealization of love, however, is shown to be impractical and unrealistic as the poem unfolds.

14. *"If this be error and upon me proved,"*

- The speaker now admits the possibility that his beliefs about love may be proven wrong. He is open to being convinced otherwise, but he remains certain that the popular, idealized notions of love are misguided.

15. *"I never writ, nor no man ever loved."*

- In the final line, the speaker takes an almost defiant stance, asserting that if love is as perfect and idealized as others claim, then he has never written a poem and no man has ever truly loved. This is a bold, sarcastic statement, highlighting the impossibility of achieving perfect love.

SUMMARY OF "LOVES ALCHEMY"

"Loves Alchemy" is a witty, satirical poem by John Donne that critiques the idealized and often unrealistic notions of love. In this poem, Donne uses the metaphor of alchemy—the medieval practice of attempting to transform base metals into gold—to explore the disillusionment and disappointment often associated with romantic love. The speaker compares the pursuit of love to the fruitless quest of turning common substances into something precious.

The poem consists of twenty lines and is written in iambic pentameter with a rhyme scheme of ABABCC, where the speaker's voice is both cynical and playful. He rejects the idea of "love" as an idealized force that can transform one's life in a perfect, almost alchemical way. Instead, the

speaker suggests that love is a process that inevitably results in frustration and emptiness, much like alchemy, which never succeeded in turning lead into gold.

*Structure of the Poem*

The poem is a single stanza divided into 3 quatrains and a final rhymed couplet. The form reflects the neatness of the speaker's cynical argument, which is constructed logically but undermined by the play of metaphors and language.

*Line-by-Line Summary*

1. "Love is a familiar; Love is a devil."
   The speaker begins by asserting that love is not a mystical, enchanting experience but something common and even diabolical. He equates love to something familiar, implying that it is flawed or troublesome.
2. "There is no evil angel but love."
   Here, the speaker continues to portray love as a destructive force, almost as if it were a "fallen angel" leading people into ruin.
3. "Love is a devil, but when it is the good, it is no longer a devil."
   The distinction between love's nature is blurred here, suggesting that even when it appears to be good, love still bears the characteristics of a "devil."
4. "Love, though he may seem a friend, is no more than a demon."
   The paradox of love being both a friend and a devil suggests the deceptive nature of romantic passion.

5-6. "Love's alchemy...makes gold of lead."
This refers to the common alchemical aim of transforming base materials (like lead) into gold. The speaker is skeptical of such transformation, suggesting that love's promises are as impossible as the alchemist's goal.

7-8. "But love, it is a fever."
The speaker now compares love to a fever—a transient, painful condition that cannot be sustained or "cured" permanently.

9-10. "Love is like a disease: it wastes the body and soul."
The metaphor here is more intense, comparing love to a contagious illness that diminishes the vitality of the person who suffers from it.

11-14. "I see love in the eyes of many, but find it nowhere."
The speaker reflects on how love is celebrated and pursued by many, but in reality, it remains elusive and unfulfilled. This reinforces the idea of love as a mirage or false ideal.

15-16. "Nothing comes of it but grief, while the body remains full of deception."
The poem concludes with a reflection on the emptiness of love, suggesting that while it may promise joy, it only delivers sorrow and deception.

17-20. "The fool who believes in it, is a fool because of it."
The final lines mock those who invest in love, claiming that they are fools for doing so. The speaker's tone becomes more dismissive, reinforcing his overall disillusionment with romantic love.

THEMES OF "LOVE'S ALCHEMY"

1. Disillusionment with Love
   The central theme of the poem is the disillusionment with the idea of love as a pure, transformative force. Donne portrays love not as an idealized, transcendent experience but as a human weakness—something familiar and even destructive. Love is presented as a pursuit that leads to frustration, rather than fulfillment.
2. Critique of Alchemy and the Illusion of Transformation
   The use of alchemy as a metaphor critiques the idea that love can transform a person or a relationship into something perfect or sublime. Just as alchemists failed in their quest to turn lead into gold, the speaker argues that love cannot turn the mundane into the miraculous. This comparison invites skepticism about idealistic views of love and romantic perfection.
3. The Deceptive Nature of Love
   Donne explores the idea that love, like alchemy, is based on deception. While it promises transformation and fulfillment, it results only in disappointment and grief. Love is not the elevating force it is often thought to be, but a source of misery that blinds its victims to the truth.
4. The Futility of Romantic Ideals
   Through his cynical portrayal of love, Donne critiques the idealization of romantic love in courtly poetry and literature. Instead of the lofty, noble love seen in many romantic works, Donne presents a love that is not worth the pursuit. This theme speaks to the poet's broader skepticism about the lofty ideals of his time, especially in relation to love and human relationships.
5. The Absurdity of Idealized Pursuits
   The reference to alchemy, a practice steeped in superstition and folly, mirrors the absurdity of believing that love, too, can be transformed into something perfect. Donne's playful yet biting tone exposes the futility of the chase for ideal love.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. Use of Wit and Irony
   John Donne is renowned for his wit and intellectual complexity, and "Loves Alchemy" showcases this in full force. The speaker's ironic tone, which blends mockery and cynicism, creates an engaging critique of love. Donne's style of argumentation—where he starts with seemingly logical premises but undermines them with a sharp twist—keeps the reader engaged while reflecting the ambivalence toward love.
2. Metaphysical Conceit
   Like many of Donne's poems, "Loves Alchemy" employs the metaphysical conceit, a complex metaphor that links seemingly unrelated ideas (love and alchemy, in this case). By using alchemy as a metaphor for love, Donne demonstrates his skill in linking intellectual ideas with emotional experiences. The conceit serves as both a critique and a reflection of the poem's central theme: the futility of pursuing love as an idealized transformation.

3. Tone and Mood
   The tone of the poem is both playful and critical, with the speaker mocking the idea of love as something that can elevate or purify. At the same time, there is an underlying bitterness that reflects Donne's disillusionment with romantic ideals. The mood is one of intellectual amusement mixed with a sense of resigned disappointment.
4. Language and Imagery
   Donne's use of imagery in this poem is rich and complex. The comparison of love to alchemy, a fever, and a disease serves to convey the idea that love is not a cure for life's troubles but a condition that exacerbates them. The references to "lead" and "gold" are potent symbols of the transformation that love promises but fails to deliver. His diction, such as "familiar" and "devil," reinforces the disenchanted view of love.
5. Cynicism and Satire
   The poem's underlying satire critiques the widespread cultural notions of love in the late Renaissance period. While many poets of the time celebrated love's virtues, Donne flips

## THE CANONIZATION

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honor, or his grace,
Or the king's real, or his stampèd face
Contemplate; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.
Alas, alas, who's injured by my love?
What merchant's ships have my sighs drowned?
Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill
Add one more to the plaguy bill?
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still
Litigious men, which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.
Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
Call her one, me another fly,
We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find the eagle and the dove.
The phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us; we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.
We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;

And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
As well a well-wrought urn becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
And by these hymns, all shall approve
Us canonized for Love.
And thus invoke us: "You, whom reverend love
Made one another's hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes
(So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize)
Countries, towns, courts: beg from above
A pattern of your love!"

Line-by-Line Explanation of "The Canonization" by John Donne

Stanza 1:

1. "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,"
   The speaker is asking someone (perhaps a critic or a third party) to stop talking and allow him to love freely, without interference. The plea is urgent, as if he is tired of judgment or unwanted advice.
2. "Or chide my palsy, or my gout,"
   The speaker suggests that the critic could focus on his physical ailments, like palsy (a disorder causing tremors) or gout (a form of arthritis), instead of meddling with his personal love life.
3. "My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,"
   He adds that the critic could mock his age (symbolized by gray hairs) or his financial ruin, rather than critiquing his love. This highlights the triviality of others' objections to his love.
4. "With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,"
   The speaker advises that the critic should focus on material wealth, social status, or intellectual pursuits—things that can improve one's life in a worldly sense.
5. "Take you a course, get you a place,"
   This refers to the critic seeking a career or position (likely in society or politics), implying that the speaker should be left alone to pursue his love without judgment.
6. "Observe his honor, or his grace,"
   The speaker tells the critic to focus on the achievements or social grace of others (perhaps those in higher social positions) and leave him to love as he pleases.
7. "Or the king's real, or his stampèd face"
   The reference here is to money—the "real" refers to a coin, and the "stampèd face" refers to the king's portrait on currency. The speaker is mocking the critic's concern with material wealth and status.

8. "Contemplate; what you will, approve, / So you will let me love."
   The speaker concludes this argument by saying that the critic is free to focus on whatever pursuits they wish, as long as they allow him to love without interference.

Stanza 2: 9. "Alas, alas, who's injured by my love?"
The speaker defends his love, asking who has been hurt by it. He questions why his love should be criticized, implying it is harmless and does no wrong.

10. "What merchant's ships have my sighs drowned?"
    This rhetorical question emphasizes that his love hasn't caused any harm to others—his sighs have not sunk ships, nor have his emotional expressions harmed anyone.
11. "Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?"
    Similarly, the speaker asks who has been harmed by his tears—suggesting that his sorrow or emotional pain hasn't negatively impacted anyone else's life.
12. "When did my colds a forward spring remove?"
    The speaker questions when his emotional state (his "colds" or sadness) has interfered with nature, preventing spring from coming.
13. "When did the heats which my veins fill / Add one more to the plaguy bill?"
    He asks when his passion or desire (the "heats" in his veins) has caused harm, like contributing to a plague. The "plaguy bill" refers to the list of victims of a plague, further emphasizing that his love has caused no harm.
14. "Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still / Litigious men, which quarrels move,"
    The speaker shifts focus to show that other people, such as soldiers and lawyers, actively create conflict and harm, whereas his love is peaceful and harmless.
15. "Though she and I do love."
    Despite their love being real, the speaker insists that it is not destructive, unlike the wars and conflicts caused by others.

Stanza 3: 16. "Call us what you will, we are made such by love;"
The speaker claims that others may label them as they wish, but their identities and actions are shaped by their love for each other.

17. "Call her one, me another fly,"
    The speaker suggests that others can call them mere insects (flies), implying that they are insignificant in the eyes of the world. Yet, their love is what defines them.
18. "We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,"
    The image of "tapers" (candles) is used to symbolize the idea that, like candles, they burn out and die in the pursuit of love. It's a self-sacrificial love, where they both give everything for each other.
19. "And we in us find the eagle and the dove."
    The eagle symbolizes strength, power, and majesty, while the dove represents peace, gentleness, and purity. Together, they represent the balance and completeness of their love—both powerful and peaceful.
20. "The phoenix riddle hath more wit / By us; we two being one, are it."
    The speaker compares their love to the phoenix, a mythical bird that is reborn from its own ashes, symbolizing immortality and renewal. The "riddle" refers to the mystery of

the phoenix's rebirth. Donne is suggesting that their love is equally mysterious, enduring, and self-sustaining, transcending the ordinary.

21. "So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit."
    The speaker declares that their love is so perfect that it transcends gender; they are united in a "neutral thing," suggesting a pure, unifying love that brings together opposites.
22. "We die and rise the same, and prove / Mysterious by this love."
    Just as the phoenix dies and rises anew, the speaker claims that their love allows them to transcend death. They are reborn through their love, proving its mystical and eternal nature.

Stanza 4: 23. "We can die by it, if not live by love,"
The speaker admits that love can be a source of suffering, even death, but it is worth it. If they cannot live by love, they can at least die for it.

24. "And if unfit for tombs and hearse / Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;"
    The speaker acknowledges that their love may not be recorded in history or memorialized in a physical tomb, but it will live on through poetry ("verse").
25. "And if no piece of chronicle we prove, / We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;"
    Even if they are not immortalized in historical records, their love will be preserved in the form of sonnets, which will "build" a lasting legacy.
26. "As well a well-wrought urn becomes / The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,"
    The speaker suggests that a beautifully crafted urn (containing ashes) can be as fitting a memorial as a large, extravagant tomb. The idea is that their love, though it may not receive grand monuments, will be honored in poetry.
27. "And by these hymns, all shall approve / Us canonized for Love."
    The speaker concludes that, through their poetry (their "hymns"), they will be canonized for their love. Their love, though perhaps not acknowledged by society or the Church, will be immortalized in the verses they create. They will become saints of love through the power of their poetic legacy.

Stanza 5: 28. "And thus invoke us: 'You, whom reverend love / Made one another's hermitage;"
In the final stanza, the speaker imagines a future where people will invoke their memory as a model of true love. Their love is seen as a sacred space—a "hermitage"—where they find peace and solitude in each other.

29. "You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;"
    The speaker contrasts their peaceful love with the turbulent nature of the world. They are seen as an example of how love can bring peace in a world filled with rage.
30. "Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove / Into the glasses of your eyes"
    The speaker suggests that their love was so powerful it contracted the soul of the entire world, focusing all existence into their love and the reflections of the world in their eyes.
31. "(So made such mirrors, and such spies, / That they did all to you epitomize)"
    The "glasses" (eyes) are compared to mirrors, reflecting the world in its entirety. Their love is so profound that it encapsulates all human experience.

32. "Countries, towns, courts: beg from above / A pattern of your love!"
    The speaker imagines that the whole world—countries, cities, courts—will look to their love as a model, seeking divine inspiration to love as purely as they have.

## SUMMARY OF "THE CANONIZATION" BY JOHN DONNE

John Donne's "The Canonization" is a witty and complex metaphysical poem that defends the speaker's love, arguing for its sanctity and transcendence, despite societal judgment. The poem is presented as a dramatic monologue in which the speaker addresses an unnamed critic who is condemning his passionate love. Through a series of clever arguments and metaphysical conceits, the speaker asserts that their love is sacred, worthy of being immortalized, and even deserving of canonization by the Church, much like saints who are venerated after death.

The poem opens with the speaker urging the critic to "hold your tongue" and allow him to love without interference. He challenges the critic to focus on trivial matters like his own physical ailments, wealth, or social status instead of commenting on his personal life. The speaker rejects the idea that his love causes harm or disruption. He questions who has been injured by his love, and he dismisses the idea that his passion has brought harm to anyone, unlike the violence and litigation caused by soldiers and lawyers. The poem's speaker implies that love should be seen as a peaceful and private pursuit, not something that should be scrutinized or condemned.

As the poem develops, the speaker defends the idea that their love, though unconventional and misunderstood, is noble and worthy of reverence. The speaker compares their love to the mythological phoenix, which symbolizes immortality and resurrection. He suggests that their love is not bound by ordinary limitations of time and space—it is eternal and transcendent, rising above both life and death. The speaker envisions their love being immortalized in poetry rather than physical monuments. The final stanza portrays the couple as saints, whose love is an example to others and who will be revered as such after death. The poem concludes with an invocation, where the speaker imagines that future generations will look up to their love as an ideal and seek divine guidance to emulate it.

Overall, "The Canonization" is a playful yet profound exploration of the nature of love, its power to transcend physical and societal boundaries, and its potential for spiritual elevation.

## THEMES IN "THE CANONIZATION"

1. Love as Sacred and Transcendent
   One of the central themes of the poem is the idea of love as something sacred, pure, and transcendent. The speaker argues that love is not merely a physical or emotional connection but a spiritual bond that elevates both individuals involved. The notion of canonization—traditionally reserved for saints who live exemplary lives and are venerated after death—serves as a metaphor for the speaker's belief that their love should be treated with the same reverence and sanctity. By using religious imagery, Donne elevates love to a level that surpasses worldly concerns.
2. Defiance of Societal Norms and Judgment
   Throughout the poem, the speaker challenges societal and religious norms that criticize or

devalue romantic love. The speaker's love is not of the conventional, socially approved kind, and he resists the judgment of others who attempt to interfere with or condemn his passion. The critique of society is both personal (directed at the critic) and general (about societal values as a whole), which reflects Donne's broader concerns about the limitations imposed by social norms.

3. Metaphysical Conceits and Wit
   Donne is known for his metaphysical conceits, which are intricate, often surprising metaphors that link disparate ideas. In this poem, the conceit of canonization is central to the speaker's argument. The speaker compares their love to religious sainthood, elevating it to the realm of the spiritual and eternal. Donne also employs the conceit of the phoenix, a mythological bird that regenerates from its own ashes, symbolizing resurrection and immortality. The metaphorical comparison of the lovers to phoenixes conveys the idea that their love is so pure and powerful that it can transcend even death.
4. The Conflict Between Earthly and Divine Love
   Another key theme is the tension between earthly love (the love between the two individuals) and divine love (the love that is revered in religious contexts). Donne blurs these boundaries by suggesting that the two types of love are not separate but rather interconnected. The lovers' devotion to one another is framed as a form of divine love, capable of being "canonized" or recognized as sacred, even though it is an earthly bond.
5. Immortality and the Power of Poetry
   The poem explores the theme of immortality, not in the sense of physical existence, but through the preservation of the lovers' story in poetry. Donne presents the idea that their love may not be commemorated with a physical tomb or monument, but it will live on through verse (poetry). The speaker imagines that their love will be celebrated in poetry and that future generations will view them as exemplars of perfect love. The immortality of love through poetry is a recurring theme in Donne's work, and it underscores the power of the written word to preserve and sanctify human experiences.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "THE CANONIZATION"

1. Form and Structure:
The poem is composed of five stanzas, each containing nine lines with a regular rhymed couplet at the end. The structure is formal, reflecting the theme of canonization, as though the poem is itself a ritual of reverence or an invocation to the lovers' sanctity. The meter is iambic pentameter, typical of Donne's work, which gives the poem a smooth, rhythmic quality. The consistent meter and rhyme scheme contrast with the sometimes erratic or disjointed nature of the speaker's arguments, creating an interesting tension between the formal structure and the passionate, sometimes whimsical tone.

2. Tone and Style:
The tone of the poem is witty, ironic, and argumentative. The speaker uses playful sarcasm to dismiss societal judgment, and there is an element of self-deprecating humor in his defense of love. The speaker's arguments are not merely logical but are delivered with a flair of intellectual bravado, which is characteristic of the metaphysical poets. Donne's use of metaphysical conceits (such as the comparison of the lovers to a phoenix) adds a layer of intellectual complexity to the

poem. However, the overall tone is one of defiance—the speaker challenges conventional views of love and society.

3. Use of Religious and Mythological Imagery:
Donne's incorporation of religious imagery (such as sainthood, canonization, and the phoenix) is central to the poem's argument. He transforms the secular experience of romantic love into something sacred, suggesting that their love is not only spiritually significant but worthy of divine approval. The phoenix metaphor is particularly potent, symbolizing the immortality of love and the idea that it rises above the physical limitations of life and death. This imagery reflects the spiritual elevation that Donne often associates with love in his work.

4. Intellectual Engagement and Paradox:
The poem is intellectually engaging, filled with paradoxes and surprising metaphors. For example, Donne plays with the idea that love is both a sacrifice (as symbolized by the "tapers" that burn out at their own cost) and an immortalizing force (as it is reborn and immortalized in poetry). This tension between opposing ideas—the worldly and the spiritual, the transient and the eternal—is characteristic of the metaphysical style and serves to elevate the speaker's argument about the transcendent nature of love.

5. Feminist and Gender Implications:
The poem presents an interesting dynamic between the speaker and his lover, both of whom seem to possess agency in their love. Donne's portrayal of love as equally uniting both sexes suggests that the boundaries between male and female roles in love are fluid and transcendent. The eagle and the dove metaphor, which represents the balance of strength and tenderness, hints at an equality between the lovers that is ahead of its time. The idea that both lovers contribute equally to the sanctity of the relationship subverts traditional gender norms.

6. Critique of Conventional Love and Societal Norms:
In addition to elevating love, Donne also critiques conventional ideas of love. The speaker challenges the critic's view that love should be restricted to socially acceptable boundaries, particularly religious and moral ones. The speaker's argument that love is independent of social conventions and is instead a self-validating force reflects Donne's broader critique of societal norms and the restriction of personal freedom in matters of love and passion.

7. Legacy and Influence:
"The Canonization" has had a lasting impact on literature, particularly in its exploration of love as a spiritual and intellectual pursuit. Donne's ability to blend the sacred and the profane, as well as his intellectual rigor, paved the way for later poets to explore love in more complex, multifaceted ways. His influence is evident in Metaphysical poetry and in the work of poets like Andrew Marvell and George Herbert, who similarly engaged with religious and intellectual themes in their writing.

## SUMMARY OF "THE CANONIZATION" BY JOHN DONNE

In "The Canonization," John Donne presents a speaker who defends his intense and passionate love against societal criticism. He argues that his love, though unconventional, is pure, sacred,

and transcendent, deserving of sanctification—akin to being "canonized" as a saint by the Church. Throughout the poem, the speaker challenges the critic to focus on more trivial matters like wealth, status, or physical ailments instead of interfering with his love life. The speaker uses metaphysical conceits, such as comparing his love to the phoenix (symbolizing immortality) and tapers (candles that burn out at their own cost), to argue that love is eternal and powerful. Ultimately, the poem explores the idea that love can be an immortalizing force through poetry and that the lovers' devotion, though not recognized by society, is worthy of canonization in the eyes of future generations. The poem blends wit, irony, and intellectual arguments to elevate the notion of love to the level of divine reverence.

The Anniversary

BY JOHN DONNE

All Kings, and all their favourites,
All glory of honours, beauties, wits,
The sun itself, which makes times, as they pass,
Is elder by a year now than it was
When thou and I first one another saw:
All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay;
This no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day.
Two graves must hide thine and my corse;
If one might, death were no divorce.
Alas, as well as other Princes, we
(Who Prince enough in one another be)
Must leave at last in death these eyes and ears,
Oft fed with true oaths, and with sweet salt tears;
But souls where nothing dwells but love
(All other thoughts being inmates) then shall prove
This, or a love increasèd there above,
When bodies to their graves, souls from their graves remove.
And then we shall be throughly blessed;
But we no more than all the rest.
Here upon earth we're Kings, and none but we
Can be such Kings, nor of such subjects be;
Who is so safe as we? where none can do
Treason to us, except one of us two.
True and false fears let us refrain,
Let us love nobly, and live, and add again
Years and years unto years, till we attain
To write threescore: this is the second of our reign.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ANNIVERSARY

## Stanza One

All Kings, and all their favourites
All glory' of honors, beauties, wits
The Sun it selfe, which makes times, as they passe,
Is elder by a yeare, now, than it was
When thou and I first one another saw:
All other things, to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay;
This, no to morrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keepes his first, last, everlasting day.

Since the poet and his beloved first met each other, kings and all their favorites have aged, the glory of honor, beauty, and wit has passed away,

And the sun itself, which measures time, as it passes, is older by a year. All other things are hastening to their decay; their love alone knows no decay. Neither tomorrow nor yesterday does affect their love: while it runs in its course, it never runs away from them. Their love never changes; it is the same as it was in the beginning and will continue to be the same till the end. Their love is eternal.

## Stanza Two

Two graves must hide thine and my corse,
If one might, death were no divorce.
Alas, as well as other princes, wee,
(Who Prince enough in one another bee,)
Must leave at last in death , these eyes, and eares,
Oft fed with true oaths, and with sweet salt teares;
But soules where nothing dwells but love
(All other thoughts being inmates) then shall prove
This, or a love increased there above,
When bodies to their graves, soules from their graves remove

The graves must hide their corpses. If one grave might cover the two corpses, death would not separate them. Alas! As it is the fate of other princes, they, each being as good as a prince in

enjoying the love of the other, also must, at last, let their eyes and ears be closed in death, their ears which were nourished with genuine oaths, and their eyes, which were nourished with sweet-bitter tears. But their souls, possessed entirely by love, and admitting other thoughts only temporarily, shall then prove the constancy of their love. Their love will increase still more in heaven when after death their bodies sink into the grave and the souls ascend to heaven.

## Stanza Three

And then wee shall be thoroughly blest,
But wee no more, than all the rest,
Here upon earth, we'are kings, and none but wee
Can be such Kings, nor of such subjects bee;
Who is so safe as wee? where none can doe
Treason to us, except one of us two.
True and false feares let us refraine,
Let us love nobly, 'and live, and adde againe
Yeares ad yeares unto yeares, till we attaine
To write threescore: this is the second of our reigne.

## SUMMARY OF "THE ANNIVERSARY" BY JOHN DONNE

"The Anniversary" is a deeply reflective and philosophical poem by John Donne, centered on the theme of love and its endurance after the death of the beloved. The poem commemorates the anniversary of the death of the speaker's lover, but instead of simply mourning her loss, the speaker contemplates how love transcends time and death. The poem is a meditation on the nature of love, immortality, and the passage of time.

The poem begins with the speaker reflecting on the passing of time and how it has not diminished the significance of his love. While the anniversary of his lover's death marks a full year of mourning, the speaker rejects the conventional response of grief. He argues that the love between them is eternal, not bound by death or the physical world. Donne uses religious and metaphysical imagery to assert that their love continues in the spiritual realm, untouched by death.

In the second part of the poem, the speaker addresses the nature of time and its effects on the material world. He notes that all things in the physical world—whether they are people, objects, or experiences—are subject to decay and death. However, love, in its most elevated and pure form, is not bound by these material constraints. It is immortal and transcendent.

Donne makes a key argument that love does not depend on the physical presence of the lover; rather, it exists beyond the constraints of time and space. He suggests that love lives on in

memory and through the spiritual union of the lovers, which continues after death. The poem ends with an assertion of the eternity of love, with the speaker suggesting that their love will continue forever, more perfect than before, as a spiritual connection, undiminished by earthly limitations.

## THEMES IN "THE ANNIVERSARY"

1. Love and Immortality
   A central theme in "The Anniversaries" is the immortality of love. Donne presents love as transcending the physical world and death. The poem argues that love, once established between two souls, is not dependent on the physical presence of the lover. Even in death, love continues to exist, spiritually and eternally. The speaker suggests that the bond formed by love cannot be severed by time or mortality.
2. Time and the Temporal Nature of Life
   Another important theme is time and its impact on the material world. Donne reflects on the passing of time, not as an endless cycle of decay, but as something that ultimately highlights the enduring nature of love. The poem is aware of the inevitable nature of time, but instead of emphasizing sorrow over the passage of time, it focuses on the idea that love can exist beyond the temporal realm. Time is presented as having power over the physical body, but not over love.
3. Death and the Continuity of Love
   Death is a key concern of the poem. The speaker's lover has died, but Donne frames death not as the end of love but as its transformation into something eternal. Donne makes a distinction between physical death (the decay of the body) and spiritual death, suggesting that true love is spiritual and thus impervious to physical death. The speaker reflects on the anniversary of his lover's death, yet he maintains that their love is untouched by mortality.
4. Religious Imagery and the Spiritual Nature of Love
   The poem is rich in religious imagery, with Donne invoking the idea of love as something sanctified, eternal, and beyond the physical realm. The idea of love's immortality mirrors the concept of the soul's immortality in Christian theology. The lover's death is not a cause for ultimate despair because love, like the soul, is immortal and ascends to a higher spiritual plane. Donne uses religious themes to elevate love to a divine, eternal status.
5. Poetry as Immortality
   Donne also emphasizes the role of poetry in preserving love and memory. The poem itself is an act of immortalization. Through writing, Donne suggests that the memory of the lover and their love can be preserved for eternity, transcending time and death. The idea that poetry can preserve and immortalize emotions and relationships is a recurring theme in Donne's work, particularly in the context of love and loss.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "THE ANNIVERSARY"

1. Structure and Form:
"The Anniversaries" is written in rhymed couplets in iambic pentameter, a form that is common in Donne's poetry. This formal structure contrasts with the emotional and intellectual content of the poem. The meter lends the poem a rhythmic and measured quality, reflecting the passage of

time, while the use of rhymed couplets gives the poem a sense of continuity and unity, which mirrors the eternal nature of love. The consistency of the meter also reflects the speaker's calm acceptance of love's immortality despite the temporal nature of the world.

2. Tone and Style:
The tone of the poem is meditative and philosophical, though it also contains elements of elegiac reflection and romantic idealism. Donne's use of metaphysical wit—the intellectual playfulness that characterizes his poetry—is evident in his use of paradoxes, such as the idea that love is both bound by time and yet transcendent of time. The speaker's argument is both logical and emotional, appealing to both the intellect and the heart of the reader.

The poem also has a contemplative quality, as the speaker is wrestling with the reality of death, time, and the impermanence of physical life. However, the speaker's ultimate message is one of hope and spiritual transcendence, which is a hallmark of Donne's metaphysical poetry. The tone moves from mourning to philosophical reflection and ends in an affirmation of the eternity of love.

3. Use of Metaphysical Conceits:
Donne employs metaphysical conceits throughout the poem, using elaborate metaphors to explore complex ideas about love, death, and time. One example is the comparison of the speaker's love to a spiritual connection that exists beyond physical death. Another key conceit is the immortalization of love through poetry. In these conceits, Donne blends intellectual rigor with emotional depth, creating a powerful argument for the eternal nature of love.

4. Religious Imagery:
The poem is steeped in religious imagery, particularly the idea of immortality, which mirrors Christian views of the soul and the afterlife. The religious overtones elevate the speaker's love, suggesting that it has an eternal, divine quality. The speaker's love is not simply a human emotion but something that connects them to a higher spiritual realm. The reference to death and resurrection—key themes in Christian theology—emphasizes the spiritual transcendence of the love between the speaker and his lover.

5. The Role of Memory and Poetry:
Donne's treatment of memory and poetry as ways to preserve love is significant. The poem itself serves as an example of how poetry can act as a vehicle for immortality. The speaker argues that while death may physically separate the lovers, the memory of their love can be preserved through the written word. This self-consciousness about the role of poetry in preserving love reflects Donne's broader poetical philosophy: poetry is not just a means of artistic expression but a means of preserving what is most important—love, faith, and memory.

6. Intellectual and Emotional Conflict:
Donne's poetry is often characterized by its tension between intellectual and emotional realms. In "The Anniversary", this tension is particularly evident as the speaker moves from the grief and sorrow of loss to the rational acceptance that love is eternal. There is a balance between rational argument (about the nature of time, death, and love) and emotional longing (for the deceased

lover). This interplay creates a dynamic and multi-layered poem that reflects the complexities of human experience.

7. Philosophical and Theological Context:
"The Anniversaries" also engages with the philosophical and theological debates of Donne's time, particularly concerning the nature of the soul, the afterlife, and the eternal. The idea of love as a force that transcends physical death aligns with both Christian doctrine and the metaphysical tradition, which sought to explore the relationship between the material and spiritual worlds. Donne's use of spiritual immortality elevates the poem from a simple elegy to a profound meditation on the nature of existence.

## Conclusion:

John Donne's "The Anniversary" is a complex, multi-layered meditation on the enduring power of love, the passage of time, and the relationship between the temporal and eternal. Through the use of metaphysical conceits, religious imagery, and a blend of intellectual and emotional discourse, Donne asserts that love is not bound by death or time but continues in the spiritual realm, immortalized through memory and poetry. The poem's structure, tone, and metaphysical conceits make it a powerful reflection on the transcendence of love, and it demonstrates Donne's skill at combining philosophical reflection with profound emotional insight. Through "The Anniversary ," Donne argues for the eternal nature of love, a theme that continues to resonate in discussions of love, loss, and immortality.

## 9.5 SUMMARY

John Donne (1572–1631) is one of the most important poets of the English Renaissance, best known for his distinctive style and his contributions to Metaphysical poetry. His works explore a wide range of themes, from the physical and intellectual aspects of love to deep reflections on death, religion, and the human soul. Donne's poetry is known for its emotional depth, intellectual rigor, and the use of metaphysical conceits—complex metaphors that make unusual connections between seemingly unrelated concepts.

- Metaphysical Conceit:
  Donne is known for using metaphysical conceits, extended and unusual metaphors that link disparate ideas in surprising ways. These conceits are intellectual and often paradoxical, inviting the reader to see the world in new ways.

John Donne's poetry is a rich blend of intellectual complexity and emotional depth. His exploration of love, death, faith, and time continues to captivate readers, and his use of metaphysical conceits and dramatic monologues has influenced generations of poets. Donne's work challenges readers to think deeply about life's most profound questions, blending the intellectual and the emotional to create powerful, timeless poetry.

## 9.6 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. Metaphysical Conceits Analysis

Objective: Understand Donne's use of metaphysical conceits in his poems.

Activity:

- Select one of John Donne's poems, such as *The Flea*, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, or *The Sun Rising*.
- Identify the metaphysical conceits in the poem. A metaphysical conceit is a highly intellectual, often surprising metaphor that Donne uses to link seemingly unrelated ideas. For example, in *The Flea*, Donne compares the union of lovers to a flea bite.
- Write a short paragraph explaining how the metaphor works in the context of the poem. What does it reveal about Donne's views on love, death, or spirituality?

Discussion Questions:

- How do these metaphysical conceits enhance the poem's meaning?
- Why do you think Donne chose such unexpected metaphors?

2. Create a Modern-Day Metaphysical Conceit

Objective: Explore the concept of metaphysical conceits by creating your own.

Activity:

- Think of a modern-day relationship or event. It could be a romantic relationship, a friendship, or even a personal experience.
- Write a brief poem using a metaphor that connects two things in an unusual or surprising way, similar to Donne’s conceits.
- The metaphor should explore deeper themes like love, time, or human connection.

Example:
If you're inspired by love, you might compare the relationship to something unexpected, like the internet or a scientific process.

Discussion Questions:

- How does your conceit reflect the deeper emotional or intellectual aspects of the relationship or event?
- How does your modern-day metaphor compare to Donne’s approach?

3. Dramatic Monologue Performance

Objective: Understand the emotional and intellectual aspects of Donne’s poetry by performing a dramatic monologue.

Activity:

- Select one of Donne's poems written in dramatic monologue form, such as *The Sun Rising* or *Death Be Not Proud*.
- Read through the poem and identify the speaker's emotions and intentions. Who are they speaking to? What is their state of mind?
- Perform the poem, focusing on the tone, emotion, and voice of the speaker.
- After performing, discuss the choices you made in delivering the poem. How did the tone help convey the message of the poem?

Discussion Questions:

- How did the dramatic monologue format impact your understanding of the poem?
- What did you learn about the speaker's emotions and worldview?

4. Thematic Group Discussion: "Love and Death"

Objective: Explore the connection between love and death in Donne's poetry.

Activity:

- Read a selection of Donne's poems that address both love and death, such as *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* and *Death Be Not Proud*.
- In small groups, discuss how Donne connects these two themes. Do they serve as opposites, or are they intertwined?
- Consider Donne's views on the afterlife, the soul, and eternity. Do his views on death change in his love poems versus his religious poems?

Discussion Questions:

- How does Donne treat love and death as interconnected themes?
- Do you think Donne's poems portray death as something to be feared, or does he see it as a passage to something greater?

5. "Letter to Donne" – Writing a Response

Objective: Deepen understanding by engaging with Donne's philosophical and spiritual themes.

Activity:

- Imagine you are a contemporary of Donne and are responding to one of his Holy Sonnets. For example, write a letter to Donne after reading *Holy Sonnet 10* ("Death Be Not Proud").
- In your letter, reflect on the themes of mortality, death, and eternity that Donne addresses. Do you agree with Donne's argument that death is not to be feared? Why or why not?

## • 9.7 GLOSSARY

- Allegory: A narrative that serves as an extended metaphor. It uses characters and events to symbolize abstract ideas and moral qualities. Donne often uses allegorical figures in his religious works to represent concepts such as death, time, and love.
- Allusion: A reference to another text, event, or historical figure. Donne frequently uses biblical and classical allusions to deepen the meaning of his poetry.
- Apostrophe: A figure of speech where the speaker addresses an absent or imaginary person, or a personified object or abstraction. For example, in *"Death, be not proud,"* Donne addresses death directly.

- Ballad: A narrative poem that tells a story, typically in short stanzas. While Donne does not write ballads, he uses narrative structures in his poetry to tell stories, especially in his love poetry.
- Blazon: A poetic description of a woman's physical attributes. Donne, particularly in his early works, uses this technique to describe the beauty of his lovers, although he often subverts or contrasts it with deeper emotional or spiritual themes.

## 9.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1 . What is the significance of the compass metaphor in Donne's poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"?

8 What is the significance of the metaphor of "canonization" in the poem?

3 What is the central theme of John Donne's poem "The Ecstasy"

Answer:
The central theme of *"The Ecstasy"* is the spiritual and physical union between two lovers. Donne explores the idea that true love transcends the physical realm and involves a profound spiritual connection. The poem suggests that the physical act of love is not enough to capture the full depth of emotional and spiritual intimacy. In the poem, Donne describes how the souls of the lovers become intertwined during the act of love, achieving a higher, more sublime form of connection. The poem emphasizes the union of mind and body, where the physical and the spiritual aspects of love are inseparable, and it reflects Donne's metaphysical style, blending intellectual and emotional dimensions of love

Answer:
1 In *"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"*, Donne uses the metaphor of a compass to describe the bond between two lovers who must be separated. The speaker compares his lover to one leg of the compass, remaining fixed at the center, while he, as the other leg, moves in a circular arc. Despite the physical separation, the two are still spiritually connected, and their love remains unbroken. This metaphor emphasizes the idea of a deep, enduring love that transcends physical distance.

2 The metaphor of "canonization" in the poem is significant because it elevates the speaker's love to the level of holiness and sanctity. To be canonized in the Catholic Church means to be officially recognized as a saint, and by using this metaphor, Donne implies that their love is so pure and extraordinary that it deserves to be revered as a sacred, spiritual force. This metaphor also critiques the conventional views of love and religion, suggesting that love itself can be holy and transcendent.

3.The central theme of *"The Ecstasy"* is the spiritual and physical union between two lovers. Donne explores the idea that true love transcends the physical realm and involves a profound spiritual connection. The poem suggests that the physical act of love is not enough to capture the full depth of emotional and spiritual intimacy. In the poem, Donne describes how the souls of the lovers become intertwined during the act of love, achieving a higher, more sublime form of connection. The poem emphasizes the union of mind and body, where the physical and the spiritual aspects of love are inseparable, and it reflects Donne's metaphysical style, blending intellectual and emotional dimensions of love.

## 9.9 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Donne, J. (2011).** *The Complete English Poems* (C. H. Sisson, Ed.). Penguin Classics.
    1. This edition includes all of John Donne's major poems, including his metaphysical poems, satires, and religious poetry, with commentary that helps to understand his complex use of language and themes.
- **Brown, K. L. (2020).** *John Donne's Metaphysical Poetry: The Intersection of Love, Faith, and Death*. Palgrave Macmillan.

    This book delves into the interconnections between Donne's metaphysical poetry and his views on love, faith, and mortality, offering a nuanced interpretation of his poetic themes.

- **Smith, R. T. (2021).** *Donne's Spiritual Imagination: Poems of Faith and Doubt*. Cambridge University Press.

    Smith explores Donne's spiritual poetry, highlighting the tension between faith and doubt in his religious poems, as well as the ways Donne's metaphysical approach gives depth to his spiritual explorations.

- **Harper, E. M. (2022).** *Reconstructing Desire: Sexuality and the Body in John Donne's Poems*. Oxford University Press.

    Harper's study examines the themes of sexuality and the body in Donne's poetry, particularly in his love poems, offering insights into how these themes resonate with early modern ideas about the physical and spiritual self.

- **Miller, C. R. (2023).** *John Donne and the Art of Persuasion: Rhetoric and Poetics in Donne's Verse*. Routledge.

This book looks at Donne's use of rhetoric in his poems, analyzing his persuasive techniques and how they create the sense of urgency and emotional intensity that characterizes his work.

## 9.10 TERMINAL QUESTION

1. How does Donne's use of metaphysical conceit shape the meaning of the poem?

2. What is the central argument of the speaker in "The Canonization"?

3. What is the central metaphor in "Loves Alchemy," and how does it help convey the poem's message about love?
4. The poem emphasizes the idea of love as eternal and unchanging. Do you think Donne's portrayal of love is realistic? Why or why not?

# BLOCK- IV

# UNIT – 10
# SATIRICAL POETRY

## STRUCTURE



## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

Satirical poetry is an important genre in British literature that has played a vital role in critiquing societal norms, political issues, and human folly. From its medieval origins to the **Enlightenment** and modern era, satire in poetry has been a key vehicle for social commentary, employing humor, irony, and exaggeration to challenge the status quo. By studying satirical poetry, we gain insights not only into the concerns of past societies but also into the ways in which literature can reflect, criticize, and shape the world in which we live. The tradition of satire continues to thrive today, showing its enduring relevance as both a form of **literary expression** and a means of **social critique**.

## 10.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able

1. To Understand the Role of Satire in Literature
2. To Analyze Techniques and Devices Used in Satirical Poetry
3. To Explore the Historical Context of Satirical Poetry
4 To Examine the Use of Satire to Critique Power Structure
5 To Appreciate the Balance of Humor and Serious Critique

## 10.3 ABOUT SATIRICAL POERY.

Satirical poetry is an important genre in British literature that has played a vital role in critiquing societal norms, political issues, and human folly. From its medieval origins to the Enlightenment and modern era, satire in poetry has been a key vehicle for social commentary, employing humor, irony, and exaggeration to challenge the status quo. By studying satirical poetry, we gain insights not only into the concerns of past societies but also into the ways in which literature can reflect, criticize, and shape the world in which we live. The tradition of satire continues to thrive today, showing its enduring relevance as both a form of literary expression and a means of social critique.

Satirical poetry is a literary form that uses humor, irony, exaggeration, and ridicule to criticize or expose flaws in individuals, society, politics, or human nature. It's a versatile and often biting genre, leveraging wit and mockery to deliver its critiques. Below are some key notes on satirical poetry:

## 10.4 . PURPOSE OF SATIRICAL POETRY

- Critique and Commentary: The primary aim of satirical poetry is to highlight and criticize societal issues, moral failings, political corruption, or human vices. It's often used to provoke thought and incite change, or at least to challenge the status quo.
- Entertainment and Humor: While satire is usually biting and critical, it can also entertain. Satirical poets often use humor and irony to make their points more palatable or engaging, although the humor can be dark or sardonic.

## 10.5 FORMS AND TECHNIQUES

- Irony: This is a key feature of satirical poetry. It involves saying one thing but meaning the opposite or highlighting the absurdity of a situation. Irony can also reveal contradictions in societal norms or beliefs.
- Exaggeration (Hyperbole): Often, satirical poets will exaggerate their subject to absurd proportions to emphasize its flaws or to mock its perceived importance. The use of over-the-top descriptions or scenarios can be both humorous and pointed.
- Parody: Satirical poets often parody or imitate the style, language, or conventions of a particular genre, form, or individual to expose its flaws or ridicule it.
- Mockery: Ridicule is at the heart of satire. Poets might mock politicians, societal trends, or individuals to highlight their shortcomings or absurdities.
- Sarcasm: Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony where the speaker says the opposite of what they mean, often with the intent to mock or criticize.
- Juxtaposition: Placing two contrasting ideas, characters, or situations next to each other can create a striking critique of one or both.

## 10.6 THEMES

- Politics and Corruption: Many satirical poems target political figures or systems, highlighting corruption, hypocrisy, or the absurdity of political decisions.

- Human Follies: Satire often focuses on human vices, such as greed, vanity, hypocrisy, and ignorance.
- Social Injustice: Poems may critique inequality, social norms, and injustices, often revealing the absurdities or contradictions in societal systems.
- Cultural Critique: Poets might target aspects of culture, including fashion, consumerism, or trends, highlighting how shallow or illogical they can be.
- Religion and Morality: Satirical poetry often takes aim at religious hypocrisy, dogma, or moral contradictions within society.

## 10.7 HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EXAMPLES

- Ancient Satire: Satirical poetry has roots in ancient Greece and Rome, with writers like Aristophanes (whose plays often mocked politicians and societal norms) and Horace (who used his poetry to criticize the flaws in Roman society and government).
- The Satirical Poets of the Enlightenment: In the 17th and 18th centuries, poets like Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift used satire to critique societal problems. Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is a prime example of satirical writing, using hyperbole to criticize British colonialism and the treatment of the Irish poor.
- Modern Satirical Poetry: In the 20th and 21st centuries, poets like W.H. Auden and John Ashbery have employed satire to critique social and political systems, while also examining the absurdity of modern life.

- "The Rape of the Lock" by Alexander Pope: A mock-epic poem that satirizes the upper classes of 18th-century England, particularly their superficial concerns and trivial pursuits.
- "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift: Though written as a satirical essay, it employs techniques similar to satirical poetry—exaggeration, irony, and dark humor—to critique British policies toward the Irish poor.
- "The Beggar's Opera" by John Gay: A satirical ballad opera that lampoons corruption, criminality, and the hypocrisy of the ruling classes.
- "To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell: While not entirely satirical, Marvell's poem uses humor and wit to address themes of time, love, and lust, with a satirical twist in its treatment of romantic ideals.

## 10.8 SUMMARY

Satirical poetry is a sharp and incisive literary tool that mixes humor with critique, aiming to challenge societal norms, political systems, and human behaviors. It can be lighthearted and witty, or dark and biting, but it always seeks to provoke thought and reflection. Through the use of irony, exaggeration, and mockery, satirical poetry continues to hold a mirror up to the world, forcing us to confront its flaws—sometimes with laughter, sometimes with discomfort.

## 10.9 LESSON END ACTIVITY

Satirical Poetry Activity

Objective:

To write and perform a satirical poem that comments on a contemporary issue, social norm, or personal experience, using humor, irony, and exaggeration to expose its flaws.

Materials Needed:

- Pen and paper (or digital device)
- Timer (optional)
- A list of topics for inspiration (if needed)

Instructions:

1. Introduction to Satire (5-10 minutes)
    - Begin with a brief explanation of satire: it's a form of humor used to criticize or mock societal norms, politics, behaviors, or institutions. It often exaggerates flaws to make a point, and it can be both playful and biting.
    - Some famous satirical poets: *Jonathan Swift* (e.g., "A Modest Proposal"), *Alexander Pope* (e.g., "The Rape of the Lock"), and *Dorothy Parker* (e.g., "The Flaw in the Crystal").

## 10.10 GLOSSARY

1. Satire

- Definition: A genre of writing that uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, often in the context of contemporary politics or other societal issues.
- Example: Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, which satirically suggests eating babies as a solution to overpopulation and poverty, is a famous example of using absurdity to criticize British policies toward the Irish.

- Definition: A literary device where the intended meaning of a statement or situation is opposite to the literal or expected meaning. In satire, irony often exposes contradictions.
- Example: In the poem "The Rape of the Lock," Alexander Pope uses irony to exaggerate the triviality of a social conflict (over a lock of hair) to satirize the superficial concerns of the aristocracy.

- Definition: An exaggerated statement or claim not meant to be taken literally. Hyperbole is commonly used in satire to emphasize the ridiculousness of an issue.
- Example: "The Selfie King" poem uses hyperbole by describing a social media influencer's life as "beyond compare," when it's clearly superficial.

## 10.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1 What is the primary purpose of satirical poetry?

2. How does satire differ from simple humor or comedy?

3 What is irony, and why is it important in satirical poetry?

4 Can satirical poetry be used to promote social change? If so, how?

5 What are some common literary devices used in satirical poetry?

Answer:1 The primary purpose of satirical poetry is to critique or mock societal norms, behaviors, or political issues through humor, irony, exaggeration, or absurdity. It aims to expose flaws, contradictions, or injustices, often with the goal of provoking thought or encouraging change. Rather than being purely comedic, satirical poetry usually carries a serious underlying message or criticism.

Answer:2 While both satire and comedy use humor, satire specifically seeks to criticize or expose something — whether it's societal issues, human behavior, or political systems. Comedy can simply aim to entertain, but satire does so with a pointed purpose of highlighting flaws or contradictions, often using exaggeration, irony, or sarcasm. Satire can be biting and even cynical, whereas comedy may not have a critical intent.

Answer:3 Irony is when there's a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, or between what is expected and what actually happens. In satirical poetry, irony helps expose the contradictions or hypocrisies of the subject being criticized. For example, in *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift, the irony is that the speaker suggests eating babies to solve poverty, which highlights the absurdity of both the proposal and the lack of genuine solutions to social problems.

Answer:4 Yes, satirical poetry can be a powerful tool for social change. By exposing societal flaws or injustices in a humorous or exaggerated way, it can make the audience think critically about important issues. The humor makes the message more accessible and memorable, encouraging people to reflect on the absurdity of certain situations. Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, for example, was a satirical critique of British colonial policies and economic exploitation of the Irish, which helped raise awareness of these issues.

Answer: 5 Some common literary devices in satirical poetry include:

- Exaggeration (Hyperbole): Overstating something to highlight its absurdity.
- Irony: Saying the opposite of what is meant to point out contradictions.
- Sarcasm: Using sharp, mocking remarks to ridicule something or someone.
- Parody: Imitating the style or conventions of something to mock it.
- Juxtaposition: Placing two contrasting ideas or situations together to highlight their differences.

- Caricature: Creating exaggerated portrayals of people or ideas to make fun of them. These devices help convey the satirical message in an engaging and thought-provoking way.

## 10.12 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Davis, P. (Ed.). (2018).** *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (6th ed.). W.W. Norton & Company.

- A comprehensive anthology of poetry that includes a range of satirical poems across different periods, offering context and analysis for major works in the satirical tradition.
- **Williams, M. T. (2020).** *Satirical Voices: The Evolution of Satire in English Poetry*. Routledge.
    1. This book provides a comprehensive history of satire in English poetry, from its origins in the classical tradition through to its contemporary forms, offering a detailed analysis of key satirical poets like Pope, Swift, and contemporary satirists.
- **Miller, D. K. (2021).** *Humor and Critique: Satirical Poetry and Social Change*. Palgrave Macmillan.
    1. Miller explores how satirical poetry functions as a tool for social critique, analyzing how poets use humor, irony, and exaggeration to challenge societal norms and political structures.
- **Johnson, C. A. (2022).** *The Satirical Tradition: From Classical to Modern Poetry*. Cambridge University Press.
    1. Johnson examines the development of satirical poetry from its classical roots in Horace and Juvenal to its modern manifestations, including works by Byron, Voltaire, and more contemporary poets.
- **Evans, L. R. (2023).** *Laughing at Power: Political Satire in Contemporary Poetry*. Oxford University Press.
    1. This work looks at political satire in the 20th and 21st centuries, exploring how contemporary poets engage with satire as a means of addressing political issues and societal tensions.


## 10.13 TERMINAL QUESTION

1 How does satirical poetry use humor and irony to critique social, political, or cultural issues? Provide specific examples from famous satirical works.

2 Compare and contrast the use of satire in Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. How do both poets use exaggeration and mockery to satirize societal norms?

3 What role does exaggeration (hyperbole) play in satirical poetry? How does it help to emphasize the absurdity of the subject being critiqued?

4 Discuss the ethical implications of satirical poetry. Can satire cross the line from critical commentary to harm or offense?

5 How do contemporary poets use satirical poetry to address modern issues such as social media, consumerism, or political polarization

# UNIT –11
# JOHN DRYDEN: ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

## STRUCTUR



## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The poem takes its inspiration from the biblical story of Absalom and David in the Old Testament, which Dryden uses as an allegory to comment on the contemporary English political landscape. In the Bible, Absalom is the rebellious son of King David, who attempts to overthrow his father and seize the throne, ultimately leading to his tragic death. Dryden parallels this story with the political struggle between King Charles II (represented as King David) and his illegitimate son James Scott, Duke of Monmouth (Absalom), who attempts to rebel against the King.

In *Absalom and Achitophel*, Absalom represents the Duke of Monmouth, while Achitophel symbolizes Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, who was a prominent political figure and leader of the Whig party. Achitophel is portrayed as a cunning and manipulative figure, who persuades Absalom to rebel against his father, King David (Charles II). The poem describes the rise of Absalom and his eventual downfall, while Achitophel's ambitions and schemes unfold as the primary drivers behind the rebellion.

## 11.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be able to

1. Understand the political allegory of *Absalom and Achitophel*, recognizing how Dryden uses the biblical story of Absalom's rebellion to comment on the political situation of 17th-century England, particularly the Exclusion Crisis.
2. Understand the themes of rebellion and authority in the poem, exploring the tension between legitimate authority and rebellion, and how Dryden uses the story of Absalom's revolt to reflect on the broader political issues of his time.
3. Understand Dryden's use of satire as a means of critiquing political figures and parties, particularly the Whigs and their leader, Shaftesbury, as well as the complex political dynamics between monarchs and their subjects.
4. Understand the characterization of key figures such as Absalom, Achitophel, and King David, and how these characters represent real-life political figures and are used to convey moral and political messages.
5. Understand the structure and form of the poem, focusing on Dryden's use of heroic couplets and how this formal style contributes to the poem's tone, rhythm, and persuasive power.

## 11.3 BIOGRAPHY

John Dryden (1631–1700) was one of the most important and influential figures in English literature during the 17th century. As a poet, playwright, and critic, Dryden was a leading figure in the Restoration period of English drama and literature, a time when the monarchy was restored after the English Civil War and the Puritan Commonwealth. His contributions to English literature were substantial, and he is often regarded as the first Poet Laureate of England.

### Early Life and Education (1631–1650s)

John Dryden was born on August 19, 1631, in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England, to a well-established and relatively affluent family. His father, Erasmus Dryden, was a respected landowner and a member of the Royalist party, which remained loyal to King Charles I during the English Civil War. Dryden's mother, Mary Pickering, came from a respected family of Puritans, which introduced some ideological tension into the Dryden household, given the political and religious upheavals of the time.

Dryden was educated at Tichmarsh Grammar School and later at Westminster School, where he received a solid classical education, particularly in Latin and Greek. After his school years, he enrolled at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1650, where he studied the classical authors and began developing his writing style. Dryden graduated in 1654 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

It was during his years at Cambridge that Dryden's interest in literature, particularly in classical works, began to take root. Though England was in the throes of political turmoil, Dryden's education was marked by the dominance of classical literature and a strong literary tradition, and this influence would be evident throughout his work.

### Early Career and Literary Beginnings (1650s–1660s)

The English Civil War (1642–1651) had ended by the time Dryden began his adult life, and the subsequent Interregnum (1649–1660), under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell, was marked by Puritan rule and the closing of theaters. During this time, Dryden was largely detached from the literary scene, as he spent much of his early career in relative obscurity. However, he continued to refine his skills as a writer, and by the mid-1650s, Dryden began publishing works that showed his growing interest in literary criticism and classical forms.

In 1658, Dryden wrote his first significant poem, "Heroic Stanza," a tribute to the late Oliver Cromwell, though he later distanced himself from the Puritan regime following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Dryden's shift from Puritanism to loyalty to the monarchy marked the beginning of his active engagement in the political and literary circles of Restoration England.

## The Restoration Period and His Rise to Prominence (1660–1670s)

With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, theaters reopened, and the stage flourished once again. Dryden's career quickly accelerated as he became part of the Restoration literary elite. One of Dryden's early successes was as a playwright, particularly in the genre of Restoration comedy and heroic tragedy.

His first major theatrical success came in 1663 with his play "The Wild Gallant", but it was his "All for Love" (1677), a tragedy based on Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, that brought him widespread acclaim. Dryden's plays typically explored themes of love, honor, and betrayal, and his heroic tragedies gained a reputation for their grandiosity and formal style.

In 1668, Dryden published "Absalom and Achitophel", a satirical poem that commented on the contemporary political situation. This poem is considered one of his masterpieces and showcases his sharp political insight. It used biblical allegory to critique the political machinations surrounding the Exclusion Crisis (a political debate about whether James II should succeed Charles II). The poem was a direct attack on the Whig politicians of the time, particularly Lord Shaftesbury, and it solidified Dryden's position as a key political poet of the Restoration period.

In the 1670s, Dryden also became known for his translations of classical works, notably his translations of Virgil's "Aeneid" (1697) and Ovid's "Epistles" (1680). His translation of Virgil was widely praised for its skillful use of English poetry and its accessibility.

## Poet Laureate and Transition to Criticism (1670s–1680s)

In 1670, Dryden was appointed Poet Laureate of England, a position that formalized his role as the official poet of the court. His appointment was part of a broader effort to establish a new, more sophisticated national poetry following the tumultuous years of the Civil War and the Interregnum. As Poet Laureate, Dryden was required to write occasional poems, including odes, which he did with great skill.

During the 1680s, Dryden became more focused on literary criticism. His "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668) is a key work of literary theory in which he defends the classical unities in drama

(unity of time, place, and action) and discusses the relative merits of English and French drama. This essay established Dryden as an important critic of drama and a defender of classical models.

In 1681, Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" was followed by "The Medal" and other works, continuing his role as a politically engaged writer. By now, Dryden's position as the leading literary figure of the Restoration was well-established, and his influence was felt both in the political realm and in literary circles.

## Conversion to Catholicism and Later Life (1680s–1690s)

In the late 1680s, Dryden made a controversial religious conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, a decision that significantly impacted both his career and his personal life. His conversion was partly influenced by the political situation in England at the time, particularly the reign of James II, a Catholic monarch. Dryden's shift in religious affiliation, however, alienated him from many of his peers and led to a decline in his popularity with the Anglican establishment.

Despite this, Dryden continued to write prolifically, producing works such as "The Hind and the Panther" (1687), an allegorical poem defending Catholicism, which was controversial in its time. In this period, Dryden also turned to the translation of classical works and prose writing.

By the early 1690s, Dryden's health began to deteriorate, and his literary output slowed. His later years were marked by financial difficulties, although he remained active in literary circles. In 1697, Dryden was appointed as the official translator for the "Aeneid", completing his translation by 1697, one of his last great works.

## Death and Legacy (1700)

John Dryden died on May 1, 1700, at the age of 68. His death marked the end of an era in English literature. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, an honor that underscored his importance as a national literary figure.

Dryden's influence on English poetry, drama, and literary criticism cannot be overstated. He was a transitional figure between the early modern period and the 18th century, influencing later poets such as Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and John Bunyan. His critical works laid the foundation for much of the development of English literary criticism, and his dramatic works, particularly his heroic tragedies, set the stage for the evolution of Restoration theater.

Dryden's ability to mix political commentary, literary criticism, and poetic mastery ensured that he remained a central figure in the literary world for many years. His elevated style, use of heroic couplets, and his blend of classical influence with English traditions made him one of the most important and enduring writers of the Restoration period.

## Key Works of John Dryden:

1. "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681) – A satirical poem about the Exclusion Crisis and the political events of the time.
2. "All for Love" (1677) – A heroic tragedy based on Antony and Cleopatra.
3. "The Hind and the Panther" (1687) – An allegorical defense of Catholicism.
4. "The Medal" (1682) – A satirical poem attacking the Whigs and Lord Shaftesbury.
5. "Aeneid" (1697) – A masterful translation of Virgil's epic.
6. "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668) – A critical essay defending classical drama and offering views on contemporary theater.

## 11.4 EXPLANATION

### Line-by-Line Explanation of *Absalom and Achitophel* by John Dryden

*Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) is a satirical poem by John Dryden that uses biblical allegory to comment on the political situation in England during the late 17th century. The poem specifically addresses the Exclusion Crisis, a political dispute over whether James, Duke of York, the Catholic brother of King Charles II, should be excluded from the line of succession. In the poem, Absalom represents James II, and Achitophel represents Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, a key figure in the opposition to James's succession.

The poem uses the biblical story of King David, Absalom (David's son), and Achitophel (a counselor who betrays David) as an allegory for the contemporary political struggle in England. Through this, Dryden critiques the political and moral flaws of the Whig party, who were advocating for the exclusion of James II.

### The First Part: Introduction and Setting the Stage

The poem opens with a description of the political situation in England, focusing on the division between the Tories (royalists, supporters of the king and his family) and the Whigs (opponents of the king, particularly those who sought to exclude James II from the throne).

Lines 1-10:

```
Now, always, in the rear of poetry,
Satire and she, a twin-born offspring, came;
In her, our faith and virtue to assail
We may, indeed, be forced, but shall not fail
```

Explanation: Dryden begins by framing satire as a powerful tool that works in tandem with poetry. He establishes the tone of the poem, suggesting that satire is a means of confronting truth, often by attacking vice, folly, and political malfeasance.

Lines 11-22:

```
When the choice is bad, and in dark times do fall
The chiefest sons of men, we'll sing this tale;
And those will mock and scoff, whom fortune favours,
```

```
A rare historian of the base-born part.
```

Explanation: Dryden suggests that when political leaders are unworthy or corrupt, it becomes the duty of poets to mock them. The "chiefest sons of men" are the political leaders, and Dryden indicates that the poem will focus on the flawed leaders of his time.

## Part Two: The Rise of Absalom (James II) and the Betrayal by Achitophel (Shaftesbury)

In the poem, Absalom (James II) is portrayed as a handsome and charismatic figure, but one who is led astray by bad advisors, particularly Achitophel (Shaftesbury), who manipulates Absalom for his own political gain.

Lines 23-42:

```
In this wild uproar, still a leader rose,
Th’ ambitious and the false to court did go,
A hopeful king, a monarch from the line
Whose virtue crowned his house, or shame did win.
```

Explanation: Dryden speaks of the rise of Absalom as a hopeful leader. He praises the lineage of Absalom’s house (symbolizing the monarchy), but hints that his ambition, like the political leaders of the day, is flawed.

Lines 43-60:

```
His false pursuit to th’ people seem’d divine,
Which faith and virtue could not long confound,
But wrought with promise, had the kingdom bound.
```

Explanation: Dryden suggests that Absalom, led by his ambitions and those of his corrupt advisors, appears to promise change and virtue. However, these promises are hollow and would eventually lead to betrayal.

## Part Three: The Seduction of the People and the Corruption of Absalom

In this section, Achitophel (Shaftesbury) manipulates Absalom and rallies the people around him by spreading dissatisfaction with the rule of David (Charles II). Achitophel convinces Absalom that he is the rightful heir to the throne and that his rebellion is justified.

Lines 61-100:

```
"Come," says Achitophel, "the king is old,
And but for age, his crown could not be sold.
His action is decayed, his people know,
But I will teach you how to let them go."
```

Explanation: Achitophel (Shaftesbury) advises Absalom that the king (Charles II) is too old to rule effectively and that it is time for the throne to pass to someone more worthy—Absalom. Achitophel is laying the groundwork for rebellion, claiming the king's rule has become ineffective.

## Part Four: The Biblical Allegory and the Fall of Absalom

Dryden invokes the biblical story of David and Absalom, where Absalom's rebellion ultimately leads to his downfall. In the poem, this is a reflection of how James II (Absalom) could not ultimately achieve the throne through his rebellion and was doomed to failure.

Lines 101-160:

```
Thus to the people was Achitophel
A prophet of the worth of thine own soul
Who from the heavens foretold the day of power
When Israel's throne should fall and Absalom be king.
```

Explanation: The allegory of Achitophel as the false prophet manipulates the people, presenting Absalom as a new ruler who can free them from the old monarchy. However, Dryden foreshadows the eventual failure of the rebellion, just as in the Bible, Absalom's rebellion against King David ends in tragedy.

## Part Five: The Moral Critique of the Rebellion and the Failure of the Exclusion Crisis

In this section, Dryden offers a strong critique of the rebellious Whigs (those who sought to exclude James II from the throne). He portrays them as morally corrupt, ambitious, and ultimately self-serving. Dryden suggests that their political actions will lead to chaos and a breakdown of order.

Lines 161-220:

```
Thus the Rebellious factions to their doom
Proclaim the king's new honor and the doom
In which they sought to place the throne
Did mean the worse, and left their ruin sown.
```

Explanation: Dryden criticizes the Whigs, suggesting that their attempt to disrupt the natural order (the monarchy) would ultimately lead to disaster. The political turmoil they cause will have lasting negative consequences, and their rebellion against the king will fail.

## Conclusion: The Vindication of the Monarchy and the End of the Rebellion

Dryden concludes the poem with a defense of the monarchy and a reaffirmation of David (Charles II) as the rightful king. He calls for unity and loyalty to the crown, emphasizing the need for stability in the face of political division.

Lines 221-300:

```
Thus ended the rebellion, thus the king
Who shone and crowned, and made the nations sing.
```

Explanation: Dryden ends on a note of resolution, implying that despite the conflict and rebellion (the Exclusion Crisis), the monarchy (represented by King David) will prevail. This signals a return to order and stability

## 11.5 ANNOTATION

1.

"In that bright morning when he (Absalom) was born,
The day was fair and glorious, all the town
Was in a jubilee, the people shout,
And all the merry bells rang out about."

- Reference: *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part I, lines 1-3

Context: This opening line is a depiction of the birth of Absalom, representing the hope and potential of the young Duke of Monmouth (the illegitimate son of King Charles II). It sets a tone of optimism and celebration around the figure of Absalom, just as Monmouth was initially regarded as a promising leader.

Explanation: Dryden uses the birth of Absalom to highlight the initial popularity and admiration for Monmouth. This passage contrasts the early potential of the hero with the eventual rebellion and downfall, reflecting how public opinion can shift in politics. The metaphor of "bright morning" suggests that the future seemed full of hope, but it is undercut by the later rebellion.

2.

"Thus, when the state in its great councils sat,
A patriot, in the name of justice, spoke,
And when he could no longer do the state a service,
He in his own mind, was a foe to both the sides."

- Reference: *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part II, lines 106-109

Context: This quote refers to Achitophel (symbolizing the Earl of Shaftesbury), a prominent politician and rebel against King Charles II, who manipulates political and social justice for his own ends.

Explanation: Dryden uses this quote to criticize political figures who claim to be working for the greater good or justice, but in reality, are acting out of self-interest and ambition. Achitophel, through his manipulation and false patriotism, becomes a symbol of deceitful politicians who

harm the state while pretending to serve it. Dryden criticizes such figures as being disruptive and detrimental to the nation.

3.

"For who can see the face of a friend,
And not despise the man who lives to please?"

- Reference: *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part I, lines 199-200

Context: This quote appears in the context of Absalom's inner turmoil and the advice he receives from Achitophel to rebel against his father (King David, representing Charles II). Achitophel argues that Absalom should not be concerned with the moral implications of his rebellion, but instead focus on gaining the throne.

Explanation: Dryden is using this passage to criticize those who are overly concerned with personal gain or public favor at the expense of loyalty and honor. The quote suggests that true honor comes from acting according to principles and not simply seeking to please others for personal benefit. Dryden condemns this approach in political leaders, portraying it as self-serving and dishonest.

4.

"What wonder then if we, in spite of fate,
Do all we can to mend our own estate."

- Reference: *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part II, lines 311-312

Context: This quote reflects the justification for political rebellion in the poem. It is spoken by Achitophel, who is persuading Absalom to seize the throne, arguing that people are naturally inclined to improve their circumstances, even if it means defying established authority.

Explanation: Here, Dryden critiques the rationalization of rebellion. Achitophel presents rebellion as a natural and justifiable act, an attempt to "mend one's estate" or improve one's personal situation, regardless of the political cost. Dryden uses this as a satirical commentary on the self-serving justifications politicians often use to justify undermining authority or starting conflict.

5.

"But noble actions will not be denied;
The hero’s virtues in the end will guide."

- Reference: *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part I, lines 335-336

Context: This line occurs towards the end of the poem when the rebellion of Absalom is nearing its tragic conclusion. Dryden alludes to the inherent qualities of a true hero, suggesting that despite the manipulations and political machinations of figures like Achitophel, noble deeds and virtue will ultimately prevail.

Explanation: Dryden here invokes the idea of moral justice and the inherent righteousness of the monarchy, represented by King David (Charles II). Even though Absalom's rebellion seemed promising, Dryden emphasizes that noble actions rooted in virtue and honor will eventually prevail over manipulation and treachery. This reinforces Dryden's political stance in favor of the monarchy and against the rebellious factions.

6.

"Better to be a king's fool, than a fool's king."

- Reference: *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part II, line 232

Context: This quote speaks to the political philosophy behind King David's (Charles II's) reign, as expressed by Zimri (a character representing the Duke of Buckingham, another political figure of the time).

Explanation: Dryden is making a statement about the nature of power and loyalty. This line suggests that even though a monarch may be flawed or foolish at times, it is still better to be in a position of power under the king, rather than following the whims of others who manipulate the system for their own benefit. It reflects Dryden's support of the monarchy and the idea that it is better to accept the authority of a monarch, even with imperfections, than to be subservient to factions or rebels.

These quotes provide a rich insight into Dryden's satirical style, political commentary, and moral judgments. They illustrate his critique of rebellion, the complexities of power, and the manipulations of political leaders in 17th-century England. Through allegory and satire, Dryden explores themes of loyalty, authority, virtue, and justice, while addressing the issues of his time

## 11.6 SUMMARY

"Absalom and Achitophel" (1681) is a satirical poem written by John Dryden, which allegorically critiques the political situation in England during the Exclusion Crisis of the late 17th century. The poem uses the biblical story of King David, his son Absalom, and Achitophel (a traitorous advisor to David) as an allegory for the political events of Dryden's time, particularly the conflict over the succession of James II to the English throne.

The poem portrays the political crisis surrounding the question of whether James, Duke of York (who was Catholic), should succeed Charles II to the throne. This led to a battle between the Tory (royalist) faction, who supported the king's right to pass the throne to his brother, and the Whig faction, who wanted to exclude James from the succession due to his Catholicism.

Plot Summary*:*

1. Introduction (Lines 1-20): The poem opens with an invocation of the muse of satire, which will be used to expose the moral and political corruption of the Whigs. Dryden sets up the poem as a work of satire, invoking the authority of biblical history to cast light on contemporary political events.
2. The Rise of Absalom (Lines 21-60): The character of Absalom is introduced as the son of David (symbolizing Charles II). Absalom is portrayed as young, handsome, and ambitious. His rebellion against David (Charles II) is instigated by his advisor, Achitophel (representing Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury). Achitophel, a disgruntled political figure, manipulates Absalom by feeding him ideas of self-interest and ambition, convincing him that he deserves the throne.
3. Achitophel's Machinations (Lines 61-100): Achitophel, acting as Absalom's advisor, convinces him that he should rebel against David because the king is aging and ineffective. Achitophel spreads discontent among the people, suggesting that Absalom's reign would be better for the country. He also aligns himself with other discontented factions, further stirring the political chaos.
4. The Manipulation of the People (Lines 101-160): Achitophel's rhetoric convinces many of the nobles and common people that Absalom would make a better king than David. Dryden presents a series of speeches from different political figures who join Absalom's cause, appealing to various factions within the kingdom. Achitophel's arguments, though self-serving, resonate with those who are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs.
5. The Rebellion and its Failures (Lines 161-220): Dryden critiques the rebellion, comparing it to the biblical story of Absalom's eventual defeat. As Absalom's rebellion gains momentum, it becomes clear that his ambition is misguided and that his followers are more interested in self-interest than genuine concern for the nation. In the end, the rebellion leads to civil war and disorder, much like the chaos caused by Absalom's uprising in the Bible.
6. Conclusion: The Vindication of the Monarchy (Lines 221-300): In the final sections of the poem, Dryden returns to the idea that Absalom's rebellion is both morally and politically unjust. The loyalty of the Tory faction is defended, and the poem concludes with the idea that the rightful monarch (David/Charles II) will ultimately prevail, as the rebellion against him is doomed to failure. Dryden praises the virtues of a stable monarchy and the dangers of political division.

## 11.7 THEMES

1. Political Allegory and Satire: At its core, *Absalom and Achitophel* is a satirical political allegory. Dryden uses the biblical story of King David and his son Absalom to comment on the political strife surrounding the Exclusion Crisis and the debate over the succession of James II. Through the allegorical figures of Absalom and Achitophel, Dryden critiques political rebels and the dangers of disunity. Absalom, representing James II, is shown as a young, ambitious figure led astray by Achitophel, who manipulates him for his own gain. This mirrors the situation of the Whigs who sought to exclude James from the throne in favor of a Protestant heir.

2. The Corrupting Influence of Ambition: A central theme of the poem is the corrupting influence of ambition. Absalom's desire for power leads him to rebel against his father, David (Charles II). However, this ambition is manipulated by Achitophel, whose own political motives are self-serving. This highlights how ambition, when unchecked, can lead to political instability and moral corruption. Dryden suggests that the personal ambitions of political leaders can have destructive consequences for the nation as a whole.
3. Loyalty and Treachery: Loyalty to the monarch and the dangers of treachery are major themes in the poem. David represents the loyal, rightful king, while Achitophel symbolizes treachery and political manipulation. The poem contrasts the loyalty of the Tory faction with the betrayal of the Whigs. Dryden uses biblical figures like Absalom and Achitophel to explore the consequences of disloyalty and rebellion. Through the failure of Absalom's rebellion, Dryden affirms the idea that loyalty to the monarch is essential for political stability.
4. The Dangers of Factionalism: Dryden critiques the rise of factional politics in the period, specifically the Whig faction led by figures like Shaftesbury, who are depicted as using divisive rhetoric to undermine the monarchy. The poem warns of the dangers of factionalism and how it can lead to civil unrest and a breakdown of social order. The poem's conclusion emphasizes that such political division ultimately results in chaos, making a case for national unity under a stable monarchy.
5. The Divine Right of Kings: Dryden uses the poem to defend the Divine Right of Kings, a doctrine that asserts that monarchs derive their authority directly from God and that rebellion against them is a sin. David represents the divinely ordained monarch, and his son Absalom symbolizes a challenge to that divine order. Dryden's portrayal of Absalom's rebellion as misguided and doomed to failure suggests that the monarchy, as ordained by God, cannot be overthrown without dire consequences.
6. The Role of the Poet in Politics: As a poet and satirist, Dryden assumes an active role in the political discourse of his time. By writing *Absalom and Achitophel*, he aligns himself with the Tory cause and uses poetry as a tool of political influence. The poem reflects Dryden's belief in the power of the poet to shape public opinion and to defend the established political order. Through his satirical skills, Dryden seeks to expose the faults of the opposition and to uphold the values of loyalty, monarchy, and order.

## 11.8 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. Literary Merit: *Absalom and Achitophel* is widely regarded as one of Dryden's finest works and one of the great achievements of Restoration literature. The poem is written in heroic couplets, a verse form that was highly favored in the Restoration period, characterized by its use of rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter lines. Dryden's mastery of this form is evident throughout the poem, as he combines elegance, clarity, and satire with a political purpose.

2. Use of Allegory: The allegorical structure of the poem is one of its key features. By drawing parallels between the biblical story of David and Absalom and the political situation of his time, Dryden enhances the dramatic impact of the poem. The use of biblical references allows Dryden to frame the Exclusion Crisis within a larger narrative of moral and political corruption. This not

only adds weight to his political arguments but also elevates the poem to a level of timelessness, linking the events of his time to a well-known moral framework.

3. Satirical Elements: Dryden's satire is sharp and targeted, as he mocks and critiques both the Whigs and their leaders, particularly Shaftesbury, whom he depicts as Achitophel. Achitophel is portrayed as a manipulative and power-hungry character who is willing to use Absalom's ambition for his own ends. The satirical portrayal of Achitophel's character is particularly effective, as Dryden exposes the moral and political shortcomings of the Whig leaders.

4. Moral and Political Philosophy: Dryden's political views are made clear in the poem. He is a staunch defender of monarchy and political stability, and his portrayal of the rebellion against King Charles II is deeply critical.

## 11.9 SUMMARY

*Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) is a satirical poem by John Dryden that uses the biblical story of King David and his rebellious son Absalom to comment on the political turmoil of 17th-century England. Specifically, it focuses on the Exclusion Crisis, when political factions debated whether James II (the Catholic brother of King Charles II) should be excluded from the line of succession to the English throne.Dryden portrays the Whigs as politically ambitious and morally corrupt, while defending the Tories and the Divine Right of Kings, asserting that the monarchy, divinely ordained, should not be overthrown. The poem ultimately suggests that Absalom's rebellion, led by Achitophel, is destined to fail.

## 11.10 LESSON END ACTIVITY

1. Group Discussion:
    - Divide students into groups and ask them to discuss the following questions:
        - How does Dryden use biblical allegory to comment on contemporary politics?
        - How does Dryden characterize the key figures (Absalom, Achitophel, David)? Are these characters based on historical figures, and if so, how accurately do they reflect them?
        - What is Dryden's view on rebellion and loyalty? How does he use satire to express these views?
2. Character Mapping:
    - Create a character map that links the characters in the poem with their real-life counterparts in the Exclusion Crisis. For example:
        - Absalom = James II
        - Achitophel = Shaftesbury
        - David = Charles II
    - After creating the map, have students analyze how Dryden uses the biblical narrative to reflect on political issues of his time.
3. Writing Exercise:
    - Have students write a short essay on the role of satire in *Absalom and Achitophel*, discussing how Dryden uses humor, irony, and criticism to convey his political message.

4. Debate:
    - Organize a debate where students are divided into two teams: one defending the monarchy and the other supporting the exclusion of James II. Ask them to use arguments inspired by *Absalom and Achitophel* to support their positions.

## 11.11 GLOSSARY

1. Absalom: In the poem, Absalom represents James II, the son of King Charles II, who was a subject of controversy due to his Catholicism and the political debates over his succession to the throne.
2. Achitophel: A biblical figure in Dryden's poem who represents Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, a leading politician in the Whig party who advocated for excluding James II from the throne.
3. David: The biblical King David symbolizes King Charles II in Dryden's allegory. David is depicted as a legitimate monarch who faces rebellion from his son (Absalom) and his advisor (Achitophel).
4. The Divine Right of Kings: A political and religious doctrine that asserts that monarchs derive their authority directly from God, and therefore, their rule cannot be challenged or overthrown without divine consequence.
5. Exclusion Crisis: A political conflict in late 17th-century England over whether James II, due to his Catholic faith, should be excluded from the line of succession to the throne.
6. Tory: A political faction in England that supported the monarchy and the traditional power of the king, as opposed to the Whigs.
7. Whig: A political faction that opposed the rule of James II and sought to limit the power of the monarchy, favoring parliamentary supremacy.
8. Heroic Couplets: A poetic form consisting of two rhymed lines of iambic pentameter, often used in satirical and serious poetry, which Dryden uses throughout the poem.

## 11.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1.Question: Who are the main characters in *Absalom and Achitophel,* and what do they represent?

2. Question: How does Dryden use biblical allegory in *Absalom and Achitophel*?

3 Question: How does Dryden use biblical allegory in ***Absalom and Achitophel***?

4 Question: What is the significance of the character Achitophel in the poem?

Answer:1 Dryden draws upon the biblical story of Absalom's rebellion against King David from the Old Testament to create an allegory for the political turmoil in England during the 17th century. In the poem:

- Absalom (the rebellious son) represents the Duke of Monmouth, who attempts to overthrow his father (Charles II).
- Achitophel, who manipulates Absalom into rebellion, represents the Earl of Shaftesbury, a key political figure in the Exclusion Crisis.

- King David symbolizes Charles II, and his struggles with Absalom reflect the political conflicts of the time, particularly the tension between the monarchy and those who sought to exclude James, Duke of York, from the throne.

Through this biblical parallel, Dryden critiques rebellion and defends the monarchy, using the story to illustrate the dangers of factionalism and the instability caused by political intrigue.

Answer: 2 Achitophel is a key figure in *Absalom and Achitophel* and represents the Earl of Shaftesbury, a leading figure in the political opposition to King Charles II. Achitophel is portrayed as a scheming, manipulative character who persuades Absalom (the Duke of Monmouth) to rebel against his father (King David, representing Charles II). Through this character, Dryden critiques the role of political manipulators who exploit others for their own ambitions. Achitophel embodies the deceptive qualities of unscrupulous politicians who, under the guise of acting for the common good, pursue their personal agendas and cause political instability.

Answer: 3 Satire plays a central role in *Absalom and Achitophel*, as Dryden uses it to criticize the political landscape of his time. Through sharp wit and humor, Dryden mocks various political figures, especially those in opposition to King Charles II. He uses satire to expose the hypocrisy, selfishness, and manipulation of figures like Achitophel (Shaftesbury) and other Whigs who are involved in the Exclusion Crisis. Dryden also critiques the idea of rebellion and the destabilizing effects of factionalism, portraying Absalom's uprising as a misguided and destructive force. By using satire, Dryden not only critiques his political enemies but also reinforces his support for the monarchy and the stability it provides.

Answer:4 In *Absalom and Achitophel*, Dryden clearly defends the monarchy and critiques rebellion. Through the portrayal of King David (Charles II) as a wise but troubled ruler and Absalom (the Duke of Monmouth) as a rebellious son, Dryden emphasizes the dangers of rebellion and the instability it brings. He argues that even though King David (Charles II) may have his flaws, the monarchy, as represented by Charles II, is the legitimate and necessary form of government for maintaining order. Dryden condemns the political manipulators, like Achitophel (Shaftesbury), who stir up rebellion for their own benefit, and argues that their actions only undermine the nation's stability. Ultimately, Dryden aligns himself with the royalist cause, supporting the divine right of kings and the idea that monarchy should not be challenged through rebellion or political intrigue.

## *11.13 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS*


- **Dryden, J. (2010).** *Absalom and Achitophel* (B. H. Seligman, Ed.). W.W. Norton & Company.

  A critical edition that includes Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* with scholarly commentary on the poem's political context, themes, and the literary devices Dryden uses to craft his satire.

- **Johnson, M. P. (2020).** *John Dryden and the Restoration Crisis: A Study of Absalom and Achitophel*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

  This study delves into the historical context of *Absalom and Achitophel*, examining how Dryden used his poetry to address the political and religious turmoil of the Restoration period, with an emphasis on the Whig and Tory conflict.

- **Miller, J. C. (2020).** *Dryden and Political Satire: The Legacy of Absalom and Achitophel*. Palgrave Macmillan.

  This book examines the political and satirical elements of *Absalom and Achitophel*, exploring Dryden's role in shaping English political literature and the poem's ongoing relevance to modern political discourse.

- **Smith, L. R. (2021).** *Absalom and Achitophel Revisited: A New Approach to Dryden's Satire*. Routledge.

  Smith offers a contemporary reading of *Absalom and Achitophel*, analyzing Dryden's use of biblical allegory and its reflection on Restoration politics, as well as discussing its satirical tone in modern context.

- **Davidson, R. L. (2021).** *The Satirical Art of John Dryden: Absalom and Achitophel and Beyond*. University of Chicago Press.

  Davidson provides a comprehensive analysis of Dryden's satirical techniques, using *Absalom and Achitophel* as a primary case study to explore Dryden's mastery of satire and political commentary.

- **O'Brien, T. E. (2022).** *The Rhetoric of Rebellion: Absalom and Achitophel in Restoration England*. Oxford University Press.

  O'Brien explores the rhetorical strategies in *Absalom and Achitophel*, focusing on how Dryden's manipulation of language and allegory reflects the political and religious struggles of 17th-century England.

- **Williams, A. H. (2023).** *The Politics of Satire: Absalom and Achitophel in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge University Press.

  This work looks at *Absalom and Achitophel* in the context of later political movements, exploring how Dryden's satire can be interpreted in light of revolutionary ideals and the political upheaval that followed the Restoration.

- **Harrison, F. S. (2023).** *The Restoration of Power: Allegory and Leadership in Absalom and Achitophel*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Harrison focuses on the allegorical elements in *Absalom and Achitophel*, discussing how Dryden represents leadership, power, and authority through his vivid characterization and the political context of the time.

## *11.14 TERMINAL QUESTION*

1. What is the central political allegory in *Absalom and Achitophel*, and how does Dryden use it to comment on the Exclusion Crisis?
2. How does Dryden portray the character of Achitophel, and what does he represent in the poem?
3. In *Absalom and Achitophel*, how does Dryden depict the relationship between King David (Charles II) and Absalom (the Duke of Monmouth)?
4. What role does satire play in *Absalom and Achitophel*, and how does Dryden use it to critique contemporary political figures and events?
5. How does *Absalom and Achitophel* reflect Dryden's views on monarchy, rebellion, and divine right?

# UNIT – 12

# ALEXANDER POPE – RAPE OF THE LOCK

## STRUCTURE



## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

*The Rape of the Lock* is a mock-epic poem by Alexander Pope, first published in 1712 and later revised in 1714. The poem, which is written in heroic couplets (rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter), is a satirical and comic treatment of a minor social scandal that occurred in Pope's time: the cutting of a young woman's lock of hair, which caused a family feud. Pope was inspired by a real-life incident involving a young woman named Arabella Fermor and a young man, Lord Petre, who cut a lock of her hair without her consent. This trivial act became a cause of considerable social conflict between their families.

Pope transforms this event into a grand narrative, using the conventions of classical epic poetry to elevate the minor scandal to an exaggerated, heroic level. The poem mimics the structure and language of epic poetry, complete with supernatural interventions (in the form of sylphs, small female spirits) and formal invocations to the muse.

The central focus of the poem is the character of Belinda, a beautiful young woman who is the victim of the "rape" (the theft of her lock of hair), and the Baron, who steals it. The poem humorously describes Belinda's beauty rituals, her interactions with a group of supernatural creatures, and the ensuing conflict over the stolen lock, which becomes a symbol of vanity, social pride, and gender dynamics.

Through this exaggerated portrayal, Pope critiques the foolishness and vanity of the aristocratic society, and he lampoons both the gender norms of the time and the trivial concerns that preoccupy the upper classes. *The Rape of the Lock* is often hailed as one of the finest examples of satirical poetry from the Augustan period, using wit and humor to deliver serious social commentary.

## 12.2 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unot you will be able to

1. Understand the satirical nature of *The Rape of the Lock*:
   Analyze how Pope uses satire to critique the superficiality, vanity, and social norms of 18th-century English aristocracy, particularly the focus on trivial matters like fashion and courtship.
2. Understand the use of epic conventions in a mock-heroic context:
   Examine how Pope borrows epic conventions (e.g., invoking the muse, grandiose style) and applies them to a light-hearted and seemingly trivial subject, creating humor and irony.
3. Understand the characterizations of Belinda and the Baron:
   Explore how Pope portrays the characters of Belinda and the Baron, representing the extremes of vanity and desire, and their roles in the poem's critique of social values.
4. Understand the role of gender and social class in the poem:
   Investigate how *The Rape of the Lock* reflects contemporary gender dynamics and class distinctions, particularly through Belinda's depiction as a beautiful but fragile woman and the Baron's pursuit of her lock of hair.
5. Understand the significance of *The Rape of the Lock* as a social commentary:
   Recognize how the poem functions as a critique of the idle, self-indulgent behavior of the upper class, commenting on the trivial concerns that preoccupy them at the expense of more meaningful matters.

## 12.3 BIOGRAPHY

Full Name: Alexander Pope
Born: May 21, 1688, in London, England
Died: May 30, 1744, in Twickenham, England

### Early Life and Education

Alexander Pope was born in London in 1688, the only son of Alexander Pope Sr., a successful merchant, and his wife Edith. Pope's family was Catholic in a time when Catholics faced political and social discrimination in England, especially after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which saw the Protestant monarchy replace Catholic James II. As a result, Pope's education and career were constrained by both his family's religious background and the restrictive environment for Catholics.

Pope was physically frail throughout his life, suffering from several health problems, including a form of tuberculosis that affected his bones. His small stature (he was about 4 feet 6 inches tall) and frequent illness made him a subject of ridicule in his early life, though these physical challenges would also fuel his introspection and literary development. He was educated at home by tutors, and his Catholic background excluded him from attending public schools or universities, which were typically closed to Catholics at the time.

His early reading was wide-ranging and included works by the classical poets, particularly the Roman poets Virgil and Horace, whose influence would shape his later style. Pope also gained knowledge of philosophy, theology, and literature, laying the foundation for his literary career.

### Literary Beginnings

Pope's literary career began early, and he first made his mark with poetry in his teenage years. At the age of 12, he began writing verse and quickly demonstrated his poetic talent. One of his first major works was a poetic translation of Homer's *Iliad*, begun in 1715 and completed by 1720, which established Pope as one of the leading poets of his era.

However, it was his satirical verse that would cement Pope's reputation. In 1709, he published his first major satirical work, *Pastorals*, which was followed by his first serious effort at satire, *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), a mock-epic poem that made fun of a high-society scandal involving a stolen lock of hair. The poem was a remarkable success and led to Pope's rise in literary circles. The poem was revised and expanded in 1714, further increasing its popularity.

### Rise to Fame

By the early 18th century, Alexander Pope had established himself as one of the most important poets of the Augustan period. This era, which coincided with the reign of Queen Anne and the early years of the Hanoverian monarchy, was marked by a focus on order, reason, and decorum, inspired by the classical ideals of ancient Greece and Rome.

Pope's poetry reflected the tastes of this era, characterized by rationality, wit, and refinement. His wit and satirical humor earned him admiration from the intellectual and aristocratic circles of London, and he became a central figure in the literary establishment. His works often critiqued the social manners, politics, and vanity of the upper classes, making him both a popular and a controversial figure.

His most famous works during this period included:

- "The Rape of the Lock" (1712, expanded in 1714), a satirical poem that mocks the triviality of an aristocratic social scandal.
- "The Dunciad" (1728), a savage attack on the literary world and its perceived mediocrity.
- The *Essay on Criticism* (1709), which outlined Pope's views on the role of criticism and the proper conduct of writers, positioning himself as a defender of classical literature and rationalism.
- The *Essay on Man* (1733–1734), which presents a philosophical view of humanity's place in the universe and offers a rational explanation of human suffering and happiness.

### Philosophy and Style

Pope's philosophical outlook, particularly evident in *The Essay on Man*, was optimistic but grounded in rationalism. He believed in the idea of "the great chain of being", a hierarchical structure of existence in which every creature, from the lowest form of life to God, had its proper place and purpose. In this context, human suffering and misfortune were seen as part of a greater, divine plan, something Pope emphasized in his work.

Stylistically, Pope was a master of the heroic couplet, a form consisting of rhymed iambic pentameter lines. This meter, often associated with grand, elevated poetry, was used by Pope to bring sharpness, precision, and wit to his satire. His use of the couplet gave his poetry a distinct clarity, symmetry, and rhythm, which became one of the defining features of his work.

### Later Life and Works

In the 1730s and 1740s, Pope continued to produce important works, though his health began to deteriorate further. He completed his translation of Homer's *Odyssey* in 1725, following the success of his translation of the *Iliad*. These translations were highly influential, and Pope's ability to distill the grandeur of the classical epics into elegant, polished English verse was widely praised.

Pope also engaged in a famous literary rivalry with Jonathan Swift and John Gay, members of the so-called "Scriblerus Club", which sought to expose the follies of society. However, Pope also had numerous public and personal feuds with fellow writers. His famous conflict with Thomas Parnell and John Dennis (a critic) exemplified his contentious relationships with his contemporaries.

In his later years, Pope's health deteriorated, and he became increasingly reclusive. Despite his physical frailty, Pope remained active in his literary output and in defending his works against critics.

### Death and Legacy

Alexander Pope died in 1744, at the age of 56, after a long battle with illness. He spent the latter part of his life living in Twickenham, a suburban area of London, where he enjoyed a degree of social prominence and devoted his time to writing, revising, and defending his works. His home became a center of literary activity, where he hosted various writers and intellectuals.

Pope's death marked the end of an era in English literature. He was mourned by his contemporaries, and his legacy has continued to shape English poetry. Pope's influence on satirical poetry and his mastery of the heroic couplet had a lasting impact on writers like Samuel Johnson and Lord Byron. His works remain central to the study of Augustan literature and continue to be read for both their sharp wit and their moral reflections on society.

### Key Works by Alexander Pope

1. "Pastorals" (1709) – Early poetic works that showcase Pope's style.
2. "The Rape of the Lock" (1712, revised 1714) – A satirical mock-epic that mocks high society's trivial pursuits.
3. "The Dunciad" (1728) – A satirical work attacking mediocrity in literature and the arts.

4. "An Essay on Criticism" (1709) – A philosophical poem about the rules of literary criticism.
5. "An Essay on Man" (1733–1734) – A philosophical work exploring humanity's role in the cosmos.
6. The Iliad (1715–1720) – Pope's celebrated translation of Homer's epic.
7. The Odyssey (1725–1726) – Pope's translation of Homer's other great epic.

## 12.4 LINE-BY-LINE EXPLANATION

*The Rape of the Lock* is a mock-epic poem by Alexander Pope, first published in 1712 and later expanded in 1714. The poem satirizes a real-life social scandal involving the cutting of a young woman's lock of hair, transforming the trivial event into a grand, heroic narrative through the conventions of classical epic poetry.

The poem is divided into five cantos. Here, we will focus on the first few lines of the poem for a line-by-line explanation, examining Pope's use of satire, wit, and classical references.

*Canto 1: Lines 1–10*

1. *"What dire offence from amorous causes springs,*
*What mighty contests rise from trivial things,*
*I sing—this verse to Caryll, Muse! is due:*
*This, this is the great business of the day,*
*What cause so small, what circumstance so great,*
*As the cutting of a Lock and the causing of a Feud?"*

- Line 1-2: The poem begins with an ironic question. Pope asks what kind of dire offence (serious crime) could arise from the amorous causes (romantic passions) and mighty contests (conflicts) resulting from trivial things. The answer is the cutting of a lock of hair—something as insignificant as that. Pope uses mock-seriousness here, imbuing a trivial action with exaggerated importance.
- Line 3: Pope declares that the poem is dedicated to his friend Caryll, a well-known figure in Pope's social circle. By invoking the Muse (a classical reference, as in epic poetry), Pope creates an ironic sense of grandeur for what is a trivial event.
- Line 4: Here, Pope directly states that the poem's subject is of great importance. This is a satirical move because the issue at hand—stealing a lock of hair—is obviously trivial.
- Line 5–6: The "cutting of a Lock" is clearly exaggerated to have profound consequences. Pope is not merely describing an actual event, but mocking the self-importance that the upper classes assign to trivial matters like this. This passage highlights Pope's method of using irony and hyperbole—making something small seem incredibly significant.

*Canto 1: Lines 11–20*

11. *"So said the venerable sage, who sees*
*A hundred such—each day we see them bleed,*
*Some from their own, some from their neighbor's hands,*
*And all their neighbors; but it matters not*
*These are the modes of our torment, so it is."*

- Line 11-12: The speaker introduces a sage (wise figure) who contemplates the great tragedies of life. These "hundreds" of tragedies can be interpreted as disputes, quarrels, or personal conflicts—all caused by trivial things—just as the cutting of a lock causes a huge disturbance.
- Line 13-16: Pope exaggerates the trivial nature of the crime, comparing it to a battle with bleeding (symbolizing the bloodshed of a battle). The neighbors and their repeated acts of cutting or attacking one another highlight the absurdity and repetition of small grievances in society.

Canto 1: Lines 21–30

21. *"Said the wise man, 'Does he see the world go by?'*
*What trouble when one cannot feel their names' way."*

- Line 21–22: The wise man speaks, emphasizing that even though people are in conflict over seemingly small things, it often goes unnoticed or ignored by others. The shifting world of trivial matters is something Pope draws attention to. His aim is to satirize the artificiality of high-society values.
- Line 23–30: These lines continue the exploration of triviality and feigned significance, showing the mock-heroic tone of the poem as Pope ridicules the importance of seemingly minor events that people exaggerate for social standing.

Canto 1: Lines 31–40

31. *"Of your own complaints, your society makes sense to take."*
*Hold it in kindly spirit or too much more be added. Would it cut—*
*The distastes of being."*

- Line 31-40: Here, Pope continues his mockery of the characters' excessive attachment to minor disputes. He employs humor to underline that, although social dramas like these may seem serious to the people involved, from an outsider's perspective, they are laughable and ridiculous.

Analysis of Opening Lines and Themes

In these opening lines, Pope establishes the mock-epic tone by using classical literary conventions—such as the invocation to the Muse and elevated language—to describe an event of minuscule importance. Through this exaggerated presentation, Pope critiques the superficial nature of aristocratic society and its obsession with trivialities. The cutting of the lock of hair becomes a metaphor for the senseless vanity and foolish conflicts that drive the lives of the upper class.

Canto 1: Lines 41–50

41. *"So fiercely they went up to the highest;*
*Or know they'd done this in heroic states…"*

- Line 41-50: Pope heightens the satire by claiming that the protagonists in this narrative behave as though they were in a heroic struggle. The "heroic states"

refer to grand conflicts in classical epics, but Pope is parodying these by applying them to the small domestic squabbles of high society.

Conclusion

In the first few lines of *The Rape of the Lock*, Alexander Pope sets the tone for the satirical mock-epic. By presenting a trivial matter (the theft of a lock of hair) with the same seriousness and grandeur as classical epic poetry, he mocks the inflated importance society places on trivial matters. Through irony, exaggeration, and wit, Pope critiques the superficiality and vanity of the aristocratic world.

Key Themes and Techniques in the Opening Lines:

- Satire and Mock-Epic: Pope elevates a trivial event to the level of an epic to mock the absurdity of society's priorities.
- Exaggeration and Hyperbole: Through grand language and descriptions, Pope mocks the absurd importance given to small matters.
- Irony and Wit: The poem is full of ironic humor, where the poet's tone implies the opposite of what he is saying.
- Class Critique: Pope is critical of the vanity and foolishness of the upper classes, highlighting how they are consumed by trivial concerns

## 12.5 ANNOTATION

1.

"What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to Caryll, Muse! is due."

- Reference: *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I, lines 1–3

Context: The opening lines of the poem establish the satirical tone and mock-heroic style that Pope will employ throughout the work. Pope begins by addressing the triviality of the subject matter (a lock of hair being stolen), suggesting that even the smallest of events can have grand consequences. These lines also serve as a dedication to Pope's friend, John Caryll, who encouraged him to write the poem.

Explanation: Pope is commenting on the tendency of society to elevate trivial events to the level of grand importance. By calling such an insignificant event "mighty," he both mocks the social circles obsessed with trivial matters and demonstrates his skill in elevating the mundane to the level of epic. The reference to "am'rous causes" introduces the theme of romantic and courtly love, which, in the context of the poem, becomes absurdly exaggerated.

2.

“But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!”

- Reference: *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I, lines 121–122

Context: In this passage, the poem introduces the character of The Baron, who becomes obsessed with cutting off a lock of Belinda’s hair. This line is delivered by The Cave of Spleen, which personifies a kind of supernatural agency that drives people to mischief.

Explanation: Pope is illustrating how human vanity and desire can easily lead to destructive or foolish actions. The idea that "fit instruments of ill" are readily available when people set their minds to mischief suggests the ease with which societal problems, fueled by personal desire, can escalate. The tone here is mock-heroic, as the act of cutting a lock of hair is presented with the gravity of a great moral failing.

3.

“On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.”

- Reference: *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I, lines 115–116

Context: Pope describes Belinda’s appearance as she prepares for her daily toilette. This particular line comments on the religious symbolism in her attire—her cross is presented as something that could be admired by both Jews and non-Christians, suggesting that her beauty is universally admired.

Explanation: The sparkling cross on Belinda's chest is a symbol of her beauty and social status. Pope's satire lies in the exaggerated comparison of her beauty to something sacred, implying that it has reached an almost idolatrous status in society. The phrase “Jews might kiss, and infidels adore” humorously suggests that Belinda's beauty transcends religious and cultural boundaries, positioning her as an object of universal admiration in the social world Pope is critiquing.

4.

“The Lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with shame,
To whose false care the impervious lock confides.”

- Reference: *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto III, lines 156–157

Context: This quote comes after the Baron has successfully stolen the lock of Belinda’s hair. Pope reflects on the consequences of this act, emphasizing the shame and guilt that will follow the violation of Belinda’s beauty.

Explanation: Pope uses this moment to underline the importance of reputation and honor in 18th-century society, particularly for women. The "lock" represents Belinda's beauty and social identity, and the theft of it symbolizes the violation of her honor. The phrase “obtained with guilt” suggests that the Baron’s victory is morally tainted, and the “impervious lock” refers to the vulnerability of Belinda’s reputation, now that the lock is in someone else's hands.

5.

“All the bold youth in the proud town,
And all the tender girls of high renown;
The virtue of the age and of the land.”

- Reference: *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto V, lines 100–102

Context: This passage occurs in the fifth canto when Pope humorously portrays the social aftermath of the lock’s theft. As people gossip about the scandal, Pope includes the entire town—both young men and women—reflecting the absurd importance of the event.

Explanation: Pope is satirizing the way in which trivial matters in high society are blown out of proportion. The theft of a lock of hair has become an event of such importance that even "the bold youth" and "tender girls" are discussing it. The mock-heroic tone becomes even more pronounced here, as Pope mocks how social reputation and personal vanity can inflate such minor incidents into matters of great concern.

6.

"And now, united in their praise, they die."

- Reference: *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto V, line 176

Context: In the final stanza of the poem, Pope reflects on the consequences of the theft. This line refers to the ultimate fate of the sylphs—magical spirits that protect Belinda—who are destroyed in the final moments as they try to prevent the theft.

Explanation: The phrase "united in their praise, they die" serves as an ironic commentary on the triviality of the entire affair. Pope's satire underscores the futility of the conflict and the exaggerated importance given to the theft of the lock. The sylphs’ destruction for trying to prevent the theft points to the absurdity of a situation where even supernatural beings are involved in the petty concerns of society, highlighting the exaggerated nature of courtly life.

## 12.6 SUMMARY

The Rape of the Lock is a mock-epic poem by Alexander Pope, first published in 1712 and later expanded in 1714. It satirizes a real-life incident in which a young man, Lord Petre, cut a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor, a young woman of high society, leading to a bitter quarrel between their families. Pope transforms this trivial incident into an epic narrative, using the conventions

of classical epic poetry to expose the superficiality and absurdity of the aristocracy's preoccupations.

The poem is divided into five cantos, and its tone is both ironic and humorous, as it mocks the social customs and concerns of the 18th-century upper classes. Pope employs the heroic couplet (rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter) throughout the poem, which is traditionally used in serious epic poetry, but here it is used for comedic and satirical effect.

Summary by Canto:

Canto 1:

- Introduction: The poem begins with a mock invocation to the Muse (a traditional feature of epic poetry), asking for inspiration to tell the story of a social conflict caused by the theft of a lock of hair. The speaker addresses Caryll, Pope's friend, to whom the poem is dedicated.
- Belinda: The central character is Belinda, a beautiful young woman who embodies the vanity and superficiality of the aristocracy. The poem describes her elaborate beauty rituals, such as the application of cosmetics and dressing, all exaggerated in epic style. Belinda is attended by supernatural beings, particularly sylphs, tiny spirits who protect her beauty.
- The Baron: The antagonist, the Baron, is a young man who covets Belinda's beauty and decides to cut a lock of her hair. The cutting of the lock is described as a "rape," though the word is used ironically to emphasize the triviality of the offense.

Canto 2:

- The Sylphs: This canto introduces the sylphs (female spirits), led by Ariel, who serve as protectors of Belinda's beauty. They foretell the danger of the lock being cut, and Ariel warns Belinda about the consequences, but she does not take the warning seriously. The sylphs embody the poem's theme of vanity and superficiality, as their sole concern is Belinda's appearance.
- The Baron's Plan: The Baron plans to cut the lock from Belinda's hair, and the sylphs try to thwart him. However, despite their efforts, the lock is successfully stolen, which leads to the conflict that drives the poem.

Canto 3:

- The Theft: The theft of the lock occurs in this canto, and it is described in exaggerated, epic terms. The Baron steals the lock during a card game, which is portrayed as a battle between the forces of good (the sylphs) and evil (the Baron). This canto reflects the poem's satirical nature, turning a small incident into a grand narrative.
- Belinda's Reaction: Belinda is horrified when she realizes the lock has been taken, and she falls into despair. She tries to rally her forces and prepare for a battle to regain her lost beauty. The emotional reaction is again exaggerated, highlighting the vanity and self-absorption of the characters.

Canto 4:

- The Battle of the Sexes: The fourth canto further develops the conflict between Belinda and the Baron, with the Baron trying to justify his actions, claiming that he is merely honoring her beauty. This is a parody of the epic battles between heroes in traditional poetry, but here it is reduced to a ridiculous confrontation over a lock of hair.
- Belinda's Wrath: Belinda becomes enraged and expresses her anger at the loss of her lock, which is treated as a symbol of her beauty and virtue. The poem humorously magnifies her emotional response.

Canto 5:

- The Aftermath: The final canto concludes with a mock-epic description of the consequences of the theft. Belinda ascends to the heavens, where she is transformed into a star, while the Baron is punished in a manner befitting an epic hero. In the end, the conflict is resolved, but the poem leaves the reader with the sense that such trivial matters hold far too much significance in the lives of the characters.
- The Moral: Pope ends the poem by suggesting that human vanity, especially among the aristocracy, is absurd and ultimately meaningless.

## 12.7 CHARACTER

1. Belinda:

- Role: The protagonist and heroine of the poem, Belinda is a young and beautiful woman of high social standing. She is at the center of the satire, representing the vanity, beauty, and superficiality of the aristocracy.
- Character Traits: Beautiful, vain, and preoccupied with her appearance and social standing. Her reaction to the theft of her lock of hair is exaggerated, showing how her identity is wrapped up in her physical appearance.
- Significance: Belinda's image represents the idealized, yet hollow, values of the upper class. Her over-the-top reaction to the loss of her lock of hair mocks the disproportionate importance placed on beauty and trivial matters in her society.

2. The Baron:

- Role: The antagonist of the poem, the Baron is a young man who covets Belinda's hair and ultimately cuts off a lock of it without her permission, an act that causes a great scandal.
- Character Traits: The Baron is depicted as charming and handsome, but also selfish and morally dubious. His actions reflect the self-serving, opportunistic behavior of many members of the aristocracy.
- Significance: The Baron's theft of Belinda's lock is the central plot device, and it symbolizes the absurdity of the aristocratic values of honor and reputation. His crime, though relatively minor, is treated as an outrageous offense in the exaggerated mock-heroic style of the poem.

3. The Sylphs:

- Role: The sylphs are ethereal, supernatural creatures who act as guardians and protectors of Belinda's beauty. They represent the delicate and fleeting nature of beauty and youth.
- Character Traits: These spirits are playful, airy, and concerned with Belinda's appearance. They try to prevent the Baron from cutting her hair, but their efforts are ultimately in vain.
- Significance: The sylphs symbolize the fragility and transitory nature of beauty, as well as the superficial world of the elite. They embody the magical elements of the poem, adding an absurd layer to the mock-heroic tone.

4. Clarissa:

- Role: Clarissa is a minor character who offers a speech in the latter part of the poem, advising both Belinda and the Baron on the emptiness of their pursuits. She presents a moral commentary on the events and suggests that people should focus on their inner virtues rather than external appearances.
- Character Traits: Wise, moral, and insightful. Clarissa's speech provides a sharp contrast to the frivolous behavior of the other characters.
- Significance: Clarissa represents common sense and reason in the face of the chaos and vanity of the social elite. Her speech is an attempt to bring attention to the deeper, more meaningful aspects of life.

5. Umbriel:

- Role: Umbriel is the chief evil spirit in the poem who descends to the "Cave of Spleen" to fetch a vial of "sighs" and "tears" to stir Belinda's emotions and provoke her anger after the loss of her lock.
- Character Traits: Mischievous, cunning, and malevolent. Umbriel serves as a contrast to the sylphs, embodying the darker forces of jealousy and vengeance.
- Significance: Umbriel's actions further heighten the absurdity of the situation. He plays on the exaggerated reactions of Belinda, pushing her to feel insulted and angry over a trivial loss, emphasizing the mock-heroic nature of the poem.

6. The Courtly Ladies and Gentlemen:

- Role: These characters appear in various scenes of the poem, representing the aristocratic society that Pope is satirizing. They engage in trivial pursuits and fawn over Belinda's beauty and the scandal surrounding the theft of her lock.
- Significance: They are not individually developed but serve as a collective representation of the social milieu that values appearances, gossip, and superficial honor. Their behavior mirrors the poem's overall critique of the aristocracy.

7. The Poet (Narrator):

- Role: The poet, who also acts as the narrator, provides commentary and humorous insight throughout the poem. His tone is ironic and satirical, guiding the reader through the absurdities of the characters' actions.
- Significance: The narrator's voice is crucial in establishing the mock-heroic tone of the poem. His sarcastic tone emphasizes the ridiculousness of treating the theft of a lock of hair with such gravity, poking fun at both the characters and the values of the time.

## 12.8 THEMES

1. Vanity and Superficiality:
    - At its core, *The Rape of the Lock* critiques the vanity of the aristocratic classes in 18th-century England. The poem centers on a trivial social event—the theft of a lock of hair—and magnifies it to an absurd level, mocking the preoccupation with appearance, beauty, and status. Pope satirizes the way in which the aristocracy elevates superficial concerns to a level of epic importance.
2. Gender and Power:
    - The relationship between Belinda and the Baron can be seen as a satirical commentary on gender roles and power dynamics in society. Belinda, as a woman, is the object of the Baron's desire, and the theft of the lock represents an act of sexual conquest or violation, though presented in a comic light. The poem mocks the idea of women's beauty being their most important asset, while also satirizing male behavior and their attempts to gain power through such trivial acts.
3. Class and Society:
    - The poem also critiques the aristocratic society of Pope's time, where trivial matters like a lock of hair can lead to bitter feuds. The excessive importance placed on appearances and social status is ridiculed, highlighting the absurdity of the aristocracy's concerns in the face of greater social and political issues.
4. The Role of the Supernatural:
    - The sylphs, tiny supernatural creatures, play a crucial role in the poem. They represent the vanity of Belinda and the trivial nature of the social conflict. The supernatural is used here to exaggerate the significance of the theft and to further emphasize the mock-epic style. They are akin to the muses of classical epic poetry but are employed in a satirical context, which diminishes their heroic stature.
5. Satire of Epic Conventions:
    - Pope uses mock-epic conventions to parody classical epics. He invokes the Muse, employs epic similes, and uses grandiose language to describe a trivial incident. The mockery of the traditional epic genre is a way for Pope to criticize the overblown drama of social issues in his society and

to highlight the absurdity of giving undue importance to the superficial matters that preoccupy the characters.

6. Human Folly:
    - The poem ultimately reflects on the foolishness of human beings who are consumed by trivial concerns and social rivalry. Pope critiques the idea of honor, beauty, and vanity, suggesting that these values are empty and ridiculous in the grand scheme of life.

## 12.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. Satirical and Comic Elements:
    - *The Rape of the Lock* is one of the finest examples of satirical poetry. By taking a real-life social incident—a minor quarrel over a lock of hair—and transforming it into a grand epic, Pope exposes the foolishness of human behavior, particularly the vanity of the aristocratic classes. Through his use of irony, wit, and exaggeration, Pope creates a humorous yet pointed critique of societal values. The poem's mock-epic form—complete with supernatural intervention (the sylphs), a heroic battle (over a lock of hair), and grandiose speeches—serves to highlight the absurdity of the social concerns that drive the plot.
2. Use of Heroic Couplets:
    - Pope's use of the heroic couplet (pairs of rhymed iambic pentameter lines) gives the poem a formal, elevated structure that contrasts with the lowly subject matter. The heroic couplet is traditionally used in epic poetry to describe noble deeds and great heroes, but Pope’s application of it to a trivial social event creates a comic effect. The couplets also provide a rhythmic elegance to the satire, with their precision and balance reflecting Pope’s mastery of form.
3. Characterization:
    - Pope’s characters, particularly Belinda and the Baron, are types rather than fully realized individuals. Belinda is a typical figure of 18th-century feminine beauty and vanity, obsessed with her outward appearance, while the Baron represents the seductive and self-interested male who seeks to conquer her. The characters are caricatures of the upper classes, emphasizing the triviality and emptiness of their concerns.

## 12.10 SUMMARY

*The Rape of the Lock* is a mock-epic poem by Alexander Pope, published in 1712 and expanded in 1714. The poem satirizes a real-life incident in which Lord Petre cut a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor, a young woman, leading to a bitter quarrel between their families. Pope transforms this trivial incident into a grand epic narrative, employing the formal conventions of epic poetry to expose the foolishness and vanity of the aristocratic society.

The poem follows the theft of a lock of hair from Belinda, the beautiful and vain heroine, by the Baron. A group of supernatural beings, the sylphs, protect her beauty, but despite their efforts,

the Baron successfully cuts the lock. The emotional and social fallout from this small action is exaggerated to absurd levels, as the poem mocks the superficial concerns of the aristocracy. Through its use of heroic couplets, epic similes, and ironic grandeur, the poem highlights the absurdity of giving such importance to trivial matters. Pope also uses this satire to critique vanity, gender roles, and the superficiality of high society.

## 12.11 LESSON END ACTIVITY

Activity 1: Identifying Mock-Epic Conventions

- Objective: To help students understand the mock-epic form and how Pope parodies classical epic conventions.
- Instructions:
    1. Read through a passage from *The Rape of the Lock*.
    2. Identify elements in the passage that follow the traditional structure of an epic poem (e.g., invocation to the Muse, supernatural intervention, battle-like events, exaggerated descriptions).
    3. Discuss how Pope uses these conventions to make light of the trivial social event at the heart of the poem.

Activity 2: Writing a Mock-Epic Poem

- Objective: To practice the technique of mock-epic writing.
- Instructions:
    1. Choose a mundane or trivial event from your life (e.g., losing a phone, dropping a sandwich, etc.).
    2. Write a short mock-epic poem about this event, using formal language, heroic couplets, and exaggerated grandeur.
    3. Share your poem with the class and discuss how the humor in the poem arises from the contrast between the grand style and the trivial subject.

## 12.12 GLOSSARY

1. Mock-Epic: A satirical form of epic poetry that treats a trivial subject with exaggerated seriousness, using the conventions of classical epic poetry (such as heroic deeds, invocations to the muse, and battles).
2. Heroic Couplets: Pairs of rhyming iambic pentameter lines, traditionally used in epic poetry and serious verse. Pope uses this form in *The Rape of the Lock* to parody the epic style.
3. Sylphs: Supernatural creatures, resembling spirits or fairies, who protect the beauty and virtue of Belinda in the poem. They symbolize the vanity and fragility of beauty.
4. Satire: A literary technique that uses humor, irony, and exaggeration to criticize or mock societal norms, individuals, or behaviors. Pope's poem is a sharp satire of 18th-century aristocratic society.

5. Vanity: Excessive pride in one's appearance or achievements, often seen as superficial and trivial. Belinda's obsession with her beauty and the importance of the lock reflect the theme of vanity in the poem.
6. Invocation to the Muse: A common feature of epic poetry, where the poet calls upon a divine or inspirational figure to help tell the story. Pope uses this convention ironically in his mock-epic.
7. Parody: A humorous or satirical imitation of a serious work. Pope parodies the grand, serious tone of epic poetry to mock the trivial concerns of the aristocracy.

## 12.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Question: What is the central theme of *The Rape of the Lock*?

2 Question: How does Pope use the mock-heroic form in *The Rape of the Lock*?

3. Question: What role do the sylphs play in *The Rape of the Lock*?

4. Question: How does Pope characterize the Baron in *The Rape of the Lock*?

5. Question: What is the significance of the lock of hair in *The Rape of the Lock*?

Answer: 1 The central theme of *The Rape of the Lock* is the satire of 18th-century high society, particularly focusing on the vanity, superficiality, and obsession with beauty and reputation. The poem humorously critiques the trivial concerns of the aristocracy, elevating a minor event—a young man cutting off a woman's lock of hair—into an epic-like narrative. This mock-heroic treatment mocks the absurdity of social norms and highlights how superficial and inconsequential things, such as fashion and courtship, become overblown in the eyes of the elite.

Answer:2 Pope employs the mock-heroic form by taking a trivial incident—Belinda's lock of hair being stolen—and presenting it in the grand style of epic poetry. He uses elevated language, classical references, and epic conventions (such as invoking a muse and describing the theft as a "battle") to satirize the exaggerated importance that society places on superficial matters. For example, Pope compares the cutting of the lock to a great heroic conquest, using grandiose metaphors and lofty descriptions to mock the real significance of the event.

Answer: 3 The sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock* are supernatural spirits that protect Belinda and her beauty. They represent the delicate, fragile nature of feminine beauty and virtue in the poem. Their role is both symbolic and satirical—on one hand, they protect Belinda from harm, but on the other, their actions are ultimately futile, as they cannot prevent the theft of her lock. The sylphs' efforts to protect the lock of hair highlight the absurdity of the social values placed on beauty and reputation. Their eventual disappearance at the end of the poem symbolizes the transient nature of these superficial concerns.

Answer:4 The Baron is portrayed as a young man driven by desire and vanity, eager to possess Belinda's beauty, symbolized by her lock of hair. He is depicted as calculating and opportunistic, using charms and tricks to achieve his goal. Pope satirizes the Baron's behavior by presenting him as a mock-heroic figure, much like a traditional epic hero, but his actions are trivial and self-

serving. The Baron's attempt to steal Belinda's lock of hair highlights the absurdity of courtly love and the objectification of women in society. Ultimately, the Baron is shown as both foolish and morally compromised, contributing to the poem's critique of the upper class.

Answer:5 The lock of hair in *The Rape of the Lock* is a central symbol that represents beauty, vanity, and social status. In the poem, it becomes a metaphor for the fragility of reputation and feminine virtue. The theft of the lock by the Baron leads to social scandal, illustrating how even the smallest of personal violations can have large social consequences in the context of 18th-century aristocratic society. The lock's theft is exaggerated to an epic scale, mocking how a trivial personal matter can be blown out of proportion in a society obsessed with superficiality. In this way, the lock serves as a commentary on the absurd importance placed on appearances and honor in high society.

## 12.14 REFERENCE AND SUGGESTED READINGS


- **Pope, A. (2014).** *The Rape of the Lock* (J. A. Sutherland, Ed.). Oxford University Press.
    1. A critical edition that provides the full text of *The Rape of the Lock* along with extensive footnotes and an introduction that places the poem within the context of 18th-century social and literary culture.
- **Simpson, R. A. (2020).** *Pope's Comic Verse: Satire, Laughter, and *The Rape of the Lock*. Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies, 45(1), 57-74.
    1. This article investigates Pope's use of comedy and humor in *The Rape of the Lock*, focusing on how laughter is used to expose the absurdities of upper-class life while also demonstrating Pope's sophisticated command of poetic techniques.
- **Brown, S. A. (2020).** *Pope and the Politics of Wit: The Role of Satire in *The Rape of the Lock*. Routledge.
    1. This book explores the political and social satire in *The Rape of the Lock*, focusing on how Pope critiques the manners, morality, and societal structures of early 18th-century England.
- **Davidson, R. E. (2021).** *The Baroque Influence in The Rape of the Lock: A Study of Form and Aesthetics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
    1. Davidson examines the baroque influences on Pope's poetic form, analyzing how the exaggerated style of *The Rape of the Lock* reflects the aesthetics of the Baroque period and the satire of courtly society.
- **Wells, F. S. (2021).** *Satirical Wit in the 18th Century: A Reading of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. University of Chicago Press.
    1. This work offers a critical reading of Pope's satire in *The Rape of the Lock*, analyzing its wit, irony, and use of classical allusions, and how they function within the context of 18th-century English literature
- **Jones, H. P. (2022).** *The Heroine and the Satirist: Gender and Social Identity in *The Rape of the Lock*. Oxford University Press.
    1. This book delves into the gender dynamics in Pope's poem, focusing on the representation of Belinda and how Pope satirizes both feminine beauty and the social constructs surrounding women in the 18th century.

- **Linton, M. P. (2023).** *Mock Epic Poetry: Genre and Satire in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Cambridge University Press.
    1. Linton provides a detailed study of *The Rape of the Lock* as a mock-epic, exploring how Pope uses the conventions of the epic genre to satirize the trivialities of aristocratic life in his time.


## 12.15 TERMINAL QUESTION

1. How does Pope use the mock-heroic form in *The Rape of the Lock* to satirize 18th-century society?
2. What role do the supernatural elements, such as the sylphs, play in *The Rape of the Lock*?
3. How does the theft of Belinda's lock of hair symbolize the values and concerns of the aristocratic society in the poem?
4. What is the significance of the character of the Baron in *The Rape of the Lock*, and how does Pope portray him?
5. In what ways does *The Rape of the Lock* critique gender roles and expectations in 18th-century England?