

REV-00

SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL



MA ENGLISH

MEN 102 : ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

w.e.f Academic Session: 2024-25



CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA

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Techno City, 9th Mile, Baridua, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya, 793101

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Master of Arts in English (MEN)

MEN 102

ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

Block 1

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Credit - 4



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Centre for Distance and Online Education
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the second paper of MA English Programme of First semester. In this paper, learners will be introduced to the poets from the Middle Ages to the 18th century covering writers like Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Dryden, Pope and Johnson. These writers represent their particular ages and the works are representations of the society and culture of that period. Thus, this paper introduces the learners to the great poets of the 14th to 18th century England.

UNIT 1: GEOFFREY CHAUCER: THE CANTERBURY TALES

Beginning our exploration of English literature, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* offers a vivid portrayal of medieval society through a diverse cast of characters. This foundational work not only sets the stage for character-driven narratives but also raises themes of social commentary that resonate in subsequent poetry.

UNIT 2: EDMUND SPENSER: SONNET 75

Building on Chaucer's exploration of character and society, Edmund Spenser introduces the sonnet form in *Sonnet 75*, highlighting the interplay between love and artistic expression. This focus on the sonnet's origin and its thematic depth paves the way for a deeper examination of Shakespeare's contributions to this poetic tradition.

UNIT 3: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: SONNET 30

Continuing from Spenser, William Shakespeare expands the sonnet tradition with his own exploration of love and loss in *Sonnet 30*. Here, we delve into the structure and significance of the sonnet form, revealing how Shakespeare's unique voice enhances the emotional and thematic richness established by earlier poets.

UNIT 4: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: SONNET 65

Following the introspective journey of *Sonnet 30*, *Sonnet 65* further deepens our understanding of Shakespeare's preoccupations with time and beauty. Through critical analysis, we uncover the intricate language and themes that characterize his work, reinforcing his status as a pivotal figure in English literature.

UNIT 5: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: SONNET 116

From the contemplative nature of *Sonnet 65*, we move to the idealized vision of love

presented in Sonnet 116. This sonnet encapsulates Shakespeare's profound understanding of love's constancy, providing a counterpoint to the uncertainties explored in earlier works and enriching our appreciation of his poetic mastery.

UNIT 6: JOHN DONNE: THE GOOD MORROW

Transitioning from Shakespeare, John Donne introduces metaphysical poetry in *The Good Morrow*, where the exploration of love takes on a philosophical dimension. This shift towards metaphysical conceits expands our understanding of emotional and intellectual engagement in poetry, setting the stage for further exploration of Donne's unique style.

UNIT 7: JOHN DONNE: VALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING

Following the intimate reflections of *The Good Morrow*, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* continues Donne's metaphysical inquiry, illustrating the profound connection between love and separation. This thematic exploration enhances our appreciation of how Donne navigates complex emotional landscapes within his poetry.

UNIT 8: JOHN MILTON: PARADISE LOST (BOOK I) PART I

Emerging from the metaphysical inquiries of Donne, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* brings a grand narrative scope to themes of fallibility and redemption. As we delve into the background and significance of this epic poem, we discover its deep connections to biblical texts and its exploration of human nature.

UNIT 9: JOHN MILTON: PARADISE LOST (BOOK I) PART II

Continuing from our analysis of Milton's epic framework, the second part of *Paradise Lost* deepens our understanding through detailed text analysis and critical appreciation. This exploration reveals how Milton's rich imagery and themes resonate with the broader literary and philosophical discourses of his time.

UNIT 10: JOHN DRYDEN: MAC FLECKNOE PART I

Transitioning from Milton's epic vision, John Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* employs satire to critique contemporary literary figures. This shift to a more playful yet critical tone highlights the evolving landscape of literature and sets the stage for Dryden's unique contribution to the genre.

UNIT 11: JOHN DRYDEN: MAC FLECKNOE PART II

Following our introduction to Dryden's satire in *Mac Flecknoe*, the second part offers a closer text analysis, revealing the sharp wit and thematic intricacies that characterize his work. This examination deepens our understanding of how satire functions as a tool for social commentary and literary critique.

UNIT 12: ALEXANDER POPE: AN EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT PART I

Building on Dryden's satirical approach, Alexander Pope's *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* reflects a personal yet broader commentary on the literary world. This transition into Pope's style emphasizes the intricate relationship between authorial voice and societal critique, setting the stage for further exploration of his work.

UNIT 13: ALEXANDER POPE: AN EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT PART II

Continuing from our background understanding of Pope's epistle, the second part delves into detailed analysis and critical appreciation. This deep dive highlights how Pope's clever use of form and irony engages with contemporary issues, solidifying his place within the literary canon.

UNIT 14: SAMUEL JOHNSON: VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES (LINES 1-120)

Finally, we conclude with Samuel Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, which draws from the themes established by Pope and others, exploring the futility of human desires. This reflective culmination encourages us to consider the philosophical underpinnings of human ambition, bringing our literary journey full circle through a rich tapestry of themes and styles.

UNIT 1

GEOFFREY CHAUCER :THE CANTERBURY TALES

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 1.1 Learning objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 About the poet
- 1.4 Background of The Canterbury Tales
- 1.5 The Canterbury Tales
 - 1.5.1 Themes
 - 1.5.2 Characterization in The Canterbury Tales
 - 1.5.3 Relation with society
- 1.6 Let us sum up
- 1.7 References
- 1.8 Further Reading
- 1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 1.10 Model Questions

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the second paper. The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories, written in verse form by the medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer. Though it is an unfinished work, it conveys a lot about the medieval social setting and beliefs. Geoffrey Chaucer was not only a poet but an author and a civil servant as well. However, he got his fame for the work ‘The Canterbury Tales’.

1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Know about the prominent medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer.
- Understand the background of the poem ‘The Canterbury Tales’

1.3 ABOUT THE POET

Geoffrey Chaucer is a medieval English poet. He is also called the ‘father of English literature’ or the ‘father of English poetry’. Other than his famous poem ‘The Canterbury Tales’, he also became renowned for his scientific and astronomical work ‘A Treatise on the Astrolabe’, which he wrote for his son. His other works include: ‘The Book of The Duchess’, an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster; ‘Anelida and Arcite’, ‘The House of Fame’, ‘The Parliament of Fowles’, ‘The Legend of Good Women’ and ‘Troilus and Criseyde’.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. What is the name of the elegy written by Chaucer?
- b. How Chaucer is known as?

1.4 BACKGROUND: THE CANTERBURY TALES

The life of Chaucer can be divided into three stages depending on the influence of the places that he had visited- The French Period, The Italian Period and The English Period. The Canterbury Tales is the creation of the English period. In this poem, Chaucer

attempt to show the English society of his time. Chaucer started to write the poem in around 1387, when his wife passed away and he continued to work on the poem till his own death. Chaucer was inspired by the system of the pilgrims to visit Canterbury, to see the holy tomb of St. Thomas in large groups. In such long journeys, the pilgrims used to tell stories for relaxation. Chaucer tried to tell such stories through the poem.

✓ **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

c. Where the pilgrims were going to?

1.5 THE CANTERBURY TALES

The poem 'The Canterbury Tales' begins with a prologue. The prologue introduces the readers with a group of pilgrims who gather to start their journey to Canterbury. These pilgrims are selected from different walks of life. Chaucer describes each of the pilgrims in such a manner that the difference in their profession and identity can be vivid. There are total 31 pilgrims including the narrator and the host. There are - the friar, the monk, the knight, the priest, the summoner, the pardoner, the parson, the squire, the franklin, the merchant, the miller, the wife of Bath, the doctor of medicine, the cook, the sergeant of law, the reeve, the prioress and so on. The prologue of the poem stands as an introduction to not just the characters but also the poet's whole literary scheme. Chaucer planned to tell stories through the poem but he did not take the whole responsibility as the narrator of the poem. He assigned four tales to each of the pilgrim. The group of the pilgrims decide to participate in a story-telling competition. They all agreed to tell two tales on their way to Canterbury and again two tales on their way back. The best story teller was promised a free meal at the Tabard Inn by the host Harry Bailly.

The poem then begins with the story told by the Knight. Then the other

members also tell their stories. As it remained an unfinished work, Chaucer could only write twenty-four stories though his plan was to make a collection of around hundred twenty stories. The poem runs in 17000 lines.

In *The Canterbury Tales*, the narrator, often identified as Chaucer-the-pilgrim, embodies a literary persona based on the author himself but presented as more naïve and trusting than the actual Chaucer likely was. This narrative style, reminiscent of earlier works like *The Book of the Duchess*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Parliament of Fowls*, showcases Chaucer-as-pilgrim's uncritical acceptance of the characters he encounters, even when they reveal themselves to be flawed or morally lacking. Through Chaucer-the-poet's adept storytelling, readers gain insight into these characters through their own words, the tales they choose to tell, their interactions with others, and the way they present themselves, thereby illuminating their habits, interests, vices, and virtues with subtle nuance.

The opening of *The Canterbury Tales* paints a vivid picture of spring's arrival, bringing nature back to life after winter's dormancy. This renewal of the natural world inspires pilgrims to embark on a journey to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury, a prominent pilgrimage site in medieval Britain. Chaucer, as the pilgrim-narrator, finds himself at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, preparing to journey alone until he joins a diverse group of fellow travellers who arrive to spend the night. During a communal dinner, they extend an invitation for him to accompany them, setting the stage for their journey together. Their jovial host, Harry Bailey, proposes a storytelling competition to pass the time on the road: each pilgrim will tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two on the return, with a promised reward of a free meal for the best tale.

The Tales represent nearly every variety of medieval story at its best. The special genius of Chaucer's work, however, lies in the dramatic interaction between the tales and the framing story. After the Knight's courtly and philosophical romance about noble

love, the Miller interrupts with a deliciously bawdy story of seduction aimed at the Reeve, the Reeve takes revenge with a tale about the seduction of a Miller's wife and daughter. Thus, the tales develop the personalities, quarrels and diverse opinions of their tellers. The prologues and tales of the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner are high points of Chaucer's art. The Wife, an outspoken champion of her gender against the traditional anti-feminism of the Church, initiates a series of tales about sex, marriage and nobility. The Pardoner gives a chilling demonstration of how his eloquence in the pulpit turns the hope of salvation into a vicious confidence game. Although Chaucer in its way satirizes the abuses of the Church, he also includes a number of didactic and religious tales, concluding with the good person's sermon on penitence; this is followed by a personal confession in which Chaucer retracts all his secular writings, including Troilers, and those Canterbury Tales that "inclined towards sin".

Chaucer's art of characterization is unique and superb. Undoubtedly the plan of the Canterbury Tales is borrowed from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio. Moreover, Piers Plowman suggested the idea of the pilgrimage of Chaucer. But his technique and art of characterization is original. He transcended both the Italian and English poet with the result. His characters are not by his age but they are universal characters of all ages.

Chaucer's characters are not mere types. They lived too actively to be mere types. They are drawn with a vivid pen. Every sly line reveals some aspects of character. The description of each man's horse, manner and dress reveal the character. He describes them in a humorous way. They were not puppets, they lived, as displayed on the whole life of the Middle Ages, with all its colour and sound, its sweetness and bitterness.

His characters, though they are types of the 14th century, are highly idiosyncratic. He has combined in them individual and typical traits. For example, the Shipman, who is a typical figure of the 14th century, has been transformed by Chaucer into an individual in his description. These men and women in the Prologue stop before us just long enough

to enable us to form an idea of their personality.

His characters form a picture gallery of the 14th century. When the prevailing tendency of the age to deal with allegory and abstractions is taken into consideration, it is astounding how alive these Chaucerian types are, for in the course of his life he had come in contact with them all. The Knight, the Squire, the Merchant, the Sailor, the Scholar, the Doctor and the Monk etc.—he knew them intimately and drew them from personal observation. We become acquainted with the medieval English man as he moved and lived, depicted with a breath of vision and a rich tolerant humour unsurpassed in English literature. A large-hearted charity in his treatment of the labouring class was depicted, as his picture of the Plowman would testify.

His power of vivid description has made his characters super. He brings a whole figure before us by one striking and apt comparison the young Squire is presented as a charming lover.

Chaucer's art of characterization is at its best on account of his ability of observation. He mixed freely with all types of mankind, and he used this opportunity of observing the little peculiarities of human nature. He had the *seeing eye*, the retentive memory, the judgement to select and the capacity to expand. Because of his power of observation, all the important classes of English society are thus represented.

Chaucer has differentiated all his characters very cleverly. The characters who are brought before us, one by one in the Prologue are cunningly planned to appear, one after another. The Miller and Reeve, the Summoner and the Friar, the Prioress and the Wife of Bath, illustrate one another admirably. They are not merely figures from whom certain stories proceed; they are characters in a drama, whose purpose is to show how certain types will appear when they are brought together in that most by trying of circumstances- a journey.

Chaucer's characters are so real that they can be easily recognized. His art of characterization is free from personal bias. He portrays his characters objectively, impartially and disinterestedly. He delights in presenting, playing man and woman, who reveal the quality not so much in their action as in their dress, manners or speech.

✓ **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- d. **How many pilgrims were there in 'The Canterbury Tales'?**
- e. **How many stories are written by Chaucer in the poem?**
- f. **What is the unique feature of Chaucer's work in "The Canterbury Tales"?**
- g. **How does Chaucer's art of characterization stand out?**
- h. **Which Italian work and English idea influenced the plan of "The Canterbury Tales"?**
- i. **How does Chaucer's technique of character description reveal their traits?**



1.5.1 THEMES

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is rich with a variety of themes, reflecting the complexity of medieval society and human nature. Here are some of the central themes:

- **Social Class and Hierarchy:** The tales often reflect and critique the rigid class structures of medieval society. Characters come from different social backgrounds (nobility, clergy, tradespeople, peasants), and their tales sometimes

challenge or uphold class-based distinctions.

- **Religion and Corruption:** Many tales, particularly those told by and about the clergy, explore the corruption and hypocrisy within the Church. Chaucer uses satire to criticize the moral failings of religious figures, such as the Pardoner and the Friar, who exploit their roles for personal gain.
- **Love and Marriage:** Romantic and marital relationships are central to many of the tales. Chaucer explores different types of love—courtly love, lust, and marriage dynamics—often questioning traditional ideas about gender roles, power, and fidelity. **The Wife of Bath's Tale** is particularly significant in addressing themes of marriage, female autonomy, and power in relationships.
- **Morality and Human Nature:** Several tales contain moral lessons or explore the tension between virtuous behavior and sinful tendencies. Characters frequently face choices that reveal their virtues or flaws, often leading to humorous or tragic outcomes.
- **Fate and Free Will:** The tension between fate and free will is another important theme. Some tales explore how much control people have over their destinies, especially in relation to moral choices and divine intervention.
- **Storytelling and Perspective:** A meta-theme of *The Canterbury Tales* is the act of storytelling itself. Each pilgrim tells a tale, providing a window into their personality, values, and worldview. Chaucer highlights how stories are shaped by their tellers and invites readers to question the reliability of narrators.
- **Critique of Chivalry and Courtly Values:** Chaucer also critiques the ideals of knighthood, chivalry, and courtly love, often exposing the inconsistencies and sometimes absurdities in these systems. **The Knight's Tale** holds these ideals, while others, like **The Miller's Tale**, parody or mock them.

These themes collectively offer a multifaceted portrait of 14th-century English society, addressing timeless concerns about human nature, ethics, and the complexities of social interaction.

1.5.2 CHARACTERIZATION IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

The characterization in *The Canterbury Tales* is one of its most celebrated features, as Geoffrey Chaucer presents a wide array of distinct and vivid personalities. Chaucer uses direct description, dialogue, and the tales told by each pilgrim to reveal their traits, beliefs, and social backgrounds. Here's an overview of some of the key characters and their characterization:

1. The Knight

A noble and honorable figure, the Knight represents the ideal of chivalry. He has fought in many battles and is deeply respected. Humble, brave, courteous, and loyal to his duty as a knight. His tale upholds the ideals of honor, chivalry, and courtly love. Chaucer depicts him with great respect, emphasizing his virtues and his adherence to the code of knighthood.

2. The Wife of Bath (Alisoun)

A wealthy and confident woman who has been married five times, the Wife of Bath is one of Chaucer's most famous and complex characters. Outspoken, independent, and worldly. She is experienced in love and marriage and seeks control in relationships. Chaucer uses her prologue and tale to explore themes of gender and power, with the Wife of Bath challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for female sovereignty in marriage.

3. The Pardoner

A corrupt church official who sells indulgences (pardons for sins) to make money, the Pardoner embodies religious hypocrisy. Greedy, deceitful, and morally

corrupt. He openly admits to exploiting the gullibility of people for his own financial gain. Chaucer portrays him with biting satire, exposing the widespread corruption within the Church. Despite his immorality, the Pardoner is a master storyteller, making him a paradoxical figure.

4. The Miller (Robin)

A brawny, coarse man with a big mouth both literally and metaphorically. The Miller is drunk, vulgar, and full of bawdy humor. Crude, dishonest, and fond of telling obscene stories. His tale mocks the values of courtly love and social decorum. Chaucer uses the Miller to highlight the differences between social classes and to contrast him with more refined characters, like the Knight. The Miller's Tale is a comic and irreverent story, filled with sexual signs and falsity.

5. The Prioress (Madame Eglantine)

A nun who is overly concerned with manners, appearances, and her own refinement. She tries to present herself as graceful and dignified. Delicate, sentimental, and somewhat hypocritical in her religious duties. Her concern for worldly matters often overshadows her piety. Chaucer portrays her as more interested in courtly behavior than in the spiritual aspects of her vocation. Her tale is one of innocence and devotion, contrasting her more superficial outward persona.

6. The Monk

The Monk enjoys hunting and eating more than adhering to the strict religious rules of monastic life. He represents the worldly clergy of the time. Materialistic, indulgent, and unconcerned with the religious disciplines expected of him. Chaucer's portrayal of the Monk is satirical, as he presents a figure who ignores his religious vows in favor of a life of pleasure, highlighting the contradictions in the Church.

7. The Clerk (Cleric)

A poor but educated scholar from Oxford who is devoted to learning and

philosophy. Humble, serious, and idealistic. His love for books and learning is his most defining feature, and he spends all his money on books. The Clerk is portrayed sympathetically as a dedicated intellectual, but also impractical in his worldly affairs. His tale reflects his thoughtful nature, focusing on patience and virtue.

8. The Summoner

An official who brings people to ecclesiastical court, the Summoner is corrupt and often takes bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye to sinners. Lecherous, dishonest, and hypocritical. He is physically repulsive, with a face full of pimples, symbolizing his inner corruption. Chaucer paints the Summoner as a grotesque figure, both morally and physically, using him to critique the abuses of the Church.

9. The Squire

The Knight's son, the Squire is a young and handsome lover and soldier in training. He is more focused on love and socializing than on chivalric duties. Youthful, vain, and eager to impress women. He is a foil to his father, the Knight, showing a more romanticized version of knighthood. Chaucer presents the Squire as charming but somewhat immature, with his focus on love and appearance suggesting a more frivolous aspect of the noble class.

10. The Franklin

A wealthy landowner known for his hospitality and generosity; the Franklin is a symbol of the prosperous middle class. Cheerful, indulgent, and fond of good food and drink. He values pleasure and the finer things in life. Chaucer presents the Franklin positively as a man who enjoys life and shares his wealth generously, though he may be a bit obsessed with material comforts.

Characterization Techniques

- *Satire and Irony*: Chaucer often uses satire to expose the flaws and hypocrisies of his characters, particularly the religious figures.

- *Frame Narrative*: The pilgrimage setting allows Chaucer to present a wide variety of characters, each representing different social classes, occupations, and attitudes.
- *Direct and Indirect Characterization*: Chaucer provides both direct descriptions of characters in the General Prologue and indirect characterization through their speech, actions, and the stories they tell.

The vivid and often humorous characterization in *The Canterbury Tales* serves not only to entertain but also to provide social commentary on the people and institutions of Chaucer's time.

1.5.3 RELATION WITH SOCIETY

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a remarkable reflection of the society of 14th-century England, offering insights into various aspects of medieval life. Here's how it relates to society:

1. Class Structure and Social Hierarchy

The Canterbury Tales presents a cross-section of medieval society, showcasing characters from different social classes, from the nobility to the peasantry. The pilgrims include a knight, a miller, a prioress, a merchant, and others, representing the feudal, ecclesiastical, and urban orders of the time. Chaucer's depiction of these figures provides a critique of the rigid social hierarchies, while also celebrating the diversity of human experience within each class.

2. Critique of the Church

The tales reflect the growing disillusionment with the medieval Church, which was a dominant force in both spiritual and temporal matters. Through characters like the Pardoner and the Friar, Chaucer critiques the corruption within the Church, particularly the sale of indulgences and the immoral behavior of clergy. This reflects the broader societal concern over the Church's declining moral authority during this period.

3. Gender and Marriage

Chaucer explores the roles of women and the institution of marriage through characters like the Wife of Bath, who challenges traditional views of women and marital relationships. Her tale and prologue reflect debates about female independence, sexual agency, and the role of women in society. This mirrors medieval tensions around gender roles and the evolving status of women.

4. Economic Change

The late 14th century was a time of significant economic change, marked by the rise of the merchant class and increasing urbanization. Characters like the Merchant and the Franklin in *The Canterbury Tales* represent this growing bourgeoisie, illustrating the shifting social dynamics as wealth and status became less tied to landownership and more to trade and finance.

5. Morality and Human Nature

Chaucer uses the tales to explore human nature, often through moral and ethical lenses. Many of the stories highlight virtues like loyalty, generosity, and humility, but they also expose vices such as greed, lust, and pride. This dual focus reflects the moral concerns of medieval society, particularly in a time when the Black Death and social upheaval led many to question the stability of human life and institutions.

6. Satire and Social Critique

Through humour and satire, Chaucer critiques the flaws and hypocrisies of individuals and institutions. His characters are often exaggerated to highlight societal issues, such as the superficiality of courtly love, the corruption of religious figures, and the deceit of common folk. In doing so, *The Canterbury Tales* serves as both entertainment and social commentary.

7. Diverse Voices and Perspectives

By allowing each pilgrim to tell a tale, Chaucer presents a multitude of voices, opinions, and experiences. This diversity mirrors the complexity of medieval society, where different classes, genders, and professions coexisted with varying degrees of power and privilege. Chaucer's inclusion of varied tales and genres—from romance to fabliaux—reflects the complexity and plurality of medieval culture.

In summary, *The Canterbury Tales* acts as a microcosm of 14th-century English society, addressing themes of class, religion, gender, economics, morality, and social critique. Through its vivid characters and engaging stories, it offers a rich portrait of the social dynamics of its time.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit you have learnt about the famous medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer. You have also understood the background of *The Canterbury Tales* and the poet's scheme to write a collection of stories in verse. We may summarize Chaucer's achievement by saying that he is earliest of the great moderns. In comparison with the poems of his own time, and with those of the succeeding century, the advance he makes is almost startling.

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1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. 'The Book of The Duchess'
- b. 'Father of English Poetry'
- c. Canterbury, to see the holy tomb of St. Thomas.
- d. 31
- e. 24
- f. The unique feature of Chaucer's work lies in the dramatic interaction between the tales and the framing story, where the tales develop the personalities, quarrels, and diverse opinions of their tellers.
- g. Chaucer's art of characterization is unique and superb, as he vividly portrays his characters with individual and typical traits, making them active and alive rather than mere types.
- h. The plan of "The Canterbury Tales" is borrowed from Boccaccio's "Decameron," and the idea of the pilgrimage was suggested by "Piers Plowman."

- i. Chaucer's technique reveals characters' traits through their horse, manner, dress, and humorous descriptions, bringing each character to life with vivid and striking details.

1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Geoffrey Chaucer as a medieval poet.
2. Write a note on the scheme of the poet for the poem 'The Canterbury Tales'.
3. Discuss the significance of the interaction between the tales and the framing story in "The Canterbury Tales." How does this interaction enhance the overall narrative and characterization?
4. Examine Chaucer's portrayal of different social classes in "The Canterbury Tales." How does his background and personal experience influence his depiction of characters from various strata of medieval society?

UNIT 2

EDMUND SPENSER :SONNET 75

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Learning Objectives

2.3 About the poet

2.4 Sonnet origin

2.5 Sonnet 75

2.6 Explanation of the poem

2.7 Themes

2.8 Critical Appreciation

2.9 Let Us Sum Up

2.10 References

2.11 Further Reading

2.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.13 Model Questions

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Spenser's *Sonnet 75* both explore themes of love, identity, and the passage of time, albeit through different lenses. In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer presents a diverse cast of characters, each revealing unique perspectives on love and society as they embark on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. This framework allows for a rich tapestry of human experience and moral reflection, highlighting the complexities of relationships and social commentary. Conversely, Spenser's *Sonnet 75* encapsulates the personal struggle against time and mortality, as the speaker grapples with the transient nature of beauty and love. Through the interplay of permanence and impermanence, Spenser underscores the power of poetry to immortalize emotions and moments, connecting to Chaucer's broader themes of storytelling as a means to understand and convey human experience. Both works, while distinct in form and context, emphasize the enduring power of narrative and verse in capturing the essence of human life and love.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. What is the most popular work of Edmund Spenser?
- b. Name one of Spenser's works besides *The Faerie Queen*.

2.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Learn about the poet, Edmund Spenser and his contribution to literature.
- Understand what the sonnet 75 is about.

2.3 ABOUT THE POET

Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) was a prominent English poet of the Elizabethan era, best known for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, which celebrates the Tudor dynasty and Elizabeth I. Spenser's work is notable for its intricate use of allegory and his

distinctive verse form, known as the Spenserian stanza. He also played a key role in the development of English poetry, blending classical influences with native traditions. His other significant works include *Amoretti*, a sonnet sequence, and *Epithalamion*, a marriage hymn. Spenser's language, rich with archaisms, and his inventive use of meter and rhyme made him one of the most influential poets of the English Renaissance.

2.4 SONNET ORIGIN

The sonnet originated in Italy in the 13th century and was popularized by the poet Francesco Petrarch in the 14th century. Petrarch's form, now known as the Petrarchan or Italian sonnet, consisted of 14 lines divided into an octave (eight lines) with the rhyme scheme ABBAABBA and a sestet (six lines) with varying rhyme schemes such as CDECDE or CDCDCD. His sonnets primarily focused on themes of love, beauty, and unattainable desire.

The form was later introduced to England in the early 16th century by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. While Wyatt adapted the Petrarchan sonnet structure, Surrey created what became known as the Shakespearean or English sonnet, which had a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCDEFEFGG, ending in a rhymed couplet. The English sonnet became widely popular in Elizabethan England, with William Shakespeare being one of its most famous practitioners.

The sonnet's structure allowed poets to explore complex themes like love, time, beauty, and mortality in a compact, structured way, and it remains a popular poetic form today.

2.5 SONNET 75

Amoretti LXXV: One Day I Wrote her Name

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,

But came the waves and washed it away:

Again I wrote it with a second hand,

But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.

"Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay,

A mortal thing so to immortalize;

For I myself shall like to this decay,

And eke my name be wiped out likewise."

"Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name:

Where when as death shall all the world subdue,

Our love shall live, and later life renew."

2.6 EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

"Sonnet 75" is also called "Amoretti 75". The Sonnet was published in 1595 as part of *Amoretti*, a cycle of 89 [sonnets](#) that recounted Spenser's courtship and marriage to his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem explores the power of poetry to immortalize its subjects, that the wife of the poet, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem also showcases Spenser's unique stanza and sonnet style, which is later named as the Spenserian Stanza. He first perfected this particular stanza in his poem 'The Faerie Queene'.

The poet is the narrator in the poem who says that once he wrote the name of his beloved in the sand on the sea-shore, but the waves rolled in and erased it. Therefore, he wrote it second time, but again it was erased by the tide. The beloved of the poet told him that he is very silly and prideful to make such futile attempts to make a mortal being last forever. She accepts that she, being a mortal, must die one day and

just the way the ocean has erased her name again and again, everything about her will disappear one day. However, the poet does not agree saying that his poetry will keep her alive forever. In this way, the poet believes, he can preserve his love forever.

The particular sonnet is about poetry itself. It deals with the power of art and how art can immortalize anything that faces decay. The poet, Spenser, here understands that death is inevitable to all but he trusts that poetry can immortalize the admirable name of his beloved forever so that even after her death, she does not disappear with all her traces.

✓ **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

c. What is the other name of 'Sonnet 75'?

d. What is the name of the stanza perfected by Edmund Spenser?

2.7 THEMES

Edmund Spenser's **Sonnet 75**, from his collection *Amoretti*, explores several prominent themes:

1. **Immortality through Poetry:** A central theme is the idea of achieving immortality through art. The speaker writes his lover's name in the sand, but it is washed away by the waves, symbolizing the transient nature of life. However, he claims that his verses will immortalize her name and their love, ensuring that it will live on through his poetry.
2. **Transient Nature of Life:** The poem addresses the fleeting nature of human life and love. The washing away of the lover's name by the tide reflects the inevitability of death and the impermanence of earthly things.
3. **Love and Permanence:** Despite the impermanence of life, the speaker asserts that their love will transcend time. Through the written word, love can be preserved forever, highlighting the eternal nature of true love.

4. **Nature vs. Human Creation:** There is a tension between natural forces (represented by the ocean) and human efforts (writing the name in the sand). The waves continually erase the speaker's attempts to eternalize his lover's name, but the speaker believes that poetry has the power to defy nature and time.

Overall, Spenser's *Sonnet 75* meditates on the power of love, the fleetingness of life, and the role of poetry in making love eternal.

2.8 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Spenser's *Sonnet 75* is a meditation on love, time, and the enduring nature of poetry. It reflects the Renaissance ideal of seeking immortality through artistic creation. The sonnet skillfully juxtaposes the temporal (the physical world) with the eternal (art), offering a thoughtful commentary on human desires to defy time. Its language is accessible, yet rich in symbolism, and the poem achieves a balance between personal expression and universal themes. Through its structure, thematic depth, and eloquent imagery, *Sonnet 75* remains one of Spenser's most memorable and celebrated works. In conclusion, Spenser effectively uses the sonnet form to discuss the ephemeral nature of life and love, while simultaneously celebrating the timelessness of poetry, making this sonnet a fine example of Renaissance literary ideals.

2.9 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, you have learnt about Edmund Spenser. You have also understood what the sonnet *75* is all about. You have read here the central theme of the sonnet and about the unique structure it has. "Sonnet 75," also known as "Amoretti 75," is part of Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*, a collection of 89 sonnets published in 1595 that recount his courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. The poem explores the theme of immortality through poetry. In the sonnet, Spenser writes his beloved's name in the sand, but it is repeatedly washed away by the waves. His beloved tells him that it is futile to

try to immortalize a mortal being. However, Spenser believes that through his poetry, he can preserve her memory forever. The poem emphasizes the enduring power of art to transcend mortality.

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2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. The Faerie Queen.
- b. The Shepheardes Calendar

- c. "Amoretti 75"
- d. Spenserian Stanza.

2.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Edmund Spenser as a poet.
2. Critically analyse the poem 'Sonnet 75'.

UNIT 3
ELIZABETHAN POETRY
SONNET 30

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 3.1 Learning Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction to Shakespeare's sonnets
- 3.3 Shakespeare's Sonnets
- 3.4 Sonnet 30
- 3.5 Analysis of the poem
- 3.6 Themes of the poem
- 3.7 Critical Appreciation
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 References
- 3.10 Further reading
- 3.11 Answers to Check your Progress
- 3.12 Model Questions

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Sonnet 30 by William Shakespeare and Sonnet 75 by Edmund Spenser both explore themes of love, memory, and the passage of time, reflecting the poets' deep emotional engagement with their subjects. In Sonnet 30, Shakespeare contemplates the pain of lost love and the bittersweet nature of nostalgia, where memories evoke both joy and sorrow. The speaker grapples with the inevitability of time's effects on relationships, emphasizing the complexity of human emotions.

Conversely, Sonnet 75 by Spenser addresses the theme of enduring love through the lens of the poet's desire to immortalize his beloved in verse. Spenser's sonnet expresses a sense of defiance against time, suggesting that poetry can preserve beauty and love beyond the constraints of mortality. While both sonnets grapple with the transient nature of human experiences, Shakespeare's approach leans towards introspection and melancholy, whereas Spenser adopts a more optimistic perspective on the power of poetry to transcend time. Together, they illustrate the multifaceted nature of love and memory in the context of their respective literary traditions, enriching the sonnet form and its exploration of these timeless themes.

3.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand key themes in Shakespeare's Sonnet 30.
- Explore the significance of memory in the context of the work.
- Examine the role of poetry in preserving love and beauty.
- Identify literary devices used in the sonnet.
- Discuss the historical and cultural context of the sonnet form.

3.3 SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is a man who needs no introduction in English literary studies. William was the eldest son of John Shakespeare as glover and dealer in other commodities such as barley, timber and wood. He may have gone to the grammar school at Stratford run by the borough where he may have learnt to read, write and speak Latin and some of the classical poets. Shakespeare certainly did not go to the University. Instead at the age of 18, in November or December 1582 he married Anne Hathway of Shottery only two miles away from Stratford, and soon began his career as a dramatist. Today, Shakespeare is primarily known for his rich dramas, however he was also a prolific poet and left a big collection of poetry.

What is a sonnet?

A sonnet is a lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme. Literally meaning a “little song”, the sonnet form is believed to have been developed by the 14th century Italian poet Francesco Petrarch. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two sections: an octave (eight lines) rhyming ABBAABBAB followed by a sestet (six lines) rhyming CDECDE or CDCDCD. The standard subject for these poems were usually the hopes and pains of unrequited love. The Elizabethan poet and politician Thomas Wyatt was the first to introduce the form of the sonnet in the English language. The Petrarchan form was also later employed by later poets like John Milton (see “When I Consider How My Light is Spent”) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (see “How do I Love Thee”). Developed to accommodate the lyrical turns of phrases of the Italian language, the Petrarchan sonnet had to be modified in order to create similar effects in the English language, and as a result of such effects we see the emergence of what we now understand as the English sonnet.

Tudor poet Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, and a close associate of Thomas Wyatt, is credited to have introduced the form of the English sonnet, even though the form is now more commonly known as the Shakespearean sonnet, after its more famous practitioner. This sonnet form is divided into three quatrains (of four lines each), and a concluding couplet, which follows the rhyming pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Another formal intervention was introduced by noted Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser in what is now known as the Spenserian sonnet, which follows the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. Besides formal variations, English poets also expanded the scope of the themes covered in the sonnets, which were previously limited to romance, but under more ambitious practitioners like John Donne and John Milton, the sonnet came to speak also of religion, nation and other matters of serious concern. In a comparative analysis of the Petrarchan and English sonnets, Abrams and Harpham have noted the following: “The rhyme pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet has on the whole favored a statement of a problem, a situation, or incident in the octave, with a resolution in the sestet. The English form sometimes uses a similar division of material but often presents instead a repetition-with-variation of a statement in each of the three quatrains; in either case, the final couplet in the English sonnet usually imposes an epigrammatic turn at the end.”

Another trend in English poetry that followed the example of Petrarch, was the development of sonnet sequences or sonnet cycles, which was a series of sonnets linked together with a common theme, which was usually the exploration of varied aspects of a relationship between lovers. Sidney’s “Astrophel and Stella” (1580) and Spenser’s “Amoretti” (1595) are two of the most well-known examples of sonnet sequences in English poetry. Shakespeare did not write his sonnets for publication. Thomas Thorpe published them in 1609 without his permission. A 1598 reference within a kind of directory of contemporary wits mentioned Shakespeare’s “sugared sonnets” that had been circulating only privately among friends. Two (138 and 144) were published in an

anthology in 1599. Based on apparent topical allusions, connections with lines by other authors, and on comparisons with the plays -- some of which make much use of the sonnet format, the sonnets are often roughly dated from 1592 to early in the first decade of the 1600s, with most probably written in the early years. Shakespeare in his sonnets seems to follow the pattern of sonnet cycles as developed by Petrarch, that was mentioned above. Sonnets 1-126 seem to be addressed to an unnamed male friend considerably younger than the poet. At first (1-17) the poet seems driven or commissioned to urge this fellow to marry and breed. But the interpersonal friendship grows in intensity, and separation causes grief. The Young Man belongs to the upper class, is more than handsome, and is somewhat given to wantonness. The gender of this unnamed lover has been the subject of much speculation. In a few instances, the poet obliquely mentions a rival for either the patronage or the affections of the Young Man, a situation which arouses jealousy, as this poet has "a worthier pen" and "a better spirit". Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to or concern a dark lady (dark in the sense of her hair, her facial features, and her character), and Sonnets 153-154 are fairly free adaptations of two classical Greek poems. Attributing Sonnets 1-126 to a young man and Sonnets 127-152 to a dark lady is somewhat problematical, since in many of the poems the gender of the person addressed is not at all clear. We have no clear mandate to interpret poems invoking "my love" as referring necessarily to a male or to a female, since the term is used to refer to both sexes equally.

✓ **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- a. **Who introduced the sonnet form in the English language?**
- b. **What is the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet?**
- c. **In which year were Shakespeare's sonnets published without his permission?**
- d. **What are Sonnets 127-152 primarily concerned with?**

3.4 SONNET 30

The text:

*When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
 I summon up remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
 Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
 And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
 And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
 The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.*

3.5 ANALYSIS:

In this sonnet Shakespeare speaks about the loss of friends and many things he sought in life which he could not get. Shakespeare cheers up when he remembers his friend. Then he overcomes the hurt caused by his outcast state or depression inflicted by his lack of achievements or loss of friends. However, for a lyric that tells us about the intimate experiences of the poet, its language couched in formal court vocabulary may appear wooden on cogitation is seamless in offering the contradictory aesthetic experience of pain and happiness. In sonnet 30 he sighs the lack of many a thing he sought. The immediate reason for the downcast state in which he finds himself is fall from the favour of goddess Fortuna as well as people around him. Nothing precipitous

accounts for the dip in happiness in sonnet 30 but idle memory: 'sessions of sweet silent thought'. He wastes his 'dear' time summoning old thoughts to the court of his mind, the relaxed indulgence in past memories makes him somewhat distant, aloof and offish. Shakespeare wrote the sonnets when he was in his late twenties and early thirties. It appears somewhat strange that he should be overcome by grief for 'precious friends hid in death's dateless night.' We recall that Marlowe, born in the same year as Shakespeare himself and the only contemporary poet Shakespeare alluded to in his plays died in 1593 and his only son Hamnet passed away in August 1596 and Spenser in 1599. Their decease could bring tears to his eyes. The overarching self-possession in sonnet 30 is expressed by the poet's assertion that his eyes are 'unused to flow.' Still the loss remembered in sonnet 30 is so personal in nature and affecting his person that he cannot help crying. The poem ends on a note of acceptance and a hope that the grief he is experiencing will end soon.

3.6 THEMES OF THE POEM

Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 is one of his most reflective and melancholic sonnets. It delves into themes of memory and loss, regret, grief, and ultimately, the healing power of friendship or love.

1. Memory and Loss:

The speaker reflects on the past, lamenting over missed opportunities and personal losses. He engages in a "session of sweet silent thought," which implies a meditative remembrance of days gone by. This introspection leads him to relive emotional wounds that still feel fresh.

2. Regret:

The sonnet conveys a strong sense of regret, as the speaker mourns "the waste of time" and recalls unfulfilled dreams and unmet desires. He also grieves over friends he has lost to death, symbolizing a broader regret over things that cannot be recovered.

3. Grief:

Shakespeare intensifies the tone by highlighting the sorrow that accompanies these memories. The repetition of "I sigh" and "I weep" shows the emotional toll of reminiscing on these old pains, emphasizing how deeply past sorrows affect the speaker's present state.

4. Healing Power of Friendship or Love:

Despite the overwhelming sadness, the sonnet concludes on a hopeful note. The speaker reveals that thoughts of a dear friend ("your dear friend") help to ease the pain of past regrets and losses. By remembering this friendship or love, all past griefs are lessened, and the speaker feels a sense of joy and redemption.

In conclusion, **Sonnet 30** is about the reconciliation of sorrow with the consoling power of love or friendship. While memory may reopen emotional wounds, the bond with another can ultimately heal them, offering a resolution to the speaker's grief.

3.7 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Shakespeare's **Sonnet 30** is a poignant reflection on memory, loss, and the passage of time, infused with deep emotion and introspection. The sonnet begins with the speaker lamenting over past regrets, missed opportunities, and the deaths of loved ones, creating a mood of sorrow and melancholy. Through its masterful use of language and form, the sonnet captures the bittersweet nature of reflection—where old wounds resurface, and grief feels fresh again. However, the poem offers resolution through the redemptive power of friendship or love, suggesting that the mere thought of a dear friend can heal the pain of the past. This juxtaposition of grief and consolation showcases Shakespeare's ability to explore complex emotions with both depth and subtlety, making **Sonnet 30** a timeless meditation on human experience.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

From this unit we have learnt that, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was a

renowned English dramatist and poet, known for his rich dramas and prolific poetry. Shakespeare's sonnets, a form of lyric poetry consisting of fourteen iambic pentameter lines, follow the tradition of Petrarchan and English sonnets. His sonnets were published without his permission in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe. Sonnets 1-126 address a young male friend, while Sonnets 127-152 concern a dark lady. Shakespeare's sonnets explore themes of love, beauty, mortality, and the passage of time, often employing vivid imagery and emotional depth.

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3.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. Thomas Wyatt was the first to introduce the sonnet form in the English language.

- b. The rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.
- c. Shakespeare's sonnets were published without his permission in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe.
- d. Sonnets 127-152 are primarily concerned with a "dark lady" in terms of her hair, facial features, and character.

3.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the theme of memory in Shakespeare's Sonnet 30. How does the speaker's recollection of past grievances shape his current emotional state, and what does this suggest about the nature of memory in relation to love and loss?
2. Discuss the use of imagery in Sonnet 30. Identify specific images that contribute to the poem's exploration of themes such as grief, nostalgia, and the passage of time. How does Shakespeare's imagery enhance the emotional impact of the sonnet?
3. Examine the structure of Sonnet 30 in relation to its thematic content. How does the traditional sonnet form, with its specific rhyme scheme and volta, contribute to the development of the speaker's argument about the complexities of love and regret?
4. Consider the role of friendship and its significance in Sonnet 30. How does the poem reflect on the relationship between the speaker and the beloved? In what ways does this friendship serve as both a source of pain and a means of healing?
5. Explore the connection between time and emotional pain in Sonnet 30. How does Shakespeare portray the impact of time on personal relationships and individual suffering? In what ways does the sonnet suggest that time both exacerbates and alleviates emotional distress?
6. Investigate the concept of emotional reconciliation in Sonnet 30. How does the speaker navigate feelings of sorrow and longing throughout the poem? In what ways does the resolution of these feelings offer insight into the human experience of love and loss?
7. Analyze the significance of the final couplet in Sonnet 30. How does this concluding statement encapsulate the overall message of the poem regarding love, remembrance, and emotional resilience?

UNIT 4

SONNET 65

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Learning Objectives

4.3 Sonnet 65

4.4 Analysis of the poem

4.5 Themes of the poem

4.6 Critical Appreciation

4.7 Let Us Sum Up

4.8 References

4.9 Further reading

4.10 Answers to Check your Progress

4.11 Model Questions

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Sonnet 65 by William Shakespeare grapples with the theme of time's destructive power over beauty and mortality, questioning how fragile things like beauty, youth, and life can withstand the relentless force of time. The speaker laments that no natural element—whether rock, steel, or earth—can escape time's decay, leaving only the written word as a form of resistance to oblivion. This theme of time's impact parallels *Sonnet 30*, where Shakespeare reflects on past sorrows and losses, but finds solace in the thought of a dear friend, which rejuvenates his spirit. In both sonnets, Shakespeare confronts the inevitability of time, but while *Sonnet 65* emphasizes the impermanence of life, *Sonnet 30* introduces a glimmer of hope, showing how memory and love can provide emotional relief from time's harsh effects.

4.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Here are the learning objectives for William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 65*:

- Understand the central theme of time's destructive power over beauty and mortality.
- Analyze Shakespeare's use of imagery and metaphor to depict the struggle against time.
- Explore the emotional depth and philosophical questions raised in the sonnet.
- Examine the role of poetry and the written word as a form of resistance to the ravages of time.
- Appreciate the structure and language of the Shakespearean sonnet form.

4.3 SONNET 65

The text:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea

But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,

How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,

Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out

*Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
 Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
 O fearful meditation! where, alack,
 Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
 O, none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright.*

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

This sonnet is a meditation upon time. The hardest metals and stones, the vast earth and sea — all submit to time "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea, / But sad mortality o'er-sways their power." "O fearful meditation!" he cries, where can the young man hide that time won't wreak on him the same "siege of batt'ring days"? In the last couplet, the poet searches for a medium through which his beloved could be immortalized by defeating the sad mortality and the fearful destructive giant i.e. time. Finally, he discovers that it is verse that can serve as a miracle in fulfilling the intense desire of the poet. Then, he feels great happiness, joy and he gets very much excited for being able to find out the proper way to make his dear friend and the sweet memories alive forever through his writings. His grief, worries, despair that made him suffered in the past have suddenly vanished while he has succeeded to immortalize his beloved and the memories of their lives that expected since many years back in the past.

4.5 THEMES OF THE POEM

Shakespeare's Sonnet 65 explores profound themes centered around time,

beauty, decay, and the power of art. These themes reflect the poet's meditation on the inevitability of aging and the fragility of all things, both physical and emotional. Below is an elaborate discussion of the themes present in Sonnet 65:

1. The Power of Time

The dominant theme in Sonnet 65 is the destructive power of time. Shakespeare presents time as an unstoppable force that gradually wears down even the most durable materials like brass, stone, and iron. These seemingly eternal objects are subject to the ravages of time, emphasizing the fleeting nature of human beauty and life. Time is portrayed as an inevitable conqueror, making everything vulnerable to its decaying touch.

2. Mortality and Decay

Building on the theme of time, Sonnet 65 also addresses human mortality and the transient nature of beauty. Shakespeare laments that if solid and enduring objects cannot withstand time's assault, then delicate and ephemeral things like human beauty stand no chance. Mortality is inescapable, and the physical decline that comes with age is unavoidable. The image of the "flower" symbolizes youth and beauty, fragile and fleeting, destined to wilt and die.

3. The Struggle Against Time

Despite the recognition of time's unstoppable nature, the sonnet reflects a deep desire to fight back against time's erosion of beauty and life. Shakespeare seeks to find a way to preserve what is precious and fragile. However, the sonnet presents this struggle as seemingly hopeless. Beauty has no tangible defense against time's "rage," and nothing physical can halt the process of decay.

4. The Immortalizing Power of Art and Poetry

One of the key turning points in the sonnet is the poet's reflection on how beauty might be saved from time's destructive effects. While physical beauty will fade, Shakespeare suggests that the written word—poetry—can serve as a form of resistance against the decay caused by time. By recording beauty in poetry, the speaker hopes to preserve it for future generations. Shakespeare asserts that only through the "miracle" of poetry can beauty and love be immortalized, implying that art is timeless and may serve as a bulwark against mortality.

5. Beauty and Its Ephemeral Nature

Throughout *Sonnet 65*, beauty is presented as something fragile and temporary, constantly under threat from time. Shakespeare contrasts the delicate nature of beauty with the immense, unyielding power of time. The metaphor of beauty being as weak as a flower suggests that, no matter how lovely, it cannot escape time's inevitable decay. The sonnet, therefore, captures the tension between the appreciation of beauty and the sorrow that it must eventually fade.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- i. What is the main theme of *Sonnet 65*?
- ii. How does Shakespeare portray the concept of time in *Sonnet 65*?
- iii. What literary devices are used in *Sonnet 65*?
- iv. How does the sonnet address the idea of beauty?
- v. What is the significance of the phrase "Time's scythe" in *Sonnet 65*?
- vi. What emotions does the speaker express in *Sonnet 65*?

4.6 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Critically, *Sonnet 65* reflects a deep philosophical engagement with the tension between time, beauty, and mortality. The poem's structure, language, and imagery work together to evoke a sense of inevitability while also hinting at the power of human creativity to outlast the physical decay of life. Shakespeare's ability to transform personal musings on love and beauty into universal questions about the human condition gives this sonnet its lasting power and relevance. In conclusion, *Sonnet 65* is a masterful reflection on the ephemeral nature of beauty and life, and the eternal power of art to defy time's destructive force. It captures the complex emotions of fear, despair, and hope in the face of mortality, making it one of Shakespeare's most thought-provoking and memorable sonnets.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In summary, *Sonnet 65* reflects Shakespeare's complex and thoughtful

exploration of time's inevitable conquest over all things, including beauty and life. It conveys an emotional struggle against time's power, while simultaneously highlighting the potential of art and poetry as a means to preserve that which would otherwise be lost. The sonnet encapsulates both the tragedy of human mortality and the hope that creativity can offer a form of immortality.

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- i. The main theme of *Sonnet 65* is the destructive power of time and its effects on beauty and love.
- ii. Shakespeare portrays time as a relentless force that ultimately erodes beauty and life, highlighting its inevitable progression.
- iii. Literary devices in *Sonnet 65* include metaphors, personification, and imagery, which enhance the emotional depth of the poem.
- iv. The sonnet suggests that beauty is vulnerable to the ravages of time, indicating that even the most beautiful things cannot escape decay.
- v. The phrase "Time's scythe" symbolizes the inevitability of death and the destructive nature of time as it cuts down all beauty.
- vi. The speaker expresses a sense of despair and frustration over the transient nature of beauty and the inevitability of aging.

4.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the theme of time in *Sonnet 65*. How does Shakespeare use imagery and metaphor to illustrate the destructive power of time on beauty? Discuss how this theme reflects broader concerns in Shakespeare's sonnets about mortality and the passage of time.
2. Examine the use of literary devices in *Sonnet 65*. How does Shakespeare employ techniques such as alliteration, enjambment, and personification to enhance the emotional impact of the poem? Provide specific examples from the text to support your analysis.
3. Discuss the relationship between beauty and mortality in *Sonnet 65*. How does the speaker's perspective on beauty evolve throughout the poem, and what conclusions does he ultimately draw about the permanence or impermanence of beauty in relation to love and memory?
4. Evaluate the structure and form of *Sonnet 65*. How does the traditional Shakespearean sonnet format contribute to the poem's themes and overall impact? Consider the significance of the rhyme scheme and the volta (turn) within the context of the poem.
5. Explore the emotional depth of *Sonnet 65*. What feelings does the speaker express regarding the inevitability of aging and loss? How do these emotions resonate with contemporary audiences, and what universal truths about human experience does Shakespeare convey through this sonnet?

UNIT 5

SONNET 116

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Learning Objectives

5.3 Sonnet 65

5.4 Analysis of the poem

5.5 Themes of the poem

5.6 Critical Appreciation

5.7 Let Us Sum Up

5.8 References

5.9 Further reading

5.10 Answers to Check your Progress

5.11 Model Questions

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Sonnet 116 focuses on the enduring quality of love, *Sonnet 65* presents a contrasting perspective by addressing the fragility of beauty and the relentless march of time. In *Sonnet 65*, Shakespeare grapples with the inevitable decay that beauty faces due to the ravages of time, questioning how love can withstand such deterioration. Both sonnets, despite their differing focuses, ultimately converge on the themes of love and time. *Sonnet 116* posits that true love remains unchanged even as beauty fades, while *Sonnet 65* reveals the challenges love faces against the backdrop of mortality and impermanence. Together, they create a rich dialogue on the complexities of love, emphasizing both its resilience and its vulnerability in the face of time's relentless passage.

5.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will be able to learn about :

- Understand the central theme of true love and its constancy in Sonnet 116.
- Recognize the use of metaphors and imagery employed by Shakespeare to illustrate his ideas about love.
- Examine the structure of the sonnet and how it contributes to the overall meaning.
- Discuss the historical and cultural context in which Shakespeare wrote this sonnet.
- Critically evaluate the definitions of love presented in the sonnet and their relevance to contemporary understandings of love.

5.3 SONNET 116

The text:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments.

Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wand'ring bark,

Whose worth's unknown,

although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool,

though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me prov'd,

I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.



5.4 ANALYSIS OF THE POEM :

Despite the confessional tone in this sonnet, there is no direct reference to the youth as we find in Sonnet 30 and Sonnet 65. The general context, however, makes it clear that the poet's temporary alienation refers to the youth's inconstancy and betrayal, not the poet's, although coming as it does on the heels of the previous sonnet, the poet may be trying to convince himself again that "Now" he loves the youth "best." Sonnet 116, then, seems a meditative attempt to define love, independent of reciprocity, fidelity, and eternal beauty: "Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks / Within his bending sickle's compass come." After all his uncertainties and apologies, Sonnet 116 leaves little doubt that the poet is in love with love.

The sonnet begins without the poet's apparent acknowledgment of the compelling quality of the emotional union of "true minds". As Helen Vendler has observed, "This

famous almost 'impersonal' sonnet on the marriage of true minds has usually been read as a definition of true love. "The poetic language leaves the sort of love described somewhat indeterminate; "The 'marriage of true minds' like the 'power to hurt' is troublesomely vague open to a variety of interpretations." Interpretations include the potential for religious imagery and the love being for God, "Lines one and two echo the Anglican marriage service from the Book of Common Prayer." The concept of the marriage of true minds is thought to be a highly Christian; according to Erne, "The mental picture thus called up in our minds of the bride and bridegroom standing up front in a church is even reinforced by the insistence on the word alter/altar in the following line. "The couplet of Sonnet 116 Shakespeare went about explaining in the inverse. He says the opposite of what it would be natural to say about love. For instance, instead of writing something to the effect of 'I have written and men have loved', according to Nelson, Shakespeare chose to write, "I never writ, nor no man ever loved. "By restating his authority as poet and moral watch almost in a sacramental manner on the theme of love, by the use of a paradox, Shakespeare rejects that he may be wrong in stating that true love is immortal: the fact that he has indeed written a lot to the point of having reached sonnet 116 on the theme of love and acquired fame for that is self evident that the opposite cannot be true, that is: what he says cannot be an error Men too have indeed loved as love is ingrained in poetry and only lyric poets can testify of men's faculty of experiencing true love.

5.5 THEMES OF THE POEM

Sonnet 116, often referred to as "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," is one of Shakespeare's most celebrated poems, encapsulating profound themes about love. Here are the key themes elaborately discussed:

1. True Love vs. Idealized Love

- **Constancy:** The sonnet emphasizes that true love is unchanging and constant,

regardless of external circumstances. Shakespeare asserts that if love can change or falter, then it is not true love. He distinguishes between fleeting infatuations and the deeper, enduring connection that characterizes genuine affection.

- **Definition of True Love:** Shakespeare offers a definition of true love that resists the trials of time and circumstance, suggesting that true love remains steadfast even in adversity.

2. The Nature of Time

- **Timelessness of Love:** Time is portrayed as a force that cannot diminish true love. Shakespeare argues that while time may affect physical beauty and life, it cannot alter the essence of true love. The speaker asserts that love is not subject to time; instead, it transcends the limitations of temporal existence.
- **Immutability:** The use of the metaphor of a guiding star further illustrates that true love serves as a steadfast reference point, remaining reliable regardless of life's changes.

3. Love as a Guiding Principle

- **Stability and Guidance:** Shakespeare compares true love to a beacon that guides the ship of life. This imagery suggests that love provides direction and stability in the tumultuous sea of existence, reinforcing the idea that love is not only a feeling but also a guiding principle in life.
- **Resilience:** The sonnet conveys that genuine love is resilient against challenges and trials, making it a source of strength for individuals facing hardships.

4. Rejection of False Love

- **Critique of Conditional Love:** Throughout the sonnet, Shakespeare critiques any form of love that is conditional or transient. He dismisses relationships that lack commitment and resilience, advocating for a more profound and unwavering connection.
- **Authenticity:** The poet's insistence on the true nature of love emphasizes the importance of authenticity in relationships, suggesting that superficial or temporary

affections are not worthy of being called love.

5. Philosophical Exploration of Love

- **Love as a Universal Truth:** Sonnet 116 invites readers to contemplate love not just as a personal experience but as a universal truth that transcends time, culture, and personal circumstances. The exploration of love as an ideal resonates with the philosophical inquiries into the nature of human relationships and the pursuit of happiness.
- **Reflection on Human Experience:** Through the lens of love, the sonnet reflects on broader human experiences, including vulnerability, desire, and the longing for connection, thus inviting readers to reflect on their own understandings of love.

In essence, Sonnet 116 encapsulates Shakespeare's profound understanding of love, offering insights into its constancy, resilience, and transformative power. Through its exploration of these themes, the sonnet remains a timeless reflection on the nature of true love, inviting readers to ponder its significance in their own lives.

✓ *CHECK YOUR PROGRESS*

- What is the main theme of Sonnet 116?**
- How does Shakespeare describe true love in the sonnet?**
- What metaphor does Shakespeare use to illustrate love's steadfastness?**
- What does the poet assert about love's endurance against time?**
- What is the significance of the final couplet in Sonnet 116?**

5.6 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

William Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, often celebrated as one of the most profound and eloquent explorations of love in English literature, delves into the nature of true love. The poem opens with a resolute declaration: "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments." This opening line establishes the tone of unwavering certainty,

positioning love as a noble and enduring force that transcends obstacles. The phrase "true minds" suggests that love is grounded in mutual understanding and intellectual connection, rather than mere physical attraction.

Throughout the sonnet, Shakespeare employs rich metaphors and vivid imagery to articulate the characteristics of genuine love. The central metaphor of love as a "star" that guides lost ships emphasizes its constancy and reliability. This imagery portrays love as a beacon that provides direction and stability, illustrating that true love remains steadfast amidst life's tumult and challenges.

The structure of Sonnet 116 follows the traditional Shakespearean form, consisting of 14 lines with a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCDEFEFGG. This formal structure enhances the poem's themes by providing a sense of order and balance, reflecting the steadfastness of true love. The volta, or turn, occurs in the concluding couplet, where Shakespeare challenges any counterarguments: "If this be error and upon me proved, / I never writ, nor no man ever loved." This assertion reinforces the poet's conviction that true love is an undeniable truth, asserting its existence against any doubts or contradictions.

Another notable aspect of the sonnet is its philosophical depth. Shakespeare elevates love beyond a mere emotional experience, presenting it as an ideal that encompasses truth, loyalty, and permanence. By doing so, he invites readers to consider the broader implications of love in human existence, positioning it as a guiding principle that shapes relationships and personal identities.

The sonnet's language is characterized by clarity and precision, yet it also carries an emotional weight that resonates with readers. The use of the imperative voice, particularly in the opening lines, conveys urgency and passion, compelling readers to engage with the text on a personal level. This immediacy is further enhanced by the poem's rhythmic quality, which flows effortlessly, creating a sense of musicality that underscores its themes.

In conclusion, Sonnet 116 is a masterful exploration of love, combining eloquent

language, striking imagery, and a philosophical perspective that continues to resonate with readers across time. Its timeless portrayal of true love as a steadfast, guiding force solidifies Shakespeare's status as a preeminent voice in the canon of English literature. The sonnet challenges us to reflect on our own experiences and understandings of love, inviting us to aspire to the ideals it presents.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

Sonnet 116, often regarded as one of Shakespeare's most famous poems about love, defines true love as an unwavering and constant force. The poem begins with a declaration that true love does not recognize obstacles or impediments. Shakespeare uses metaphors to illustrate love's steadfastness, comparing it to a guiding star that remains constant amidst life's storms. The speaker emphasizes that love is not subject to the ravages of time or changing circumstances; it endures and remains unchanging. In the concluding couplet, the poet asserts that if his definition of love is proven wrong, then he has never written and no one has ever truly loved. Ultimately, the sonnet presents an idealistic view of love, highlighting its permanence and resilience against the trials of life.

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5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a) The main theme is the definition of true love, emphasizing its constancy and unwavering nature.
- b) Shakespeare describes true love as an eternal and unchanging force, unaffected by time or obstacles.
- c) He uses the metaphor of a guiding star to illustrate love's unwavering guidance amidst life's challenges.
- d) The poet asserts that true love remains constant and does not fade or diminish with the passage of time.
- e) The final couplet signifies that if his definition of love is proven incorrect, then he has never written anything and no one has ever loved, reinforcing the truth of his definition.

5.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the significance of the metaphor of a "guiding star" in Sonnet 116. How does this metaphor enhance the understanding of true love as portrayed by Shakespeare?

2. Analyze the structure of Sonnet 116, including its rhyme scheme and meter. How do these elements contribute to the poem's overall meaning and emotional impact?
3. Examine how Shakespeare contrasts true love with other forms of love in Sonnet 116. What qualities does he attribute to true love, and how do these qualities differentiate it from superficial or temporary affections?
4. Explore the implications of the poet's assertion that true love remains constant "even to the edge of doom." What does this reveal about Shakespeare's views on the permanence and resilience of love in the face of challenges?
5. Reflect on the concluding couplet of Sonnet 116. How does this couplet serve to reinforce the poet's arguments about the nature of love, and what challenges does it pose to the reader regarding the definition of true love?

UNIT 6.1 JOHN DONNE : THE GOOD MORROW

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Learning Objectives
- 6.3 Metaphysical Poetry
- 6.4 Metaphysical Conceit
- 6.5 About the Author
- 6.6 The Good Morrow
- 6.7 Analysis
- 6.8 Themes
- 6.9 Critical appreciation
- 6.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.11 References
- 6.12 Further reading
- 6.13 Answers to Check your Progress
- 6.14 Model Question

6.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne's poem *The Good Morrow* marks a significant contribution to metaphysical poetry, characterized by its intricate language and profound exploration of love. Emerging after the structured and emotive sonnets of **William Shakespeare**, Donne's work invites a deeper philosophical inquiry into the nature of intimacy and the self. While Shakespeare often depicts love through personal loss and longing, Donne's portrayal is more about the transformative power of love, positioning it as a spiritual and unifying force.

6.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the characteristics of metaphysical poetry in Donne's work.
- Examine the use of metaphysical conceit and its impact on the poem's themes.
- Explore the central themes of love and identity in *The Good Morrow*.
- Conduct a critical appreciation of Donne's style and its significance in the context of 17th-century poetry.

6.3 METAPHYSICAL POETRY

What is metaphysical poetry?

The word 'metaphysical' applies in an obvious sense to Donne's poetry insofar as he regularly speaks of the world of souls and spirits—the world beyond the physical. But more importantly, the term metaphysical poetry alludes to the concept of metaphysical conceit/ wit which is an extended metaphor that makes an outstretched comparison between a person's spiritual faculties and a physical object in the world. Drawing metaphors from distinct, tangible objects and contemporary forms of knowledge like cartography, lends to Donne's poetry a certain newness even as his subject remains conventional. Stock Petrarchan images of contemporary sonneteers are replaced by fresh metaphors and images which really betoken new ways of thinking and imagination. Metaphysical conceit does bear a certain philosophical weight in its practice. If love animates the length and breadth of the mortal and immortal world, it is only natural that evidence of love be found and deduced from a broad range of phenomena. In a poet like

Donne, this conceit becomes the lover's way of inhabiting his mortal world. The images that are used as metaphors have an internal, a more permanent life.

The form of Donne's poetry is modelled on actual speech, with frequent use of give- and-take arguments between lovers, friends, or between man and God, or within oneself. His poems also make use of irony and a cynical tone that capture the heterogenous nature of human relationships. He also makes frequent references to religious experiences, and plays with language through puns and paradoxes. These formal elements will be explored further in the close reading of select poems.

6.4 METAPHYSICAL CONCEIT

Metaphysical conceit is a distinctive and central element of metaphysical poetry, characterized by its use of elaborate and often surprising comparisons that draw connections between seemingly unrelated ideas or objects. This concept serves to deepen the exploration of complex themes such as love, spirituality, and existence, making it a hallmark of poets like John Donne, George Herbert, and others from the 17th century.

Key Characteristics of Metaphysical Conceit

1. **Unexpected Comparisons:** Metaphysical conceits often present startling or unconventional analogies. For instance, Donne might compare a lover's eyes to the sun and a compass, suggesting both beauty and guidance. This creative juxtaposition challenges readers to see familiar emotions in a new light.
2. **Intellectual Engagement:** These conceits require active engagement from the reader, as they often demand careful thought to unravel the deeper meanings behind the comparisons. This intellectual stimulation aligns with the metaphysical poets' goal of exploring profound ideas about love, life, and faith.
3. **Emotional Depth:** By linking disparate elements, metaphysical conceits enrich the emotional landscape of the poem. They allow poets to convey complex feelings that go beyond surface-level sentiments, capturing the nuances of human experience.
4. **Spiritual and Philosophical Inquiry:** Many metaphysical conceits explore themes of spirituality and the nature of existence. By connecting physical realities with abstract

concepts, poets invite readers to reflect on larger questions about the divine, the soul, and the interconnectedness of all things.

Significance of Metaphysical Conceit

Metaphysical conceits distinguish this genre of poetry from others by merging intellectual rigor with emotional and spiritual exploration. They:

- **Challenge Conventional Thinking:** By juxtaposing the mundane with the profound, metaphysical conceits prompt readers to reconsider established norms and assumptions about love, existence, and relationships.
- **Foster Deeper Connections:** The surprising analogies can resonate on multiple levels, allowing for varied interpretations that connect with readers' own experiences and insights.
- **Enhance Thematic Complexity:** Conceits enrich the thematic tapestry of the poem, allowing poets to tackle intricate subjects such as love, mortality, and divine intervention in nuanced ways.

In essence, metaphysical conceit is a defining feature of metaphysical poetry, transforming simple expressions of emotion into intricate explorations of thought and feeling. Through unexpected comparisons, these conceits enrich the reader's understanding of complex themes, embodying the intellectual and emotional depth that characterizes this unique poetic form. By engaging both the mind and the heart, metaphysical conceits ultimately elevate poetry to a space where profound truths about human existence can be explored and understood.

6.5 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Donne (1572-1631) was born and brought up a Roman Catholic, and though he later argued himself into the Anglican position and ended his life as Dean of St. Paul's, his training as a Catholic in an age of religious polemic, together with the scholastic element that was still part of the university education of his day, helped to determine the set of his mind. In English literary studies, Donne is most visibly associated with the tradition of metaphysical poetry. The term metaphysical poets was first used for John Donne by John Dryden in the text "Discourse Concerning Satire" (1693) wherein he

wrote that Donne's poetry "affects the metaphysics". In Dryden's conceptualization, metaphysics meant the use of the terminology and arcane arguments of medieval philosophers. Another century later, Samuel Johnson coined the term "metaphysical poets" and clubbed Donne together with contemporaries Abraham Cowley and John Cleveland, as a movement that was marked with dense intellectual articulation, and which lacked artistic integrity. Most importantly, the metaphysical poets, including Donne, were against the lyricism of contemporary Elizabethan poets and their focus on an idealized view of human nature and of sexual love.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

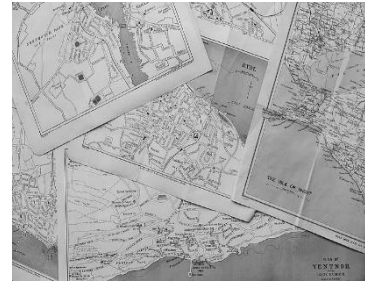
- a. What religious background did John Donne have during his upbringing?
- b. What role did John Donne eventually hold in the Anglican Church?
- c. Who first used the term "metaphysical poets" to describe John Donne's work?
- d. What does the term "metaphysical conceit" refer to in Donne's poetry?
- e. What literary device is frequently used in Donne's poetry to model actual speech?

6.6 THE GOOD MORROW

The text:

*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 other,
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.

6.7 ANALYSIS:

The Good-Morrow was published in his 1633 collection *Songs and Sonnets*. Written while Donne was a student at Lincoln's Inn, the poem is one of his earliest works and is thematically considered to be the "first" work in *Songs and Sonnets*. Although referred to as a sonnet, the work does not follow the most common rhyming scheme of such works—a 14-line poem, consisting of an eight-line stanza followed by a six-line conclusion—but is instead 21 lines long, divided into three stanzas. The poem describes the experience of being in love as a new morning or waking up to a new life. This sonnet is a good example of Donne's interpretation of courtly love, wherein both lovers assume mutually significant positions. It arrives at this inextricable mutuality in cartographic

terms-whereby the flat maps which only represent one half of the earth in a sphere-are better in the coming together of the two lovers as two perfect hemispheres of a single sphere. The two hemispheres begin to look like as a single sphere, each partaking of the other hemisphere in its newly recognized completeness.

The title of the poem hints that the circumstance of the poem, is one of the morning after a night of love-making. The lover speaks in terms of the soul- 'good morrow to our waking souls'-while the bodies seem to have consummated sexually. The sexual experience does form the core of this mutuality. However, the act of 'knowing' of the self and "becoming one', apparently, happens post- requital. In Donne, this space is often constructed in the awkward gap that follows sex - this gap otherwise being filled by the discourse of guilt in Christian discourse. As the lovers appear in the poem they are merely looking at each other's faces wondering what they did 'till they loved.

The fixed gaze of the each in the other's eye becomes for the lovers a stratagem of resistance against their own mortality. Mortality becomes merely a fact of the body against the new unity that they 'wake upto' - their 'waking souls' holding the promise of permanence: The experience of reciprocation is reinforced as indispensable to love, in emphasising the equality of the degree of reciprocation - 'so alike'. The 'equal mutuality' is for the two lovers to judge by the intensity and absorption of their experience.

6.8 THEMES

The Good Morrow explores several interwoven themes that contribute to its richness:

1. **Love and Unity:** The poem asserts that true love creates a unique bond that unites individuals, fostering a sense of completeness. The idea that their love forms a world of its own emphasizes that genuine connection goes beyond physical attraction. This

theme resonates with the concept of love as a transformative force that shapes identities and realities.

2. **Awakening and Discovery:** The notion of awakening is central to the poem. The speaker reflects on the idea that love brings a new understanding of self and the world. This awakening signifies a move from ignorance to enlightenment, suggesting that love reveals deeper truths about existence. The poem celebrates the journey from a mundane life to one filled with purpose and insight.
3. **Time and Eternity:** Donne contrasts the fleeting nature of physical beauty with the eternal quality of love. The speaker argues that while physical attributes may fade, the emotional and spiritual connections fostered by love endure. This exploration of time highlights the idea that true love transcends temporal constraints, reinforcing the notion of an everlasting bond.
4. **Identity and Selfhood:** The merging of identities through love raises questions about individuality and selfhood. The poem suggests that in a deep romantic relationship, the boundaries between self and other blur, leading to a shared identity that enriches both partners. This theme encourages readers to reflect on how love influences personal growth and self-discovery.

6.9 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The Good Morrow stands out for its innovative use of language and structure. Donne's adept manipulation of form, coupled with rich imagery, creates a vivid emotional landscape. The poem's conversational tone invites readers into an intimate dialogue, making the profound themes more accessible. Moreover, the rhythmic flow of the poem enhances its lyrical quality, ensuring that the exploration of love remains both engaging and thought-provoking. In the context of 17th-century poetry, Donne's work challenges the romantic conventions of his predecessors, establishing a new paradigm that emphasizes intellect alongside emotion.

6.10 LET US SUM UP

In summary, *The Good Morrow* serves as a pivotal exploration of love within the realm of metaphysical poetry, drawing contrasts with the more emotive sonnets of Shakespeare. Through intricate metaphysical conceits and rich thematic explorations,

Donne offers a fresh perspective on intimacy, unity, and the transformative power of love. This poem not only deepens our understanding of human relationships but also solidifies Donne's place as a significant figure in the evolution of English poetry.

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6.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. John Donne was brought up as a Roman Catholic.

- b. John Donne was brought up as a Roman Catholic.
- c. Samuel Johnson coined the term "metaphysical poets" to describe John Donne's work.
- d. The term "metaphysical conceit" refers to an extended metaphor that makes an outstretched comparison between a person's spiritual faculties and a physical object in the world.
- e. Donne's poetry frequently uses give-and-take arguments between lovers, friends, or between man and God, or within oneself.

6.14 MODELQUESTIONS

1. How does John Donne employ metaphysical conceits in *The Good Morrow* to deepen the poem's exploration of love and connection?
2. What themes of love and identity are present in *The Good Morrow*, and how does Donne portray the relationship between the lovers as both personal and universal?
3. In what ways do John Donne's *The Good Morrow* and William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 30* differ in their treatment of the emotional complexities of love?
4. How is the concept of time represented in *The Good Morrow*, and what is Donne's perspective on the relationship between love and the passage of time?
5. How has the critical reception of John Donne's work, particularly *The Good Morrow*, evolved over time within the context of metaphysical poetry?

UNIT 7 JOHN DONNE : A VALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Learning Objectives

7.3 Valediction Forbidding Mourning

7.4 Analysis

7.5 Themes

7.6 Critical appreciation

7.7 Let Us Sum Up

7.8 References

7.9 Further reading

7.10 Answers to Check your Progress

7.11 Model Question

7.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne's *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* continues the exploration of love that began in *The Good Morrow*. While *The Good Morrow* emphasizes the intimate awakening and unity experienced in love, *A Valediction* addresses the challenges posed by physical separation. Donne eloquently argues that true love can endure distance and separation without diminishing its strength. This poem employs metaphysical conceits to illustrate the idea that love transcends physical presence, echoing the spiritual connection emphasized in his earlier work.

7.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the use of metaphysical conceits in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*.
- Examine the themes of love, separation, and spiritual connection.
- Explore the poem's structure and its contribution to the overall meaning.
- Conduct a critical appreciation of Donne's style and thematic concerns.

7.3 A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING

The text:

*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 th' 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 center 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 th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.*

7.4 ANALYSIS:

This poem was written for Donne's wife, Anne, in either 1611 or 1612. It was penned before he left on a trip to Europe. It was not published until after his death,

appearing in the collection *Songs and Sonnets*. Donne has also structured this piece with a consistent pattern of rhyme, following the scheme of *abab*. In regards to meter, Donne chose to use iambic tetrameter. This means that each line contains four sets of two beats. Generally, the first of these is unstressed, and the second is stressed. The poem begins with the speaker describing the death of a virtuous man. He goes to the afterlife peacefully, so much so that his friends are not sure if he is dead or not. Donne compares this kind of peaceful parting to the way he and his wife will separate. Rather than throwing an emotional fit, as a shallow couple would, they “melt” from one another.

This poem is noted for Donne’s use of a metaphysical conceit. Donne consoles the beloved departure - forbidding her from mourning his using an otherwise banal, rugged object, a pair of compasses. This, an otherwise un-love-like object, transmutes into a perfect metaphor for their parting, and the state of their love. Couldn't the lover simply be cracking a joke, to dispel the morose mood at the parting? Such a possibility is surely tenable, but what lends to this joke gravity is its persistence even after the stanzaic space of the four lines is exhausted. The lover pursues the image, and the subsequent stanzas see an elaborate and logically infallible maturation of the metaphor. While talking about the compass in the second stanza mentioned above, the lover is actually explaining their refined love to the beloved. The casuistry of the lines is impeccable and what may have been a joke, does make for intuition of a certain degree of 'sincerity'.

7.5 THEMES

1. **Love and Spirituality:** Donne presents love as a profound spiritual bond that remains unbroken despite physical separation. The poem suggests that true love is not merely dependent on physical presence but rather thrives on an emotional and intellectual connection.
2. **Separation and Resilience:** The poem addresses the inevitability of separation, urging the speaker's beloved not to mourn their parting. Donne reassures that their love is strong enough to withstand distance, portraying separation as an opportunity for growth rather than a loss.

3. **Metaphysical Conceits:** Donne uses metaphysical conceits, such as comparing their love to a compass, to illustrate the idea that love is both anchored and expansive. This imagery emphasizes the balance between individuality and unity in a loving relationship.
4. **Transcendence of Physicality:** The poem argues that the true essence of love lies beyond the physical realm. Donne suggests that spiritual love is eternal and can remain untainted by the limitations of the physical world.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a) **What is the central theme of the poem?**
- b) **What literary device is predominantly used in the poem?**
- c) **How does the speaker compare the lovers' souls in the poem?**
- d) **What metaphor does Donne use to describe the lovers' separation?**
- e) **What is the tone of the poem?**
- f) **Why does the speaker believe that the lovers should not mourn their separation?**
- g) **Which figure of speech does Donne use to describe the lovers as "stiff twin compasses"?**
- h) **What is the significance of the title "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"?**
- i) **What does the speaker say about earthly love compared to spiritual love?**
- j) **How does the poem end?**

7.6 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning exemplifies Donne's mastery of metaphysical poetry. The poem's intricate structure, with its rhythmic cadences and carefully chosen diction, creates a meditative quality that reflects the speaker's emotional depth. The use of metaphysical conceits adds layers of meaning, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of love and separation. Donne's ability to convey profound philosophical ideas through intimate imagery sets this poem apart as a quintessential example of metaphysical poetry.

7.7 LET US SUM UP

In summary, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* builds upon the themes explored in *The Good Morrow*, emphasizing the strength and resilience of love in the face

of physical separation. Through the use of metaphysical conceits and thoughtful imagery, Donne articulates a vision of love that transcends time and space, inviting readers to appreciate the spiritual dimensions of intimate relationships.

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7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a) The central theme of the poem is the enduring nature of spiritual love, even when lovers are physically separated.
- b) The predominant literary device is the extended metaphor (conceit).
- c) The speaker compares the lovers' souls to a pair of compasses, emphasizing their connection and unity even when apart.

- d) Donne uses the metaphor of compasses to describe the lovers' separation, where one foot stays fixed while the other moves around.
- e) The tone of the poem is calm and reassuring, urging quiet acceptance of their separation.
- f) The speaker believes that the lovers should not mourn because their love is spiritual and transcendent, unaffected by physical distance.
- g) The figure of speech used is a metaphor—comparing the lovers to a pair of compasses.
- h) The title signifies a farewell that forbids mourning, as the speaker believes their love transcends physical parting.
- i) The speaker contrasts earthly love, which is based on physical presence, with spiritual love, which is unbreakable even in separation.
- j) The poem ends by reinforcing the idea that their love will stay connected, like the two legs of a compass, always circling back to each other.

7.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. How does John Donne utilize metaphysical conceits in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* to convey the enduring nature of love despite physical separation?
2. Compare and contrast the treatment of love and separation in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* and *The Good Morrow*. How do the poems reflect different aspects of romantic relationships?
3. Discuss the theme of resilience in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*. How does Donne portray separation as an opportunity for emotional growth?
4. Analyze the structure and form of *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*. How do these elements contribute to the poem's overall meaning and impact?
5. Evaluate the significance of spiritual love in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*. How does Donne's perspective challenge traditional notions of love and intimacy?

**UNIT 8 JOHN MILTON : PARADISE LOST (BOOK 1)
(LINES 1-150) PART I**

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Learning Objective

8.3 John Milton (1608-1674)

8.4 Paradise Lost

8.5 Themes

8.6 Importance of the title

8.7 Connection with the Bible

8.8 Let us sum up

8.9 References

8.10 Further Reading

8.11 Answer to check your progress

8.12 Model Questions

8.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne and John Milton, though different in style, share a concern with religious themes and metaphysical exploration. In Donne's poems, particularly in his Holy Sonnets, he grapples with the complexities of faith, divine judgment, and human frailty—much like Milton does in *Paradise Lost*. Both poets explore humanity's relationship with God, the consequences of sin, and the tension between divine love and judgment. Donne's metaphysical poetry often reflects personal, emotional turmoil regarding salvation and grace, while Milton's epic takes a broader, cosmic view of humanity's fall and potential redemption.

Paradise Lost is an epic poem written by John Milton and first published in 1667. The poem consists of twelve books and explores the biblical story of the Fall of Man, focusing on the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the temptation by Satan, and their eventual expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It is a profound meditation on themes of free will, obedience, sin, redemption, and the nature of human suffering. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is written in blank verse and showcases his vast intellectual range, blending classical and Christian ideas.

8.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading unit 8 you will be able to:

- Learn about the poet, Milton and understand his style
- Discuss and appreciate *Paradise Lost*
- Analyse his style of writing
- To get acquainted with Milton's puritanical bend of mind

8.3 JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

John Milton (9 December 1608 – 8 November 1674) was an English poet and intellectual. His 1667 epic poem *Paradise Lost*, written in blank verse and including over ten chapters, was written in a time of immense religious flux and political upheaval. It addressed the fall of man, including the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and God's expulsion of them from the 'Garden of Eden'. *Paradise Lost* elevated Milton's reputation as one of history's greatest poets. He also served as a civil servant for

the Commonwealth of England under its Council of State and later under Oliver Cromwell.

Milton is described as the "greatest English author" by biographer William Hayley, and he remains generally regarded "as one of the preeminent writers in the English language", though critical reception has oscillated in the centuries since his death, often on account of his republicanism. Samuel Johnson praised *Paradise Lost* as "a poem which ... with respect to design may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind", though he (a Tory) described Milton's politics as those of an "acrimonious and surly republican". Milton was revered by poets such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Thomas Hardy.

Milton's poetry was slow to see the light of day, at least under his name. His first published poem was "On Shakespeare" (1630), anonymously included in the Second Folio edition of William Shakespeare's plays in 1632. An annotated copy of the First Folio has been suggested to contain marginal notes by Milton. Milton collected his work in 1645 *Poems* in the midst of the excitement attending the possibility of establishing a new English government. The anonymous edition of *Comus* was published in 1637, and the publication of *Lycidas* in 1638 in *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago* was signed J. M. Otherwise. The 1645 collection was the only poetry of his to see print until *Paradise lost* appeared in 1667.

8.4 PARADISE LOST

Paradise Lost is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th-century English poet John Milton (1608–1674). The first version, published in 1667, consists of ten books with over ten thousand lines of verse. A second edition followed in 1674, arranged into twelve books (in the manner of Virgil's *Aeneid*) with minor revisions throughout. It is considered to be Milton's masterpiece, and it helped solidify his reputation as one of

the greatest English poets of all time. The poem concerns the biblical story of the fall of man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Milton first published his seminal epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, in 1667. A “Revised and Augmented” version, which is the one read more widely today, was published in 1674, with this following introduction. In it, Milton explains why he has chosen to compose his long poem in English heroic verse without the use of rhyme, following the models of Homer and Virgil. Milton argues that rhyme is particularly unnecessary in longer poems, and that its unquestioned use by his peers, “carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worst than they would have expressed them.” Milton sees an inflexible application of rhyme and meter as in danger of becoming rote and mathematical, and he defends the liberty he found in releasing his poem from rhyme’s limitations.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. What makes *Paradise Lost* an epic poem?

b. What is the writing style that Milton has adopted in this poem?

8.5 THEMES

John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is rich with complex themes that explore theological, philosophical, and human concerns. These themes not only address the cosmic battle between good and evil but also touch on personal and moral questions about obedience, free will, and redemption. Below are some of the most significant themes in *Paradise Lost*, expanded with detailed insights.

1. Free Will and Predestination

Free will is central to *Paradise Lost*. Milton presents a universe where both angels and humans are endowed with free will, giving them the ability to make moral choices. The theme of free will is most evident in the decisions made by Satan, Adam, and Eve. Satan, who chooses to rebel against God out of pride, embodies the misuse of free will. Similarly,

Adam and Eve exercise their free will when they choose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. Milton underscores that free will is essential for genuine love and obedience; without it, obedience would be forced, and love would be meaningless. While Adam and Eve's fall might seem like a tragedy, Milton presents it as part of God's larger plan, where free will plays a crucial role. God foresees the Fall, but He does not predetermine it, making a distinction between foreknowledge and predestination. This reinforces the idea that humans are responsible for their actions, but divine grace offers redemption despite their mistakes.

2. Obedience and Disobedience

The **theme of obedience** is one of the poem's driving forces. The disobedience of Satan, and later Adam and Eve, sets the events of the poem into motion. Satan's rebellion against God, due to his pride and unwillingness to submit to divine authority, leads to his expulsion from Heaven. This act of disobedience represents a cosmic upheaval that extends beyond Satan, affecting the entire created universe. Adam and Eve's disobedience serves as a microcosm of the larger rebellion. By succumbing to temptation, they too violate God's command, leading to their fall from grace. However, Milton contrasts Satan's defiance with Adam's choice to eat the fruit out of love for Eve, introducing a more nuanced look at disobedience. While Adam's fall is still an act of disobedience, it is driven by human emotion, suggesting the complexity of moral decisions in the face of love and temptation. The consequences of disobedience are severe—Adam and Eve lose their innocence, their place in Eden, and bring suffering and death into the world. Milton, however, introduces the possibility of redemption, suggesting that obedience to God can be restored through repentance and divine grace.

3. Good vs. Evil

Milton presents the **struggle between good and evil** as an ongoing battle, not only in the cosmic sense between God and Satan but also within individuals. Satan, as the embodiment of evil, is depicted as a tragic yet villainous figure whose ambition leads him to defy God and seek to corrupt humanity. His character represents a complex portrait of evil—initially charismatic and persuasive, but ultimately destructive and self-serving. The poem contrasts Satan's ambition and pride with the goodness and omnipotence of God. Despite Satan's rebellion and temptation of Adam and Eve, God remains the supreme force of good, and His justice and mercy are emphasized throughout the

narrative. God's plan to send His Son for humanity's redemption demonstrates that good ultimately prevails over evil, even in the face of sin. Milton complicates the simple dichotomy of good and evil by allowing Satan moments of self-awareness, making him a more dynamic and tragic figure. However, Satan's self-destructive choices reaffirm that evil is inherently doomed to fail, no matter how persuasive or attractive it might seem.

4. The Fall and Redemption

The **Fall of Man** is the central event of *Paradise Lost*. Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden leads to their expulsion from paradise, symbolizing the introduction of sin, death, and suffering into the world. This fall is not only a personal tragedy for the first humans but also a cosmic one, as it affects all of humanity. The theme of the Fall explores how disobedience and moral failure lead to loss—of innocence, divine favor, and the ideal state of existence. However, Milton balances the theme of the Fall with the **promise of redemption**. The poem underscores that although the Fall brings suffering and mortality, it also sets the stage for God's greater plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Milton emphasizes that God, in His omniscience, foresaw the Fall and had already prepared the path to redemption. The fall from grace is not final but an opportunity for humans to redeem themselves through repentance and faith. This theme reflects Milton's optimistic view that suffering and sin are part of a divine plan leading toward ultimate reconciliation and eternal salvation.

5. The Nature of Heroism

Milton redefines **heroism** in *Paradise Lost*. Traditional epics, like Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*, depict physical strength, martial prowess, and honor as heroic virtues. Milton, however, presents a more spiritual concept of heroism. While Satan is initially portrayed with some traits of a classical hero—ambition, defiance, and leadership—his heroism is ultimately hollow, as it is based on pride, selfishness, and a refusal to submit to divine authority. In contrast, the true heroism in *Paradise Lost* is moral and spiritual, demonstrated through Adam and Eve's repentance after the Fall. Milton suggests that humility, obedience to God, and the capacity for repentance are the ultimate heroic qualities. The Son of God, who sacrifices Himself for humanity's redemption, represents the highest form of heroism in the poem, as He embodies selflessness and divine grace. Thus, Milton shifts the focus of heroism from physical conquest to spiritual redemption and self-sacrifice.

6. The Role of Reason and Knowledge

Reason and knowledge play a crucial role in the moral landscape of *Paradise Lost*. Milton portrays reason as the guiding force for human beings, designed to help them make informed, moral decisions. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve are in harmony with their reason, which helps them live in accordance with divine will. However, when Eve is tempted by Satan, she is persuaded to value knowledge—specifically the knowledge of good and evil—above obedience. This moment represents the misuse of reason and the desire for knowledge beyond the boundaries set by God. Milton critiques the pursuit of knowledge when it is separated from divine guidance. The desire for knowledge, unchecked by reason and humility, leads to disastrous consequences. Adam and Eve's quest for forbidden knowledge disrupts the natural order, introducing sin into the world. However, Milton also recognizes that knowledge is part of humanity's nature. After the Fall, Adam gains deeper insight into the world and God's plan for redemption, suggesting that true knowledge comes from understanding one's place in God's creation.

7. The Hierarchy and Order of the Universe

Milton's cosmos is structured according to a **divine hierarchy**, where everything has its place. God is at the top of this hierarchy, followed by the angels, with humans below them. This order reflects the divine will and the natural law of the universe. Satan's rebellion represents an attempt to overturn this hierarchy, as he refuses to accept his position beneath God. His fall from Heaven is not just a personal defeat but an attempt to disrupt the divine order of creation. The hierarchical structure extends to Adam and Eve's relationship, where Adam is depicted as the head of the household. Milton's portrayal of hierarchy is not rigidly authoritarian; it is based on mutual respect and love, particularly between Adam and Eve. However, their fall distorts this natural order, resulting in tension, blame, and imbalance. Milton presents the restoration of this order through obedience to God and the acceptance of divine grace.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* weaves together intricate and interrelated themes, exploring the cosmic struggle between good and evil, the complexity of free will, and the moral implications of obedience and disobedience. The poem's exploration of the Fall and redemption presents a deeply theological and philosophical reflection on the nature of sin, grace, and human existence. Through its spiritual and moral lens, *Paradise Lost* offers timeless insights into human nature, moral responsibility, and the hope for salvation.

8.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE TITLE

The title "**Paradise Lost**" carries profound symbolic and thematic significance in John Milton's epic poem, capturing the essence of its central narrative—the Fall of Man and the consequences of disobedience. Let's delve deeper into the multiple layers of meaning embedded in this title.

1. Literal Loss of Eden (The Garden of Paradise)

The most immediate and literal meaning of "Paradise Lost" is the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In biblical tradition, Eden represents an earthly paradise—a place of perfect harmony where humans live in communion with God. By disobeying God's command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve lose their right to live in this divine space. Their exile signifies not only the physical loss of this idyllic location but also the spiritual separation from God, which has enormous implications for all of humanity. Milton's poem emphasizes that once paradise is lost, it cannot be regained in its original form. Instead, humankind must strive for a different kind of redemption, one that involves suffering, repentance, and, ultimately, the hope of a spiritual paradise through salvation.

2. Paradise as Innocence and Spiritual Purity

The title also signifies the **loss of innocence and spiritual purity**. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve exist in a state of childlike innocence, unaware of evil, sin, or death. Their act of disobedience introduces sin into the world, forever altering their relationship with each other, with nature, and with God. They gain knowledge of good and evil, but this knowledge comes at a steep price: guilt, shame, and mortality. Thus, "Paradise Lost" symbolizes not only the loss of a physical space but the internal loss of an innocent state of being. After the Fall, Adam and Eve are burdened with the knowledge of their transgression, and their pure relationship with both God and the natural world is shattered.

3. Moral and Existential Loss

Milton extends the meaning of the title to encompass the **moral and existential loss** suffered by all of humanity as a result of Adam and Eve's actions. Their fall from grace introduces sin, suffering, and death into the world, affecting every generation that follows.

In this sense, "paradise" represents an ideal moral state where humans lived in harmony with divine will, a state that is now irretrievably lost. Milton explores this loss through the poem's broader themes of disobedience, temptation, and free will. The loss of paradise reflects humanity's tragic condition: we are born into a fallen world, inherently sinful and subject to suffering. The poem also questions how humans can find meaning, purpose, and redemption in a postlapsarian world, where the original state of grace has been forfeited.

4. Political and Historical Allegory

Milton's title can also be understood in the context of **political and historical allegory**, particularly when viewed in light of Milton's own life and political beliefs. Milton was a staunch advocate of the English Commonwealth and an opponent of the monarchy. The fall of Adam and Eve can be seen as a metaphor for the political fall of the English nation after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, which Milton saw as a loss of political "paradise"—the collapse of the republic and the return to tyranny under King Charles II. In this allegorical reading, "Paradise Lost" takes on additional resonance as a meditation on the loss of political freedom, idealism, and the hope for a just and godly society. For Milton, the human condition after the Fall reflects the failure of humanity to live up to its potential, both morally and politically.

5. Philosophical Reflections on Free Will and Divine Justice

The title also invites **philosophical reflections** on the relationship between free will, divine justice, and human suffering. Milton's "paradise" is not lost because God is unjust or arbitrary, but because Adam and Eve exercise their free will in a way that leads to disobedience. The loss of paradise is a consequence of their choices. This reflects Milton's attempt to "justify the ways of God to men"—a key purpose of the poem. By emphasizing the role of free will, Milton explores the paradox of human freedom: though humans have the ability to choose, they often choose wrongly, leading to loss and suffering. Yet, this loss is not final; it opens the way for future redemption through Christ's sacrifice. In this sense, "paradise" is also a spiritual state that can be regained, not by returning to the original Garden of Eden, but through the redemptive power of faith and divine grace. The title, therefore, encompasses not just loss, but the potential for salvation.

6. Universal Symbol of Human Fallibility

Finally, the title "Paradise Lost" has come to symbolize a **universal human experience** of loss and longing. It speaks to the broader human condition—our yearning for a state of innocence, perfection, or happiness that has been lost due to our own failings. This could be interpreted in spiritual, moral, or even psychological terms. The title resonates with readers as a powerful symbol of the irreversible loss of something deeply cherished, whether it be spiritual integrity, moral clarity, or an idealized vision of human existence. In this way, Milton's title transcends its specific religious context and becomes a timeless reflection on human vulnerability and the consequences of our choices. The universality of this theme is one of the reasons *Paradise Lost* continues to hold relevance for readers across different historical periods and cultural backgrounds.

The title *Paradise Lost* encapsulates the epic's exploration of humanity's most profound loss—the loss of innocence, divine connection, and moral clarity. It is a rich metaphor for the human condition, reflecting the complexities of free will, disobedience, and the long journey toward redemption. Milton's title evokes not only the tragedy of the Fall but also the possibility of reclaiming a different kind of paradise—one that is achieved through repentance, grace, and divine mercy. Thus, the title is as much about loss as it is about the hope for eventual recovery and spiritual salvation.

✓ CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- c. **What is the subject of Milton's 'Paradise Lost'?**
- d. **Who does Milton invoke at the beginning of 'Paradise Lost' to inspire his poem?**
- e. **Who is the primary antagonist introduced in the early part of 'Paradise Lost'?**
- f. **What does Satan propose to his fellow fallen angels after their defeat in Heaven?**
- g. **What is the name and significance of the great hall constructed by the fallen angels in Hell?**

8.7 CONNECTION WITH THE BIBLE

Milton's *Paradise Lost* draws heavily from the biblical narrative, particularly the Book of Genesis. The story of the Fall, Adam and Eve's temptation, and their expulsion from Eden is derived directly from Genesis chapters 2-3. Milton supplements

this with theological insights from other parts of the Bible, including the prophetic and messianic promises of redemption in the New Testament.

Key biblical connections include:

- **The Creation Story:** Milton elaborates on the creation of the world and humankind, as recounted in Genesis 1-2.
- **The Temptation and Fall:** Satan's temptation of Eve and their subsequent disobedience echoes the biblical account of the serpent in Genesis 3.
- **Redemption through Christ:** Milton presents a vision of future redemption through Christ, linking the Fall to the promise of salvation, as described in Christian theology.
- **The Role of Satan:** Milton expands on the figure of Satan, drawing from the biblical idea of Lucifer's rebellion in Isaiah 14:12-15 and his role as the tempter in the New Testament.

Milton's deep engagement with the Bible allows him to not only retell the Genesis story but also to explore its broader theological and moral implications, framing the narrative within the larger context of Christian belief in sin, grace, and salvation.

8.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt that the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, the poem begins with an invocation to the Muse for inspiration as the poet intends to explore the fall of humanity and the loss of Paradise. The poem shifts to describe Satan and his fallen angels who have been cast out of Heaven into Hell after rebelling against God. Satan, a once glorious angel, now lies in fiery ruin along with his followers. Despite their dire situation, Satan gathers his courage and resolves to seek revenge against God by corrupting God's newest creation: humanity. Satan decides to explore the newly created Earth and find a way to bring about the downfall of Adam and Eve, thus continuing the cosmic battle between good and evil.

8.9 REFERENCES

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8.10 FURTHER READING

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8.11 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Paradise Lost is considered an epic poem due to its grand scope, heroic characters, lofty themes (like the fall of mankind), and its use of elevated language and epic conventions.
- Milton's writing style in Paradise Lost is characterized by its use of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), elaborate syntax, classical allusions, and epic similes. It combines elements of biblical language with classical epic traditions.
- The subject of *Paradise Lost* is humankind's first act of disobedience toward God—Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit—and its consequences.
- Milton invokes the Holy Spirit, which inspired Moses to write Genesis, rather than the classical muses.

- e. Satan is introduced as the primary antagonist, having been cast into Hell after rebelling against God in Heaven.
- f. Satan proposes to gather their forces and consider another attack against God, despite their recent defeat.
- g. The fallen angels construct a great hall called Pandemonium, meaning "all the demons" in Greek, where they convene to hold a council.

8.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What does Satan vow to do after being cast out?
2. With what Literary element does the epic open?
3. What is the central idea of the poem "Paradise Lost"?
4. Analyze Milton's depiction of Satan's character development in the early chapters of "Paradise Lost." How does Satan's defiance and pride contribute to the poem's exploration of themes such as free will, rebellion, and the consequences of sin? Support your analysis with references to Satan's speeches and actions as described in the text.

