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MODULE I: PROSE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)

Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for fighting racial inequality through nonviolence, Martin Luther King (1929 - 1968) was an American pastor, activist, humanitarian, and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's success with non-violent activism in India, King is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia (US) to a Baptist minister and a school teacher, King attended segregated public schools in Georgia and received his B. A. degree in Sociology in 1948 from Morehouse College, Atlanta, a Bachelor of Divinity(B. D.) degree from Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1951 and his Ph.D. degree in 1955 for doctoral studies in systematic theology at Boston University. An academic inquiry concluded in October 1991 proved that portions of his dissertation had been plagiarized. In 1954, he became pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

The famous Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955-56 led by King, following the arrest of Rosa Parks for her refusal to give up her seat to a white man/woman, ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses. King's role in the bus boycott transformed him into a national figure and the best-known spokesman of the civil rights movement.

From then on there was no looking back and he added many more feathers to his cap like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) which he established with fellow activists in 1957, the Birmingham Campaign in 1963 and his renowned 'I have a dream' speech, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, which is regarded as one of the finest speeches in the history of American oratory.

Arrested several times for his participation in civil rights activities, Dr. King received numerous awards and honorary degrees from various colleges and universities in the United States and other foreign countries.

INTRODUCTION

'The Philosophy of Non-violence' was the title of the keynote address given by Martin Luther King Jr. on the opening day of the SNCC (Student Nonviolent

Coordinating Committee) conference that took place in Atlanta from 14 to 16 October 1960. In the talk, he holds up nonviolence as the continuous and persistent search for truthful ends through moral means. He emphasizes that human nature has amazing potential for goodness and concludes the speech by warning the civil right activists against ego struggles and other 'pitfalls'.

SUMMARY

King begins the talk by saying that ever since man came into existence there have been disagreements and clashes. The history of mankind is filled with wars and fights. Nonviolence is upheld by King as a method in these clashes.

The chief philosophy behind nonviolence includes a discussion of both the means and the end. They are interchangeable terms. Both should be noble. He says that it is not enough that the aim of nonviolence struggle is noble. The means and methods undertaken to achieve the noble end should also be noble and good. That is when nonviolent struggle becomes significant because here the means is non violent. There is no bloodshed. This means that nonviolence is against war and communism because both say that end justifies the means. Hence, the aim of nonviolence is to achieve moral ends through moral means.

Another basic philosophy behind nonviolence is the refusal to injure another being. There are two types of injury - external and internal. External includes the physical violence inflicted on another and internal injury includes the mental wounds inflicted through the way we talk, make press releases etc. and even through the way we feel about our enemies. Therefore King advocates love as a means to achieve our noble aims because it is the highest expression of non-injury. By love he means that we should try to remove the evil rather than the evil-doer. Nonviolent struggle should be focused on the evil system and not those who does the evil. They should be saved from doing the evil.

The philosophy of nonviolence calls for both the means and end to be pure. Hypocrisy is not allowed since a group and an individual has the same code of behaviour. Evil is fought with truth and physical force with 'soul-force'. One important point to note is that the nonviolent resistor does not think that he can eliminate all opposition. On the other hand he is trying to bring the fight from the physical violent level to the nonviolent level so that a peaceful negotiation between the opposing parties is possible. Suffering is used by nonviolent resistor as a powerful tool. Nonviolence is not about the physical but the mental and hence it is the evil that will be eliminated.

Another fundamental aspect of nonviolence is the power of suffering. Suffering is a force that can bring great changes- both social and human. Suffering is powerful because it stops the enemy efforts by exposing their violent methods of fighting and lack of morality.

Hence their self confidence is broken and they begin to question their own methods. King believes that human nature has great potential for goodness. He has faith in the human nature.

Nonviolence is not just a philosophy; it is also a method of action. King concludes by listing a few traps of which the nonviolent resistor should be careful of. Unplanned activity is one of them and another is publicity. He warns the resisters against seeking publicity and also not to lose their heads if unwanted publicity finds them. Ego struggle is another trap to be watched for and of course there is the universal trap of being misunderstood by the public when a new method is followed.

GLOSSARY

Conflict situation:	disagreements and clashes have always been part of human history.
Means:	the way/method to achieve something
Ends:	aims/objectives/goals
Convertible:	interchangeable
This automatically sets non-violence against war and communism:	war and communism believes in doing anything to achieve the desired goals.
Relentless:	persistent
Retaliatory violence:	violence as a reaction to something
Soul-force:	spiritual/mental force
Antagonism	enmity/hostility
Antagonist:	enemy/ opponent
Cognizant:	aware
Morale:	self confidence

ANALYSIS

‘The Philosophy of Non-violence’ by Martin Luther King is a speech on an extremely relevant topic as far as the present world is concerned. Keeping in mind that the Indian independence was won mainly through nonviolent struggle and the utter physical violence that the world has gone into in the past few decades, or to be more exact the

violence that had always dominated political and social relationships, the significance of this topic increases manifold.

Philosophy of a subject matter is a discussion of the underlying principles that supports the issue at hand. In this speech some of the basic aspects of nonviolence are discussed as well as the thoughts and ideologies behind the concept of nonviolence.

The basic/fundamental aspects of the philosophy of nonviolence as listed by King are:

- Both the end and the method/means of achieving the end should be noble and pure -- moral end through moral means.
- Avoid injuring another being – both external physical injury and internal injury of the spirit.

Love is the highest form of 'non-injury'.

Eliminate the evil, not the evil-doer.

Same code of behavior for both the group and the individual.

Fight evil with truth and physical force with 'soul-force'.

No illusion of eliminating all clashes. Only aims at nonviolence so there can be peace-talks.

Refusal to cooperate with evil.

Focus on the moral, not the physical. Hence focus on the evil and its eradication.

- Suffering is a powerful tool of resistance. It exposes the violence of the enemy and breaks their self confidence.
- Human nature has amazing potential for goodness.
- Nonviolence is not just a philosophy but also a technique of action.
- Traps – unplanned activity, publicity, ego struggles and misunderstanding.

King used non-violent protesting as a means to negotiation and argued that even though nonviolence is commonly portrayed as cowardly, it is not. It requires great emotional and spiritual courage to stand up against injustice. The nonviolent protestor does not want to disgrace the opponent, but to seek his understanding and friendship. Nonviolence is directed against evil, not the people who are committing the evil. The fight was not between two races, but between justice and injustice. Nonviolent resistance is a willingness to accept suffering without retaliating. He believed that nonviolent resistance

prevented physical and emotional violence. The method of nonviolent resistance is powerful in that it can overcome all bitterness and hatred and replace them with love.

King's philosophy of nonviolence is a thread throughout history that many different scholars have used and/or would agree with. The oppression of a certain group of people has happened many times in history and nonviolence has been used with tremendous success in many instances.

REVISIONARY QUESTIONS

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. How is war and communism contradictory to the philosophy of nonviolence?
2. What are the different types of injury that nonviolence is against?
3. What are the different pitfalls that King warns the nonviolent resistor against?

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

4. Comment on the relation between the means and the end as proposed in King's 'The Philosophy of Nonviolence'?
5. Comment on the use of suffering as a tool of resistance.

III. Write an essay

6. What are the various fundamental aspects of nonviolence as outlined by King in his speech 'The Philosophy of Nonviolence'?

(refer to the summary and analysis for answers)

ON THE RULE OF THE ROAD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alfred George Gardiner (1865-1946)

Born into the Victorian era in 1865 and writing through the Edwardian and Georgian periods, Alfred George Gardiner, was a newspaper editor, journalist and author. He is known for his essays, written under the pen-name "*Alpha of the Plough*" as well as his prose written under his own initials. Beginning his career as an apprentice-reporter at the age of fourteen Gardiner went on to become the editor of the oldest, most widely read Liberal newspaper in the early half of the 18th century, *Daily News*. As was typical of the Victorian age' his works reflected the pressing social, intellectual, economic, and religious issues and problems of the era. However, his skill was best displayed in the four published collections of pen portraits: *Prophets, Priests and Kings* (1908), *Pillars of Society* (1913), *The War Lords* (1915), and *Certain People of Importance* (1926). His essays are uniformly elegant, graceful and humorous. His uniqueness lay in his ability to teach the basic truths of life in an easy and amusing manner. *Pebbles on the Shore*, *Many Furrows* and *Leaves in the Wind*, are some of his other best known writings. His writings reflect two moods: the combative, disputatious controversialist who signed himself A. G. G., and the gentle, discursive essayist, Alpha of the Plough, who contributed to *The Star*. Gardiner died in 1946.

INTRODUCTION

A.G. Gardiner's famous and amusing essay 'On the Rule of the Road' strikes the bull's eye when he declares that in order to preserve the liberties of all the liberties of everybody must be curtailed. In this essay "The Rule Of the Road" he points out what constitutes true liberty.

Liberty and freedom has become the watchwords of today's society and every action taken is for the sake of personal liberty. In the contemporary world of constructed social and political anarchy, liberty both individual and political has gained tremendous importance.

SUMMARY

The essay begins with an amusing anecdote of a fat old lady walking in the middle of the road on a busy street in Petrograd. Obviously the traffic was confused and there ensued a traffic block. When someone pointed out to her that pedestrians must walk on the

footpaths her reply was interesting. She replied that she has the freedom to walk anywhere she likes. Nothing can be said against this since it is, after all, a public road.

In the next paragraph, the author goes on to make clear the boundaries of personal liberty. He states that people are liberty-drunk these days. The reader cannot but agree with the author on this point as we see today that everybody wants individual freedom. The problem has become more acute over the passage of time and fights over freedom begin when children are very young. Independence and dependence has taken on many colours and hues.

According to Gardiner, sacrifice seems to be the foundation for liberty because “in order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed.” He gives the example of a traffic police at a busy junction. At first the policeman may seem like a nuisance but later we realize that he is in fact a blessing. If everybody drove wherever and whenever they wanted there would be utter chaos and nobody will be able to reach anywhere. So in a sense personal liberty is restricted in order to make the same liberty a reality.

The author introduces liberty as a social contract and not a personal one. He says it is an adjustment. If our freedom does not interfere with those of others we may do as we please. He gives many instances where we do as we please like what to wear, what to eat, which religion to follow, which writer to prefer and many others.

We rule over a kingdom where we have all the freedom but the moment we come in contact with other people’s freedom both parties will have to restrict their own freedoms. For this again he gives the instance of playing the Trombone. If he wants to play it at midnight he will have to go to the Everest or else his family and neighbours will object. The author reminds the reader that there are a lot of people in this world and adjustment is the key to liberty.

Gardiner points out that unfortunately we are quicker to see the faults of others than our own. He says that consideration for the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of social conduct.

He concludes saying that it is these small matters that decide whether we are civilized or uncivilized. Great moments of heroism and sacrifice are rare but our life is made up of these small adjustments which make it sweet.

GLOSSARY

Petrograd: Leningrad (formerly St. Petersburg and then Petrograd).
Former capital of the Russian empire from 1703 to 1917 when

the capital was shifted to Moscow by the newly established Soviet Government.

Piccadilly Circus: London Thoroughfare.

Curtail: Restrict.

Maelstrom: Utter confusion.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox: American author and poet.

Wordsworth: English Romantic writer.

Trombone: Musical instrument. Formerly known as the Sackbut.

ANALYSIS

Alfred George Gardiner is one of the most delightful essayists of the modern times. The reason for his popularity can be understood from his selection of subject as well as his treatment of the subjects.

Gardiner's writing style and language is bewitching. Simplicity is its key note. His economy of words and ideas make his essays a pleasure to read. His use of anecdotes and illustrations serve to make the essay and its elucidation crystal clear.

In this essay "The Rule Of the Road" he points out what constitutes true liberty. Personal freedom or individual liberty is a very familiar concept these days even among small children. Almost prophetically Gardiner has dealt with this subject in a diplomatic and mature manner by giving a solution to the 'liberty-drunk' mentality of today. Gardiner tells us that there will often be times when we have to "submit to a curtailment of private liberty" if we want to live in a social order where we truly have liberty. What he is saying, then, may seem slightly paradoxical. He is saying that we have to give up some of our liberty in order to make our liberty a reality.

Gardiner's idea of personal liberty as a social contract reflects the philosopher John Locke's idea of 'social contract'. Locke is one thinker most closely connected to the idea of the 'social contract'. This idea says that we give up some of our smaller liberties so that we can live together in a society. In return for our doing this, the society protects our truly important rights. This is one major point Gardiner is trying to make in this essay.

Literally, when Gardiner refers to the "rule of the road," he is talking about the rules that say what you are allowed to do on the road. He is referring to the anecdote about the Russian woman walking down the middle of the road and causing traffic problems. That woman was not following the rules that tell us what we may do on roads.

But there is a figurative meaning here as well. Gardiner is using traffic laws as a metaphor for the rules (often unwritten and informal) that make society work and that create community and solidarity in society. The major point of this essay is that people need to consider how their actions affect others and how they affect society, not just about what they themselves want to do. In this sense, the rules of the road are rules of politeness and of unselfishness. They are rules such as "don't play your trombone too loudly or at the wrong time" or "don't have loud conversations in public places."

The author concludes the essay by saying that we must be a judicious mixture of both anarchist and socialist. We have to preserve both the individual liberty and social liberty. It is in the small matter of conduct in the observance of the rule of the road, that we pass judgment upon ourselves and declare that we are civilized or uncivilized.

REVISIONARY QUESTIONS

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. What is the essay 'On the Rule of the Road' about?
2. Describe the possible consequences of the old lady walking down the middle of the road.
3. What would happen at Piccadilly Circus if there was no policeman?

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

4. Give some of the examples Gardiner gives to show that if personal liberty does not disturb the life of other people we may be as free as we like.
5. What does the author mean by 'liberty-drunk'?

III. Write an essay

6. Comment on the author's declaration "Liberty is not a personal affair only, but a social contract". Do you agree?

(refer to the summary and analysis for answers)

MODULE II: SHORT STORY

VANKA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov (1860-1904)

Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov, considered to be among the greatest writers of short stories in history, is also a dramatist who changed the theatrical world with his plays and his ground-breaking theatrical techniques. A physician by profession, Chekhov is perhaps the most popular Russian author outside of his own country.

Chekhov was born in Tanarog, Russia, in 1860. The very fabric of Russian society was permanently altered when Chekhov was only one year old: on February 19, 1861, Russia's serfs were freed. Chekhov himself was the grandson of a serf, and the overturning of this older social order plays a central role in many of his writings.

When his father's business failed, the family moved to Moscow, a Russian center for intellectuals. There, Chekhov grew intellectually, although he developed in two different directions. On the one hand, at the age of twenty he attended medical school at the University of Moscow, preparing himself for his lifelong profession as a physician. While at medical school, Chekhov also began writing to help support his family. He worked as a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines; the respect he gained from these often humorous pieces encouraged Chekhov to begin writing serious short stories. Tolstoy, an older Russian contemporary of Chekhov's, was a great influence on the young writer and medical student. Chekhov was quoted as saying that medicine was his lawful wife and literature was his mistress, and he remained devoted to his two professions throughout his life.

During the late eighties, Chekhov wrote both short stories, such as 'The Bear' in 1888, and 'The Wedding' in 1889, and plays, which include *Ivanov* in 1887 and *The Wood Demon* in 1889. Although these works are only of moderate acclaim and are not the masterpieces that Chekhov is best known for, they form an important part of his development as a literary figure. For example, Chekhov came back to *The Wood Demon* in 1896, and after re-working it and re-titling it, the finished product, known as *Uncle Vanya*, propelled Chekhov's success and fame in his own life and to this day.

In 1896, Chekhov entered the period of creativity for which he is best known. At the turn of the century, he authored four plays, commentaries on Russian society, which have gained him lasting acclaim: *The Sea Gull* in 1896, *Uncle Vanya* in 1896, *The Three Sisters* in 1901, and *The Cherry Orchard*, his last great play, in 1904. These four works present a

challenge to the acting ensemble as well as to audiences, because in place of conventional action Chekhov offers a "theatre of mood" and a "submerged life in the text." Chekhov married Olga Knipper, a former protégée, who performed in each of these four plays, in 1901. *The Cherry Orchard* was first performed in Moscow on January 17, 1904, Chekhov's last birthday, with his wife in the leading role. Chekhov died of pulmonary tuberculosis on July second of that year, in Germany.

Most of Chekhov's tales are written between 1885 and 1899 which was his most creative period as a short story writer. Chekhov's best short stories are held in high esteem by writers and critics in which he made formal innovations that have influenced the evolution of the modern short story. His originality consists in an early use of the stream-of-consciousness technique, later adopted by James Joyce and other modernists, combined with a disavowal of the moral finality of traditional story structure. He made no apologies for the difficulties this posed to readers, insisting that the role of an artist was to ask questions, not to answer them.

His stories have influenced a host of writers right from James Joyce to Katherine Mansfield. He builds a low-toned atmosphere out of petty patches of brightly coloured personalities. His heroes are individuals struggling with an optimistic approach but at the mercy of irresistible forces. His stories present a convincing picture of the Russian middle-class life at the end of the 19th century but they have a timeless quality since they reflect the universal predicament of man.

INTRODUCTION

As a writer of short fiction, Chekhov is indebted to such literary giants as Maupassant, Tolstoy, and Turgenev, but his own influence on western literature has been immense. The author's masterful handling of prose, as well as his sensitivity towards character, mood, and setting, impressed authors as diverse as E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf.

Chekhov, in his stories, weaves humor with pathos to magnify the inconsequential details of people's lives. He also developed a technique of ending stories with what have been termed "zero endings"—or anti-climactic conclusions. This technique makes the stories seem more realistic, and often more pathetic, because readers are left to guess what will happen next. However, Chekhov also employs "surprise endings" to confound our expectations, and we can never be sure how a tale will end. Consequently, over a hundred years after his works were written, readers still marvel at Chekhov's freshness and originality. Although the author sketches his characters with compassionate good-humor, he never abstains from highlighting their faults, foibles, and human weaknesses. Chekhov's stories are thus deeply humane works of fiction: in detailing life's poignant trivialities, they are unrivalled in their sense of authenticity.

SUMMARY

Vanka, is a poignant story of an orphan boy of nine years – the miserable condition of his present life and a ray of hope he has for the future. Ivan Zhukov, known by the diminutive “Vanka,” is an unhappy orphan who has been apprenticed for three months to the shoemaker Alyakhin in Moscow. On Christmas Eve, while his master and mistress and the senior apprentices are all at church, Vanka sits down to write a pleading letter to “Grandad” Konstantin Makarich in the nearby village where Vanka lived before being sent to the city. Vanka’s mother, Pelageya, had been in service at a country estate, where his life had been idyllic as he roamed freely with Grandad, “one-eyed Yegor,” and other servants. After his mother’s death three months earlier, Vanka had first been dispatched to the back kitchen with Grandad and from there to the shoemaker. His homesickness and misery emerge heartbreakingly as he writes his letter.

As Vanka writes, he muses on his grandfather. The old man – about sixty-five – is night watchman on the estate. Vanka imagines him at his usual diversions: hanging around the kitchen, dozing, and joking with the cook and the kitchen maids before going out to walk all night around the premises shaking his rattle. Vanka knows that Grandad’s dogs Kashtanka and Eel will be with him. Kashtanka is too old for mischief, but the wily Eel – long, black, and weasel-like – is sly and treacherous, snapping at unsuspecting feet or stealing chickens. For this misbehavior, Eel is beaten severely, but his behavior is unchanged.

Vanka’s most cherished memory is of going with his grandad to get Christmas tree for the gentry and later the decoration of the same tree. He fondly remembers Olga, the daughter at the big house who had taught him to read and write when his mother had been alive.

Vanka’s letter is peppered with the various cruel treatments he received from his master and mistress who are seen to be heartless in their exploitation of the little boy. Capital punishment is a usual occurrence and Vanka is forced to do menial jobs for the family in addition to his job of a cobbler. Moreover, he is teased and made fun of by the other workers.

Vanka pleads with his granddad to come and take him away from Moscow. In exchange for his freedom, Vanka promised his grandfather he would perform the tasks of his grandfather's everyday life in order to relieve the old man of his burden. Vanka fills his letter with promises and pleas. Vanka would give anything to avoid living with his master. Vanka ends his letter with a final heart-wrenching plea to his grandad and addresses it to "To Grandfather in the village," and as an after-thought adds “To Konstantin Makarich” and ran with the letter to the letter-box. That night he slept filled with hope and dreaming of his granddad and the village.

GLOSSARY

Apprentice:	learner, one who learns a craft
Phial:	bottle
Furtively:	secretly
Somber:	serious
Ikon:	painting or carving on wood
Lasts:	blocks of wood or metal for repairing shoes
Blar-eyed:	with tired eyes
Trifled:	fooling around
Enveloped:	covered
Strayed:	wandered
Domain:	kingdom
Tapping:	touching
Cudgel:	stick
Loach:	a small fresh water fish
Civil:	polite, gentle
Deference:	respect
Sneak:	do something secretly
Larder:	cupboard used for storing food
Flogged:	beaten
Ecstasies:	moments of extreme joy
Offended:	feeling insulted
Hoar-frost:	white snow
Scintillates:	shines, glitters
Thrashing:	beating
Patron:	one who takes care or looks after
Brat:	a badly behaving child
Herring:	a kind of fish
Handy:	easy to catch
Guzzle:	eat or drink something quickly
Vestibule:	an entrance hall

Grate:	metal frame for holding the coal near a fireplace
Quadrille:	a dance with four or more couples
Beseech:	beg, request

ANALYSIS

'Vanka' is a story with a unique structure. There is the barest movement of plot, in that Vanka begins writing his letter, works on his letter, and finishes his letter. He is not the narrator, but it is through the boy's mind that the reader is inducted to the story. Vanka seems to be the protagonist, but the only antagonistic forces seem to be a slim apprehension that he will be caught and his own fear/hatred of the masters, and perhaps Moscow itself. The climax, if it is even identifiable, is very subtle and the resolution is typical of the Chekhovian style, irresolute but leaving the reader with strong depressions. In this light many critics have argued that the primary theme of exposing the ills against and within the lower class is an outcry from Chekhov's childhood.

The primary theme is the obvious one of the universal plight of orphans from the lower class as the atrocities committed against Vanka are vividly described by himself. He gives a moving account of how he was dragged to the courtyard and thrashed with a stirrup strap because he slept off while rocking the master's child to sleep. There is also a description of how the mistress had rubbed his face with fish because he tried cleaning the fish from the wrong end. The struggles of a child in an adult world is given adequate representation when Vanka describes how he is made to get vodka from the tavern for the older workers and how he is made to steal the food from the master's for which he invariably receives more beating. Food is inadequate for the growing boy and he remains hungry most of the time.

Sadly, the account he writes is not shocking to most people. Set in a time where poverty and slavery were common occurrences, Vanka's situation was not abnormal or a rarity. Illnesses and death often left young children alone to defend themselves. Forced to work at a young age, Vanka did not receive a formal education. The lack of education created a perpetual downfall for Vanka. The lack of education was what required him to obtain a job in a craft field. Lack of education was also the reason Vanka will never be rescued by his grandfather. This ignorance creates an ironic parallel between his life and his freedom. The reader is left to wonder if the letter will ever reach its proper destination. Were Vanka's efforts only done in vain?

Vanka is a story which has a lot of trappings of hope. First, the story takes place on Christmas Eve, a time traditionally associated with redemption (through the birth of Jesus) and the granting of wishes (presents are normally given during the Christmas season and Santa Claus is additionally supposed to deliver presents on Christmas Eve).

Second, Vanka is an orphan apprenticed to an abusive shoemaker. So fearful is Vanka of his master that he must write his letter in secret, before tracing the shape of the first letter, he looked several times fearfully in the direction of the doors and windows. Usually stories featuring brave orphans under abusive custodians (like Annie, Oliver Twist or even Cinderella) end up with the orphan escaping their horrid surroundings to a new home of love and sunlight.

Third, there is a hero just waiting in the sidelines to rescue Vanka. His grandfather, Konstantin Makarich, with whom Vanka has spent happy times. Based on this description, it would be fair for the reader to assume that Konstantin Makarich will come at once to rescue his grandson once he hears of his (Vanka's) plight.

All the elements for a potential happy ending are in place. Vanka ran to the nearest mailbox and thrust his precious letter into the slot. He had learned from clerks how letters were dropped in boxes and from these boxes they were carried all over the world. However, the clerks did not mention, and Vanka does not realize, that such letters need to have a stamp on them. Vanka clearly only has an envelope without a stamp, Vanka twice folded the sheet of paper and then he put it in an envelope bought the previous day for a kopeck. Without such a stamp, there is no possibility that his letter will reach his grandfather.

The elements of hope which the story lines up so neatly are all for naught for want of a simple but crucial detail. Vanka does not know any better, of course. In fact his knowledge of the postal system is only secondhand, as the clerks did not tell him he needed a stamp, he did not buy a stamp. Thus do the mundane realities of the world oftentimes crush grandiose, perhaps childish, hopes.

Moreover, Vanka's descriptions of Konstantin Makarich call into question as well the character of his grandfather. Certainly Makarich sounds like an amiable chap, but is he really willing to raise his grandchild? There is a subtle hint in the story that it was Makarich that sent Vanka away, when Pelageya died, they relegated the orphan Vanka to the servants' kitchen to be with his Grandfather, and from there he went to Moscow to the shoemaker Alyakhin. As such, even if the letter somehow reached Makarich, it is most likely that he would not have come and rescued his grandchild. Sometimes rays of hope are defeated when placed against the cruel realities of the world.

REVISIONARY QUESTIONS

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. Why was Vanka sent to Moscow?
2. Why did Vanka get beaten by his master the previous day?

3. How and why did the mistress punish Vanka?
4. How was Vanka treated by the other apprentices?
5. Give an account of Vanka's life before he was sent to Moscow.
6. How did Vanka describe Moscow?

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

7. According to Vanka's memory, what kind of a person is Konstantin Makarich? Is the impression the reader gets of him the same as Vanka's memory?

Vanka's memory remembers his grandfather as his guardian angel after the death of his parents. He has fond memories of his 'grandad'. Konstantin Makarich is a night watchman on the estate of some rich gentry. He is a small man of about sixty five, remarkably lively and agile with a smiling face and eyes always tired from drinking. During the day he either slept or sat joking with the kitchen maids and walked around the estate at night. Vanka has pleasant memories of going to cut the Christmas tree with his grandfather for the gentry every year.

Although Vanka has fond memories of his grandfather, the picture portrayed by his memory is not altogether favourable for a guardian. Konstantin Makarich is a confirmed bachelor whose main interest seems to be in snuff boxes, drinking and generally fooling around with the maids of the house. He does not come out as a nurturing protective guardian.

8. Comment on the ending of the story *Vanka*.

As is typical of Chekhov's stories, *Vanka* ends with as little explosion as possible. The reader does not even realize the coming of the climax, if at all there is one. The story ends with Vanka posting his letter to "Grandfather in the village" and on second thought "To Konstantin Makarich" and then going to sleep dreaming of his 'grandad' and the village and hoping that his grandfather will come and get him out of Moscow soon. The tragic elements in the story come to their peak with the reader's realization that grandfather would never get the letter and Vanka's fate would most probably continue as it is. Thus, true to Chekhov-narration, the ending brings the most emotion in the reader with the least action.

III. Write an essay

9. Comment on the short story *Vanka* as a social criticism of child labour.
10. Comment on the theme of 'hope' in the short story *Vanka*.

(refer to the summary and analysis for answers)

MARRIAGE IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chinua Achebe(1930-2013)

Called as the "patriarch of the African novel", and fondly remembered as the "grandfather of Nigerian Literature" Albert Chinualumogu Achebe is a Nigerian novelist, short story writer, poet, professor, and critic best known for his first novel and magnum opus, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the most widely read book in modern African literature. The spearhead of the post colonial movement in Nigerian literature, Achebe is acclaimed for his unsentimental depictions of the social and psychological disorientation accompanying the imposition of Western customs and values upon traditional African society. His main concern was with emergent Africa at its moments of crisis. His novels range in subject matter from the first contact of an African village with the white man to the educated African's attempt to create a firm moral order out of the changing values in a large city.

A titled Igbo chieftain himself, Achebe's novels and stories focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of Western and traditional African values during and after the colonial era. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines straightforward narration with representations of folk stories, proverbs, and oratory.

Chinua was born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe in the Igbo village of Ogidi on 16 November 1930 to convert protestants who continued to respect the traditions of their ancestors while practicing Christianity.

An exceptional student at school, Achebe won a scholarship for undergraduate studies. He became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures, and began writing stories as a university student. After graduation in 1953, he worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) and soon moved to the metropolis of Lagos. He gained worldwide attention for his trilogy set in the Igbo tribe describing the clash between native African culture and the white coloniser's culture. The trilogy includes *Things Fall Apart*, his later novels *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964). Other major novels are *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Achebe wrote his novels in English and defended the use of English, a "language of colonisers", in African literature. In 1975, his lecture *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"* featured a famous criticism of Joseph Conrad as "a thoroughgoing racist".

A politically committed writer Achebe was deeply involved in the internal political struggles in Nigeria and wrote poems and essays about it such as 'Beware, Soul-Brother'

(1971) and 'Christmas in Biafra' (1973) and 'There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra' (2012).

Achebe also published several of collections short stories like *The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories* (1953), *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1973) and a children's book, *How the Leopard Got His Claws* (1973). *Another Africa* (1998) combines an essay and poems. In 2007 he won the Man Booker International Prize and received numerous honorary fellowships and doctorates from institutions around the world. The great writer passed away on 21st March, 2013.

SUMMARY

'Marriage is a Private Affair' tells the story of two young people who find themselves caught in a clash between the old and the new. Nene belongs to the Ibibo tribe, a region of southeastern Nigeria, while her soon to be husband Nnaemeka belongs to the Ibo tribe. When Nnaemeka moves to Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, to be with Nene an ancient tradition has clearly been broken. While Nene is excited to share her plans of marriage, Nnaemeka isn't so sure, for he knows that his father, Okeke would strongly object as Nene belonged to another tribe. True to Nnaemeka's expectation Okeke was very upset when he came to know of his son's plans and vehemently opposed them. The villagers assembled to give Okeke their support and pronounced that such a thing had never been heard of in the village. They quoted the Bible to show that Jesus had foreseen this very phenomenon, of sons turning against fathers. They wanted Okeke to take Nnaemeka to a traditional doctor but we see that he is a progressive man in that case and refuses to do so. Nnaemeka maintains a small glimmer of hope, thinking that with time his father would change his mind. However the old man would only reply, "I will never see her." Okeke is offended when his son sends him his wedding picture and sends it back with Nene's picture cut out of it. The internal struggle undergone by Okeke is poignantly portrayed as his love and concern for his son clashes with his traditions. This leaves Nnaemeka no choice but to move on without the consent of his father. He and Nene begin a happy marriage together and gradually even the Ibo women in Lagos accept Nene and their two children. Then one day, the Okeke receives an unexpected letter from Nene herself, explaining that his grandsons are asking to see him. This leaves him with the same internal struggle he experienced when his son married Nene. The ending is left open to the reader as Okeke goes to sleep with a turbulent heart as he imagines his grandsons in the raging storm outside with no protection.

GLOSSARY

Lagos:	a metropolitan city in Nigeria and the most populated.
Ibo:	Igbo (pronounce d as Ibo) people is an ethnic group based in West Africa, chiefly in South-eastern Nigeria. Chinua Achebe belonged to the Igbo tribe.
An Amazon of a girl:	Amazon, in Greek mythology, is a tribe of all-women warriors.
Pastor:	A Christian priest having spiritual charge over a congregation or other groups.
Disconcertingly:	upsetting,
Emeka:	Nnaemeka's father uses the shortened Emeka here.
St. Paul in his letter to Corinthians:	two letters in the New Testament addressed from the apostle Paul to the Christian community that he had founded at Corinth, Greece.
Calabar:	a city in south-east Nigeria
Perplexed:	confused
Dissuasion: something	an act of convincing someone not to do something
Cease:	stop
Commiserate:	to sympathise
Our Lord:	Jesus
Sons shall rise against their Fathers:	from the Bible
Holy Book:	the Bible
Amalile:	a type of herb
Mutilated:	crippled, maimed
It was a reenactment of that other struggle:	the author is referring to Okeke's earlier struggle to forget his son.

ANALYSIS

The story is told by an all knowing objective narrator. Achebe uses an absolutely unbiased tone in the narration of the events as well as in the portrayal of the protagonists. Throughout the story the reader can trust that the narrator will give an unbiased view of the story. The narrator does not add any other views, interests or colors to the story.

The time period of the story is not specified but seems to have a universal tone. 'Marriage is a Private Affair' is set in the capital of Nigeria, Lagos. This serves as Ibibio land and NeNe's home. The other parts of the story briefly take place in Ibo country where Nnaemeka and his father Okeke live. The general mood of the story is one of worry, coming from all characters. Nnaemeka is worried because his father wont accept NeNe and Okeke is worried because once he figures out that NeNe has had his grandchildren, he is faced with the toughest decision of his life.

The primary theme of the clash of cultures and civilizations, of the old and new ideas, is of personal interest to Achebe as can be seen from his major novels. 'Marriage is a Private Affair' gives one the many facets of this conflict with the universal practice of marriage becoming the site of struggle between the new and old generation. Caught in a world of changing ideals both the son and the father act according to their personal beliefs making it difficult for the reader to take sides. Okeke acts according to his belief that a marriage of people between two different tribes is not going to work and is genuinely concerned that Nnaemeka is going to regret his decision later in life. Nnaemeka, having more modern outlook, is bent on marrying the love of his life.

The character portrayal in this story is extraordinary as Achebe succeeds in representing each character in a neutral manner who stick to their convictions. They are very strong at heart and have plenty to give to the world and each other. The son was very firm in his decision to marry out of love and at the same time tries to get acceptance from his father with loving and patient gestures. The wife was very strong to deal with such a situation that was out of her hands and showed a great amount of grace to not hold anything against the father and his actions. The father was noble in keeping the tribes beliefs and traditions although it was very painful to watch him suffer for so long knowing that his son had made choices that in his opinion Nnaemeka will regret later.

Characters-at-crossroads is another theme that can be detected in the story. Both the father and the son are developing or round characters who are at a crossroad in their individual lives. Nnaemeka, although he loves his father and respects the traditions of his tribe, equally loves Nene and believes that marriage is a private affair. Okeke is torn between his obligations to the tribe and his love for his son. But what is to be noted here is that Okeke is not a blind believer in traditions. He rejects the villagers' idea of taking

Nnaemeka to the traditional doctor on the grounds that it was superstitious. Hence we see here a transforming Okeke.

Conflict is another theme of the story as we see both external and internal conflicts. The external conflict between individuals is evident between the father and the son on the question of the selection of a wife and there is also the external conflict between the individual and the society. Initially Nene is not accepted by the Ibo women in Lagos and also Okeke rejects his society's idea of the traditional doctor. Okeke is the prime candidate for a raging internal conflict between his beliefs and his love for his son and grandsons. Nnaemeka also experiences internal conflict between his beliefs and his love for his father.

The open ending of the story is filled with possibilities as Achebe finishes the story without a decisive action from Okeke. But he gives subtle hints that point to a happy ending for all the characters though not specifically stated.

REVISIONARY QUESTIONS

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. Why hadn't Nnaemeka written to his father about his plan to marry Nene, at the beginning of the story?
2. Did Nnaemeka's expectation of his father's reaction come true?
3. Why did Okeke object to Nnaemeka's marriage?
4. What was the reaction of the people of his village to the marriage?
5. Did Okeke accept the marriage in the end?

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

1. What is the main theme of the story?
2. Comment on the ending of the story.
3. Character sketch of Okeke.

III. Write an essay

1. "The story 'Marriage is a Private Affair' is filled with conflicts". Comment.
2. Comment on the relevance of the subject and theme of the story in the present world.

(Refer to the summary and analysis for answers)

A DAY'S WAIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernest Miller Hemingway(1899-1961)

Ernest Miller Hemingway is one of the most famous American modernist novelist, short-story writer and essayist, whose deceptively simple prose style has influenced a wide range of writers. Hemingway served in World War I and worked in journalism before publishing his story collection *In Our Time*. His other popular collections of stories include *Men Without Women*, and *Winner Take Nothing*. He was renowned for novels like *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*, which won the 1953 Pulitzer and he was awarded the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1899 to a physician and a musician, Hemingway led an athletic outdoor life influenced by his father and began his writing for his school newspaper.

He joined a volunteer ambulance unit in Italy during World War I and suffered a severe leg wound. For his service, Hemingway was twice decorated by the Italian government. Generally thought to be a member of the 'Lost Generation', some of his major works may be classified under war literature. His service in World War I was probably the most influential of his experiences as far as his writing is concerned as it was the source for many of his short stories and novels.

After the war, he lived in Paris, the centre of the modernist movement, and associated with writers like Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Hemingway's first serious novel was *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). The story deals with a group of expatriates in France and Spain who are members of the disillusioned post-World War I Lost Generation.

Hemingway travelled extensively in Europe when he was not writing and lived an active life of outdoor hunting and deep-sea fishing. He married four women in his life and committed suicide in 1961.

What makes Hemingway a master of narration is his writing style, syntax and his themes. The popularity of Hemingway's work to a great extent is based on the themes, which according to scholars are love, war, wilderness and loss, all of which are strongly evident in the body of work. The theme of death permeates Hemingway's work. These are recurring themes of American literature, which are clearly evident in Hemingway's work. Hemingway's nature is a place for rebirth, for therapy, and the hunter or fisherman has a moment of transcendence when the prey is killed. Nature is where men are without

women: men fish; men hunt; men find redemption in nature. Although Hemingway writes about sports, the emphasis is more on the athlete than the sport.

In 1954, when Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, it was for "his mastery of the art of narrative, most recently demonstrated in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style." He avoided complicated syntax and about 70 percent of the sentences are simple sentences—a childlike syntax without subordination.

Writing in "The Art of the Short Story," Hemingway explains: "A few things I have found to be true. If you leave out important things or events that you know about, the story is strengthened. If you leave or skip something because you do not know it, the story will be worthless. The test of any story is how very good the stuff that you, not your editors, omit."

The simplicity of his prose is deceptive. Hemingway's legacy to American literature is his style: writers who came after him emulated it or avoided it. After his reputation was established with the publication of *The Sun Also Rises*, he became the spokesperson for the post-World War I generation, having established a style to follow. His books were burned in Berlin in 1933, "as being a monument of modern decadence". His parents disavowed his literature as "filth". Reynolds asserts the legacy is that "he left stories and novels so starkly moving that some have become part of our cultural heritage"

INTRODUCTION

"A Day's Wait" is a short story by Ernest Hemingway published in his 1933 short story collection *Winner Take Nothing* about a nine-year old boy who is sick during a cold winter. Written in his simple prose style, the story is a casket of strong emotions, all the more intense for the protagonist's inability to express them.

SUMMARY

The story opens as a father discovers that his 9-year-old boy, Schatz, has a fever. The father sends for the doctor and he diagnoses a mild case of influenza. As long as the fever doesn't go above 104 degrees, the doctor says, the boy will be fine, and he leaves three different types of medication for the father to administer with instructions for each. Schatz's temperature is determined to be 102 degrees.

When the doctor leaves, the father reads to Schatz from a book about pirates, but the boy is not paying attention and is staring fixedly at the foot of the bed. His father suggests he try to get some sleep, but Schatz says he would rather be awake. He also says that his

father needn't stay in the room with him if he is bothered. His father says he isn't bothered, and after giving him his 11 o'clock dose of medication, the father goes outside.

It is a wintry day with sleet frozen onto the countryside, and the father takes the family's Irish setter out hunting along a frozen creek bed. Both man and dog fall more than once on the ice before they find a covey of quail and kill two. The father, pleased with his exploits, returns to the house.

Upon returning home, he finds that Schatz has refused to let anyone into his room because he doesn't want anyone else to catch the flu. The father enters anyway and finds the boy still staring at the foot of the bed. He takes Schatz's temperature and finds it 102, as before. He tells Schatz his temperature is fine, and not to worry. Schatz says he's not worrying, but he is thinking. When the father gives Schatz his medication, Schatz asks if he thinks the medication will help, and the father answers affirmatively.

After attempting to interest Schatz in the pirate book and failing, the father pauses, whereupon Schatz asks him when the father thinks Schatz will die. It emerges that Schatz has heard at school in France that no one can live with a temperature above 44, so Schatz thinks he is sure to die with a temperature of 102. He has been waiting to die all day.

After the father explains the difference between Fahrenheit and Celsius, Schatz relaxes, letting go of his iron self-control and the next day he allows himself to get upset over little things.

GLOSSARY

"Schatz":	German term of endearment (brave and caring)
Influenza:	caused by a virus, commonly known as the flu
Epidemic:	affecting many persons at the same time.
Evident:	clearly
Covey:	a small group of game birds
purgative :	a drug that causes a bowel movement
pneumonia:	inflammation of the lungs; the flu
detached:	separate, not attached to something
varnished:	a coat that give a smooth surface and attractive finish
slithered:	slide or gliding movement
flushed:	red in the face
commenced:	to begin something

ANALYSIS

"A Day's Wait" deals with the familiar Hemingway theme of heroic fatalism or fatalistic heroism, namely courage in the face of certain death. It is a testament to Hemingway's skill and his dedication to this theme that he can make fatalistic heroes out of 9-year-old boys as easily as out of middle-aged has-been prizefighters on the run from gangsters and 76-year-old Spanish war refugees. The tragedy in this story is not, of course, that the hero Schatz is doomed, but that he believes himself to be doomed when he is in fact fine.

Schatz's heroism is quietly but strikingly demonstrated in his words and actions over his day's wait. The most dramatic manifestation of Schatz's heroism is the difference between his demeanor during the day described by the story and his demeanor the next day. The narrator says "He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something" before the father goes out hunting, and when Schatz realizes he will be fine, "The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance." The little boy is stoic in the face of what he believes will be certain death; he holds his emotions in with iron self-control all day, and even suggests that his father leave the room if he is distressed to see his son dying. He also forbids anyone to come into his room out of concern for their health, even though by doing so he condemns himself to die alone.

Aside from Schatz's own behavior, the other element of the story that makes Schatz's heroism striking is the behavior of his father, which unintentionally worsens Schatz's mental turmoil. Shortly after Schatz suggests that his father need not stay with him if the spectacle of his son's death will bother him, the father leaves the house for hours to enjoy himself in the winter sunshine with the family dog, a gun, and a covey of quail. The juxtaposition of the father's enjoyment with Schatz's self-controlled, tragic, and solitary stoicism sharpens the reader's sense of Schatz's heroism.

Obviously there is an invisible wall between father and his son- a fateful misunderstanding. They talk about two different things, the father about the disease and the son about his death but they do not know that they misunderstand each other. This fateful misunderstanding appears in different scenes where the father and son talk about "it", meaning two different things. One example is when the father asks his son why he does not go to sleep.

"You don't have to stay in here with me, Papa, if it bothers you." The son is talking about his death but does not mention his fear. He must be shocked when the father answers "It doesn't bother me". Because the father does not know of the fear of his son there is no reason for him to explain that he won't die. Instead he goes out to hunt. The boy must think that his father does not even care that he will die, but prefers going out to hunt.

This fateful misunderstanding happens another time, again Hemingway uses the word "it" to describe two different things.

Father: "It's nothing to worry about." He means the fever. "Just take it easy." Since the son always thinks of death he assumes his father tells him to take dying easy so he answers: "I am taking it easy".

The misunderstanding leads to many unnecessary and acute turmoils in the boy's mind. The story within a short time frame spreads before the reader the landscape of a nine year old child's mind. In some ways the child's mind can be seen as being childish like when he blindly believes what he had heard from his friends; in another way his mind is very similar to that of an adult such as his stoic determination to face death without a shudder and his determination to keep others away from suffering the same way as he does.

Schatz characterization is that of a protagonist in the story. He displays both positive and negative characteristics. He is a very determined nine year old child with a set mind. He displayed a strong will and seemed not easily shaken from his position. He has a good memory by recalling what the boys who attended school in France had told him about individuals dying from temperature above forty-four degrees.

Schatz could also be classified as an antagonist in this story. He fought to prevent himself from overcoming his illness. He appeared to be his own worst enemy. He believed everything he heard especially the story from the boys in France. He appeared to be a snotty nose brat who would not listen to his father, and reprimand his helpers at home in his father's absence. He acted disobediently and shunned those who tried to help him.

One interesting point in the story "A Day's Wait" is the point of view which is very limited. Hemingway uses the first-person narrator in this story because this way the father cannot read the boy's mind and the reader is forced to see everything through the father's eyes.

The plot of the story is peculiar because even though it takes place in a very peaceful setting away from strife and hardships it reminds one strongly of a war-zone situation. Schatz reminds the reader of a noble young soldier.

The resolution in the story occurs at the end of the story when the boy comes to know that he will not die and becomes his old self again. He starts to complain about little things that are of no importance just like before he thought he would die. This shows how death lets things appear in a different way, everything that seemed to be important before is not important anymore. True to Hemingway's major theme of all-pervading death the new perspective offered by death seems to smother the protagonist with its intensity and

changes his whole outlook on life. The nature of man to be noble under stressed situations is highlighted in the story.

Most Hemingway scholars believe the narrator of this story, though unnamed, is actually Nick Adams, Hemingway's semi-autobiographical character who appears in a series of stories. Hemingway's official biographer Carlos Baker was the first to make this claim, and the fact that original manuscripts for 'Fathers and Sons', one of Hemingway's confirmed Nick Adams stories, calls Adams's boy "Schatz" seems to settle the matter.

REVISIONARY QUESTIONS

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. How did Schatz behave when he thought he had only a headache?
2. What did the doctor say after examining Schatz?
3. Why did Schatz think that he would die soon?
4. How did his father explain to Schatz the difference between Fahrenheit and Centigrade?
5. What was the change in the boy when the misunderstanding cleared up?

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

6. Comment on the misunderstandings in the story 'A Day's Wait'.
7. Character sketch of Schatz.
8. Heroism in the story 'A Day's Wait'.

III. Write an essay

9. Write an essay on Schatz as a fatalistic hero.

MODULE 3 : POETRY

1.CHURCH GOING.

About the author

Philip Larkin (1922-1985) was born on 9 August 1922 in Coventry, Warwickshire. He was educated at a local Grammar school of his home town and later at St. John's College Oxford. There after he was a Librarian at Hull University for a couple of years. At Oxford he became friends with Kingsly Amis who shared his enthusiasm for traditional Jazz. He remained a single, sad figure, immensely respected by fellow poets. He died on 2, December, 1985.

Larkin emerged as a writer in the 1950s, in the Movement called "angry young men". Other prominent poets in the group are Thom Gunn, John Wain, Donald Davie and Elizabeth Jennings. They wrote rather bitter poems that express a "refusal to participate". His reputation as a poet rests mainly on two anthologies : "The North Ship" (1945), and "The Less Deceived" (1955). He has also published two novels, "Jill" (1946), and "A Girl in Winter" (1947). His poems also appeared in "New Lines" (1956), Robert Conquest's anthology of significant new verse of the fifties. His next volume of verse, "The Whitsun Weddings" appeared in 1964. However, his last work, "High Windows" was published in 1974.

Larkin's poetry is a reaction against the Neo-Romanticism and the surrealistic abstractions of poets like Dylan Thomas. He has also no link with the politically-oriented poetry of the Auden group. He wanted poetry to make sense, and therefore, he aimed at clarity and verbal precision. Although his total output of poems is remarkably small, he is one of the major poets after World War II.

In October 1954 an article in The Spectator made the first use of the title **The Movement** to describe the dominant trend in British post-war literature. The term "Movement" refers to the work of a group of poets of the nineteen-fifties. These poets were John Wain, Donald Davie, Kingsley Amis, Thom Gunn, and a few others too. Philip Larkin was also one of the poets believed to be intimately related to the Movement. These poets were believed to have rebelled against the high romanticism of the nineteen thirties and nineteen-forties. The work of these poets was regarded as a victory of common sense and clarity over obscurity and mystification, and of verbal restraint over stylistic excess. Not a Well-Organized Group of Poets with a Well-Defined Programme. It has been admitted by many critics that the poets of the Movement did not exist as a coherent literary group. But it has also been admitted that these poets operated as a significant cultural influence. The

Movement was the product of specific views about literature and society; and it, in its turn, helped to establish and to propagate those views.

Glossary.

Nothing going on: No service is conducted in Church.

Thud: Dull sound usually produced with a heavy body falling down.

Another Church: One more Church that the speaker enters. A note of disgust and boredom is expressed with the word another. Surely the speaker is disgusted with a lot of churches serving no purpose.

Madding: Carpet spread on the floor.

Little books: Books insignificant, which are of no value.

Sprawlings: Scattered things, no sacred value is attributed to them.

Brownish Now: The flowers are faded, now stuff things.

Orgun: Piano.

Tense: Anxious.

Musty: Stale and unpleasant smell.

Unignorable: Unavoidable. Something that cannot be ignored.

Brewed: Formed, Produced. Cycle-clips: Shows that the speaker has come on a Bicycle.

Awkward: Uncomfortable.

Reverence: Respect.

Font: Vessel containing baptismal water.

Restored: Renovated, repaired.

Mounting: Going up.

Lectern: A speech stand or reading desk.

Peruse: Read or examine.

Hectoring: Bullying.

Large scale verses: Numerous poetical lines.

Snigger: Laugh at.

Sign the book: He signs in the attendance register as a visitor.

Reflect: Think of.

Turn them into: Change them into.

Cathedral: Big Church.

Chronically: Perpetually.

Unlucky places: Places haunted by ghosts.

Dubious Of ill repute or doubtful.

Herbs: Plants with medicinal properties.

Advised night: Particular night.

Weedy: Covered with Weed.

Brambles: A kind of thorny plant.

Buttress: A kind of support to a wall.

Obscure: Unknown, difficult to understand.

Crew: the staff working in a ship.

Tap and jot: the crew who opens the cask of wine and jots or writes down the amount of wine sold.

Rood-loft: Gallery over the ornamental portion.

Ruin-bibber: Someone who loves ruins.

Christmas addict: One who loves Christmas celebrations.

Randy: Lecherous and ill mannered.

Antique: Belonging to an earlier period.

Whiff: A slight gentle gust of air.

Myrrh: An aromatic gum got from a particular shrub with incense.

Silt: A sedimentary material consisting of very fine particles intermediate in size between sand and clay.

Disperse: To drive or scatter into different directions.

Suburb: A usually residential area or a community outlying a city.

Scrub: Rub hard to clean.

Equably: Unvarying and steady.

Accoutered: To outfit or equip as for military duty.

Frowsy: having a stale smell, musty.

Obsolete: No longer in use, depreciated.

Summary and analysis of the poem.

Church going written by Philip Larkin in 1955 is a monologue in which the speaker discusses the futility and the utility of going to a church. It clearly reveals the social context of the time when it was written. It was a time of general decline in the attendance in churches which had begun to take place in 1945. The poem expresses a view that faith and belief in religion must die but that the spirit of tradition represented by the English church cannot come to an end. Larkin's agnosticism becomes more understandable if we look at this poem in the national and the international context of the post-war years. The poem refers both to the disappearance of the Church as an institution and to the perpetuation of some kind of ritual observance. In other words, the poet here explores different perceptions of the same event (the event being the decline of attendance in the churches).

The poet describes his visit to a church. He goes when there is no ceremony or ritual at the church. The building is more or less deserted. There is matting on the floor, seats, a few books and faded flowers plucked on Sunday last. There are also some brass utensils, an organ and other paraphernalia. Above all, there is absolute silence; God alone knows how long it has been so. The poet has already removed his hat, and now he removes his cycleclips too in an act of reverence unknown to himself.

He moves forward, touches the font. The roof looks almost new; perhaps it has been cleaned recently. He mounts the lectern and reads a few verses from the book at the pulpit. The concluding words 'Here endeth' are spoken loudly by him and he hears them echo. Coming back to the door he signs the register, drops six pence coins, and thinks of leaving. He feels that it is not worthwhile to remain there.

Curiously enough, something makes him linger there. He is utterly confused. He wonders what he should look for. His mind revolves round the future of churches. When people have lost their belief in religion, churches will lose their value. Some may be preserved as museums while others may be lashed by rain and occupied by sheep. Perchance churches may be associated with ill-luck and avoided by people.

Women with dubious character may bring their illegitimate children and make them touch a particular stone, associated with some superstition, or the stone may be the grave of the child's father. Some herbs capable of curing cancer may be collected from the churchyard. People may also go there to see ghosts. They may entertain superstitious beliefs that a visit to church will endow them with some mysterious power enabling them to win games and solve riddles. Yet all such superstitions must come to an end. What remains then will be grass, weeds, brambles and so on with the sky above.

As years roll by, the church will lose its present shape, for it will be ruined. The poet wonders who will be the last persons to visit this place. It may be an antiquarian hankering after ruins. Or it may be someone who loves Christmas day celebrations. He may be longing for gowns, musical bands and the smell of myrrh. Probably the last visitor is a person like the poet himself. He may be bored with religious rituals and have little knowledge about them. He may be led to the place because it is associated with marriage, birth, death and such important events in one's life. Regarding the poet he considers it like a shell, not more worthy than a barn, yet he likes to stand there in silence.

The poet admits that the church has a serious purpose because people meet here on serious occasions. In that harmonious atmosphere people gather to satisfy their inner urges. Many have found their last resting place in the churchyard, and many living men will move towards church in search of wisdom.

The theme of the poem is thus the erosion of religious institutions and values. The rhythm of the poem is iambic tetrameter, and it has a strict rhyme of ababcdcd. The language of the poem is conversational, and the narrator poses many interrogatives (asks questions). Larkin uses a lot of religious imagery and words. The title can be interpreted in a few different ways: the act of going to church, the customs that keep the church alive, visiting the church as one would a theatre, and the disappearance of the church are some of the possible ones.

Some readers take this poem as a religious poem but Larkin strictly contradicts to this idea of interpretation. He says, "It is of course an entirely secular poem. The discussion in the poem is half-mocking and half-serious. The speaker scoffs at the church and its equipment; and he scoffs at church-going, though at the end of the poem he finds that the churches, or at least some of them, would continue to render some service to the people

even after they have ceased to be places of worship. According to the speaker, a time is coming when people would stop going to churches altogether, because they would have lost their faith in God and in divine worship. Then a time is also coming when people's disbelief in God and their superstitions would come to an end too. Eventually, however, some people might still visit the decayed and disused church buildings on account of some inner compulsion or to derive some wisdom from the sight of the many graves in the churchyard.

Church Going is a monologue in which the speaker frankly appears as an agnostic if not as a downright atheist. As Larkin himself was a sceptic or an agnostic, we are justified in thinking that the speaker in the poem is Larkin himself. The upshot of the whole argument in the poem is that the churches would continue to provide some sort of emotional or spiritual solace to some people even after the current belief in God and in a future life has collapsed and given way to scepticism or agnosticism. Thus, while Larkin dismisses the concept of a church being a house of God, he yet believes that churches would continue to serve some emotional or spiritual purpose even after people's rejection of the current religious beliefs.

Church Going is really an interesting, and even entertaining, poem. A vein of irony runs through the poem. The title of the poem suggests a union of the important stages of human life—birth, marriage, and death—which going to church represents. In other words, the poem describes a strictly secular faith, and its author's speculations about what churches would become when they have fallen completely out of use. The speculations lead the poet to a conclusion in which the fear of death and the loss of religious belief are counter-acted by an unshakable faith in human and individual potential.

Answer the following questions in one or two sentences.

1. What is the state of the Church, when the speaker enters it?

Ans. The speaker enters the Church, when there is no ceremony or ritual at the Church. The building is more or less deserted. There is matting on the floor, seats, a few books and faded flowers plucked on Sunday last. There are also some brass utensils, an organ and other paraphernalia. Above all, there is absolute silence.

3. Why does the poet think of leaving the Church.

Ans. The poet signs the register, drops six Irish Pence coins and thinks of leaving. He feels that it is not worthwhile to remain there.

4. Which according to the poet are the two ways by which churches will be useful in the future when people lose faith in them.

Ans. According to the poet, when people lose their belief in religion, churches will lose their value. Some may be preserved as museums while others may be lashed by rain and occupied by sheep.

5. What according to the poet will dubious women do in the churches in the future?

Ans. According to the poet, when the churches are fully given up by their followers, women with dubious character may bring their illegitimate children and make them touch a particular stone, associated with some superstition, or the stone may be the grave of the child's father.

6. What are the different purposes that the poet identifies, that the people will visit the church for, in the future?

Ans. Some dubious women may bring their illegitimate children to touch a particular stone associated with some superstition. Some herbs capable of curing cancer may be collected from the churchyard. People may also go there to see ghosts. They may entertain superstitious beliefs that a visit to church will endow them with some mysterious power enabling them to win games and solve riddles.

7. Who according to the poets could be the last person to visit the Church?

Ans. According to the poet, the last person to visit the Church may be an antiquarian hankering after ruins. Or it may be someone who loves Christmas day celebrations. He may be longing for gowns, musical bands and the smell of myrrh. Probably the last visitor is a person like the poet himself.

8. What according to the poet can be the reason that may lead an agnostic like him to the Church?

Ans. The poet is of the view that the last man to visit the Church can sometimes be a person like himself. He may be bored with religious rituals and have little knowledge about them. He may be led to the place because it is associated with marriage, birth, death and such important events in one's life.

9. Why does the poet call the Church a "Serious house on a Serious earth"?

Ans.

The poet admits that the church has a serious purpose because people meet here on serious occasions. In that harmonious atmosphere people gather to satisfy their inner urges. Many have found their last resting place in the churchyard, and many living men will move towards church in search of wisdom.

10. Why does the speaker begin the poem with the remark "Another Church"?

Ans. The speaker tries to express a note of dislike and boredom with the word 'Another'. Evidently the speaker is disgusted with the large number of churches that serve no useful purpose.

11. Why does the poet refer to his Cycle clips?

Ans. The reference to the Cycle clips from the part of the speaker is an evidence for the fact that he has come on a bicycle. Obviously he belongs to a middle class family.

12. Why does the poet refer to the verses as "Hectoring large scale verses"?

Ans. The verses, evidently from the Bible, seem to frighten the speaker because they may refer to punishment meted out to sinners. On account of his agnosticism they fail to rouse any devotional sentiment in him.

13. Why do we treat the coinage "Unlucky place" as an instance of irony?

Ans. The coinage "Unlucky places" signifies places haunted by ghosts. It is an example of irony. A church is the dwelling of God where evil spirits never enter, or are exorcised if they do. But the speaker here implies that the church is no longer an abode of God, and fails to offer comfort to the distressed and poor.

Write short notes on the following questions.

1. Philip Larkin's thoughts on the future of Churches.

Ans. Philip Larkin is convinced that churches will come to nothingness in future, for people will, by degrees lose their faith in religion. He wonders what will happen to them when they lose their significance. Perhaps antiquarians may visit them and boast of the antiques found there. A few cathedrals may be maintained as museums. The parchment plates and pyx may be kept locked up in cases there. Women with dubious character may bring their illegitimate children there in the nights and show them the graves of their putative fathers, or ask them to touch a particular stone considered sacred. On the whole, the church will be lashed by rain and the grass growing there will be a pastureland for sheep. Herbs supposed to be a cure for cancer may be picked up from there. All told, the church will be ruined to such an extent that one may not be able to make out that it existed there. Still the poet cannot side-stet the fact that churches exist for a serious purpose, and that people gather there for important functions like marriages, births and death. It stands to reason that people may, in the future, go to churches to gain wisdom because a church is always regarded as the fountainhead of wisdom. The burial place near the church may inspire philosophical thoughts in a pensive mind. Therefore, serious-

minded persons may flock to churches just as men with nostalgic memory of Christmas may go there just to derive a little.

2. Ironical note in Church going.

Ans.

The spirit of Larkin's poem "Church Going" is ironical. The poet enters the church with dislike, and shows little reverence for the articles kept there. Yet unknown to himself he removes his cycle clips from his trouser bottom. It is an impulsive action on his part. After reading a few verses in the Bible, signing the register and dropping a few Irish pence into the box, he thinks of leaving, but something makes him linger there. He passes into a contemplative mood, and various thoughts about the future of churches pass through his mind. He wonders if churches will be regarded as places haunted by ghosts or associated with ill-luck when people lose their faith in religion. It may be visited by antiquarians or nostalgic men eager to call to mind Christmas celebrations. Though the poet confesses that he has no more esteem for the church than for a barn, he is tempted to stand there in awkward silence. It flashes upon him that churches have a serious purpose, for they are associated with decisive events like wedding, birth of children and finally death. People may, therefore, resort to churches to satisfy their inner urges. They gain wisdom and enlightenment in church which is the fountain-head of spiritual truth. The poem begins with condemnation of churches but ends in praising them.

Write essays on the following questions.

1. Larkin's Major concern in the poem "Church going", is the decline of religion. However, he tries to replace the religiousity of the churches with a secular purpose on account of his Agnostic outlook. Do you agree with this statement?
2. How does Larkin present the urban man of the postwar England, his anxieties and detachments? Explain with reference to the poem you have studied.
3. Write an essay on Philip Larkin's poetic techniques with reference to the poem you have studied.
4. Write an essay on Larkin's religious convictions as reflected in "Church going"?
5. Larkin has been regarded as one of the pessimistic poets. Do you agree with this observation? Explain with reference to the poem you have studied. Ans. See the summary analysis section.

Ans. See the summary analysis section.

2. AFTER APPLE PICKING.

About the author.

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was born in San Francisco, but he regarded New England as his home and made it the background of his poetry. He was the son of a school master, and his father died when he was ten years old. In 1892 he left school and worked in a mill, then taught at a school, became a reporter and editor of a weekly.

When he was twenty, he married Eleanor Miriam White, and from 1897 to 1899 he studied classics at Harvard. Though he never got a regular degree, he won sixteen honorary degrees. He moved to England in 1912 and settled at Beaconsfield, where he met Rupert Brooke, Lascelles, Abercrombie, Edward Thomas and other poets.

His first book, "A Boy's Will" (1913), was followed by "North of Boston" in 1914. A year later, he returned to the U.S.A. and became Professor of English at Amherst and at Harvard. He continued to write poetry, but growing impatient with the mechanised life of the West, he turned to nature and wrote poems about man living in the midst of nature. This gives his poetry an air of strangeness and wonder. He began to hit the headlines, and was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry four times ---- in 1924, 1931, 1937 and 1943. He also won the medal of the American Academy of Art and Letters in 1933, and of the Poetry Society of America in 1941. His works include "Mountain Interval" (1916), "New Hampshire" (1923), "West Running Brook" (1928), "A Further Range" (1936), "A Witness Tree" (1942), "A Masque of Reason" (1945), "Steeple Bush" (1947), "A Masque of Mercy" (1947) and "Complete Poems" (1949).

"My poems begin in delight and end in wisdom", says Robert frost. His poems are known for their simple, lucid and conversational tone and lyrical grace. They appear very simple but with a few complicated philosophical nuances at least at the end of the poem. On account of the predominance that natural and rural themes attain in his verse, he is referred to as the "American Wordsworth".

Glossary

Ladder: an often portable structure consisting of two long sides crossed by parallel runs. A step ladder.

Barrel: A large cylindrical container.

Drowsing: Becoming half sleepy.

Pane: A window pane.

Skimmed: To remove floating matter from a liquid.

Trough: A long, narrow, generally shallow receptacle for holding water or feed for animals.

Hoary: Grey or White as if with age.

Magnified: Enlarged.

Blossom: A Flower or cluster of Flowers.

Fleck: A tiny dot or mark.

Russet: A moderate to strong Brown.

Instep: The arched middle part the human foot between the toes and the ankle.

Ache: To suffer dull sustained pain.

Sway: To swing back and forth or to and fro.

Boughs: The branch of a tree.

Cellar: A room or enclosed space used for storage.

Rumbling sound: To make a long deep rolling sound.

Harvest: The act or process of gathering a Crop.

Cherish: To treat with affection and tenderness.

Bruised: To injure the underlying part of a soft tissue or body.

Spiked: Pierced.

Stubble the short stems of Hay or such stems like that.

Cider: The juice pressed from fruits, especially from Apples.

Woodchuck: a kind of bird.

Summary and analysis.

Robert Frost's poem "After Apple picking" was published in his collection "North of Boston" in the year 1914 at London. Frost called this book "A book of people" and it was hailed as a great masterpiece by Critics both in America and in England. A British critic regarded it as "one of the most revolutionary works of modern times". In the poem After Apple picking also, we see the simplicity, Conversational tone and the philosophical

nature that we encounter in his other poems in this collection such as "Home burial" and "Mending wall". The poem concerns itself with the daily work of gaining a livelihood or rather with the sensation of fatigue and fulfilment after the day's work is over. It is basically a pastoral poem.

The poem can be paraphrased in the following words.

At the end of a long day of apple picking, the narrator is tired and thinks about his day. He has felt sleepy and even trance-like since the early morning, when he looked at the apple trees through a thin sheet of ice that he lifted from the drinking trough. He feels himself beginning to dream but cannot escape the thought of his apples even in sleep: he sees visions of apples growing from blossoms, falling off trees, and piling up in the cellar. As he gives himself over to sleep, he wonders if it is the normal sleep of a tired man or the deep winter sleep of death.

In terms of form, this poem is strikingly unconventional, because it weaves in and out of traditional structure. Approximately twenty-five of the forty-two lines are written in standard iambic pentameter, and there are twenty end-rhymes throughout the poem. This wandering structure allows Frost to emphasize the sense of moving between a waking and dream-like state, just as the narrator does. The repetition of the term sleep, even after its paired rhyme (heap) has long been forgotten, also highlights the narrator's gradual descent into dreaming.

In some respects, this poem is simply about apple picking. After a hard day of work, the apple farmer completely fatigued but is still unable to escape the mental act of picking apples: he still sees the apples in front of him, still feels the ache in his foot as if he is standing on a ladder, still bemoans the fate of the flawless apples that fall to the ground and must be consigned to the cider press.

Yet, as in all of Frost's poems, the narrator's everyday act of picking apples also speaks to a more metaphorical discussion of seasonal changes and death. Although the narrator does not say when the poem takes place, it is clear that winter is nearly upon him: the grass is hoary, the surface of the water in the trough is frozen enough to be used as a pane of glass, and there is an overall sense of the essence of winter. Death is coming, but the narrator does not know if the death will be renewed by spring in a few months or if everything will stay buried under mindless snow for all eternity.

Because of the varying rhymes and tenses of the poem, it is not clear when the narrator is dreaming or awake. One possibility is that the entirety of the poem takes place within a dream. The narrator is already asleep and is automatically reliving the days harvest as he dreams. This explanation clarifies the disjointed narrative -- shifting from topic to topic as

the narrator dreams -- as well as the narrators assertion that he was well upon my way to sleep before the sheet of ice fell from his hands.

Another explanation is that the narrator is dying, and his rambling musings on apple picking are the fevered hallucinations of a man about to leave the world of the living. With that in mind, the narrators declaration that he is done with apple-picking now has more finality, almost as if his vision of the apple harvest is a farewell. Even so, he can be satisfied in his work because, with the exception of a few apples on the tree, he fulfilled all of his obligations to the season and to himself. Significantly, even as he falls into a complete sleep, the narrator is unable to discern if he is dying or merely sleeping; the two are merged completely in the essence of the oncoming winter, and Frost refuses to tell the reader what actually happens.

The sequence and tenses of the poem are a bit confusing and lead one to wonder what is dreamed, what is real, and where the sleep begins. It is understandable that the speaker should be tired at the end of a days apple picking. But the poem says that the speaker was well on his way to sleep before he dropped the sheet of ice, and this presumably occurred in the morning. The speaker has tried and failed to rub the strangeness from his sight. Is this a strangeness induced by exhaustion or indicative of the fact that he is dreaming already

When we read *After Apple-Picking* metaphorically, we may want to look at it as a poem about the effort of writing poetry. The cider-apple heap then makes a nice metaphor for saved and recycled bits of poetry, and the long sleep sounds like creative (permanent?) hibernation. This is one possible metaphoric substitution among many; it seems plausible enough (though nowise definitive or exclusive).

Answer the following questions in one or two sentences.

1. What does the speaker wonder about, as he feels sleepy?

Ans. The speaker is tired and feels sleep coming on, but he wonders whether it is a normal end of the day sleep or it is something deeper like death.

2. What is implied through the sleep of the woodchuck?

Ans. The sleep of the Woodchuck signifies the sleep of the winter and winter in the metaphoric language of seasons strong associations with death.

3. What all are the hints that the poet uses to convey that it is Winter?

Ans. There are many hints in the poem which give the reader indications of Winter. The scent of apples is the essence of winter sleep; the water in the trough froze into a pane of glass; the grass is hoary (i.e., frosty, or Frosty).

4. What all could be the possible implications of the term "Harvest of Apples"?

Ans. The harvest of apples can be read as a harvest of any human effort--study, laying bricks, writing poetry, etc.--and this poem looks at the end of the harvest.

5. What is interesting about the sequence and tenses used in the poem?

Ans.

The sequence and tenses of the poem are a bit confusing and lead one to wonder what is dreamed, what is real, and where the sleep begins.

6. What all could be the implications of the "Strangeness" that the speaker tries to rub of his eyes?

Ans. It could be a strangeness produced by exhaustion or it could also be indicative of the fact that he is dreaming already.

7. How far it is possible to consider the poem "After Apple picking" as poem on writing poetry?

Ans. When we read After Apple-Picking metaphorically, we may want to look at it as a poem about the effort of writing poetry. The cider-apple heap then makes a nice metaphor for saved and recycled bits of poetry, and the long sleep sounds like creative (permanent?) hibernation.

8. What does the poet see in his dream?

Ans. The poet sees in his dream, visions of apples growing from blossoms, falling off trees, and piling up in the cellar.

Write short notes on the following questions.

1. Frost's style.

Ans. "My poems begin in delight and end in wisdom", says Frost about his poems. This simple beginning and later developing into a complicated philosophical pattern is very evident in the present poem also. Although it appears as a simple poem on Apple picking at the beginning, towards its close, it raises many questions and ambiguities about the nature of the sleep and the nature of the dream.

As usual, here also Frost uses a very simple conversational tone and it is also autobiographical like many of his most famous poems. Here also, Frost does not leave any clear cut conclusion or solution to the problem that he cites. He simply exposes the idea and its multiple nuances to the reader and gives the reader a space to interpret and enjoy the poem. Again, even though Frost is very simple and lyrical, his simple words and coinages suggest a lot than what he intends. Thus After apple picking as many of Frost's poems is another chapter from the life of a New England farmer probably leaves the reader in a state of bafflement and wonder.

2. The poem After Apple picking as a metaphoric poem.

Ans. One of the exclusive qualities of Frost as a poet is his suggestiveness. He does not state many things but leaves the reader a space for imagination and interpretation. However, he gives the reader, right clues to suggest plausible meanings.

Even though the poem appears like a simple one about the feelings of a farmer about Apple picking and his fatigue and sleep, Frost's typical style and use of language enables the reader to carve out many layers of interpretation to many of the lines. For example, the sleep of the Woodchuck suggests the sleep of the winter and winter, in the metaphoric language of seasons, has strong associations with death. Hints of winter are abundant: The scent of apples is the essence of winter sleep; the water in the trough froze into a pane of glass; the grass is hoary (i.e., frosty, or Frosty). It is possible for us to look at this poem metaphorically as a poem about the writing of poetry. The cider-apple heap then makes a nice metaphor for saved and recycled bits of poetry, and the long sleep sounds like creative (permanent?) hibernation. Thus in some respects, this poem is simply about apple picking. After a hard day of work, the apple farmer completely fatigued but is still unable to escape the mental act of picking apples: he still sees the apples in front of him, still feels the ache in his foot as if he is standing on a ladder, still bemoans the fate of the flawless apples that fall to the ground and must be consigned to the cider press.

Yet, as in all of Frost's poems, the narrator's everyday act of picking apples also speaks to a more metaphorical discussion of seasonal changes and death.

Write essays on the following questions.

1. Though Frost's poems are simple, they contain in their inner core a more complex and metaphoric meaning. How far do you agree with this observation in the context of the poem "After Apple picking"?

Ans. See the summary analysis section.

2. Frost is a master craftsman when he portrays Nature and Human character. Explain with reference to the poem you have studied.

Ans. See the summary analysis section.

3. "North of Boston" was described as one of the most revolutionary works written in that age. "After Apple picking" is a best example from that collection to prove its greatness. How far do you agree with this view?

Ans. Refer to the section summary and analyses.

4. Beyond the mundane every day life that Frost deals with in his poems, he gives his readers a space for imagination and interpretation. Explain with reference to the poem you have studied.

Ans. See the summary analysis section.

3.STRANGE MEETING.

About the author.

Wilfred Edward Salter Owen who is generally known as Wilfred Owen was born at Oswestry, Shropshire, England on 18 March 1893. He had a very short life like Shelley and Keats and died in the age of 25. He was an English poet and soldier and was one of the leading poets of the First World War. He belonged to a school of poets called War poets who in their works tried to portray the horror and agony of war in highly touching ways. Owen was particularly known for His shocking, realistic war poetry on the horrors of trenches and gas warfare. He was highly influenced by his friend and fellow mentor Siegfried Sassoon in this regard. His style was different from that of his predecessors like Rupert Brooke. However his war poems are often considered the best one in that class.

Among his best-known works most of which were published posthumously are " Dulce et Decorum Est", " Insensibility", " Anthem for Doomed Youth","Futility" and "Strange Meeting". His early influences included the Bible and the "big six" of romantic poetry, particularly John Keats. His experience as a soldier during the first world war has also influenced him in his career as a War poet. Owen died on 4th November 1918 at the age of 25 at Sambre Oise Canal, France.

Glossary.

Battle: War.

Profound: deep.

Dull: Stupid or weak.

Tunnel: An underground or underwater passage.

Scooped: Carried in a shovel like utensil. Also means a narrow thing. Here means very old and loosely constructed.

Titanic: Huge or very big and enormous in size.

Groined:To provide or build with groins.

Encumbered: Burdened.

Groaned: To voice a deep inarticulate sound as of pain, grief or displeasure.

Bestirred: To cause to become active, rouse.

Probe: Search deeply.

Sprang up: Jump up.

Sullen: Gloomy or sulky.

Grained: Here deformed.

Flues: A tube.

Moan: A low sustained mournful cry.

Undone: To erase or reverse.

Braided: To interweave three or more strands, strips or lengths of something in a diagonally overlapping pattern.

Mocks: Ridicules.

Grieve: to be mournful or sorrowful.

Glee: Joy or delight.

To distil: To separate.

Spoiled: Damaged or ruined.

Discontent: Unhappiness or dissatisfaction.

Boil: To evaporate.

Swift: Quick or fast.

Tigress: A female Tiger.

Trek: Move slowly.

Mystery: Something that cannot be understood, something that is baffling or confusing.

Mastery: possession of consummate skill.

Retreating: Withdrawing.

Vain: Fruitless.

Citadel: A fortress.

Clogged: Blocked or obstructed.

Taint: spoiled or contaminated. Polluted.

Stint: To limit or restrict.

Cess: Luck or success.

Frowned: To express contempt or disregard probably through a wrinkling of the brow.

Jabbed: To stab abruptly.

Parried: To deflect or avoid.

Loath: Unwilling or disinclined. Reluctant.

A summary and analysis of the poem.

Strange Meeting is a poem by Wilfred Owen. It deals with the atrocities of World War I. The poem was written sometime in 1918 and was published in 1919 after Owen's death. It was published in 1919 in Edith Sitwell's anthology *Wheels: an Anthology of Verse* and a year later in Siegfried Sassoon's 1920 collection of Owen's poems. The poem is narrated by a soldier who goes to the underworld to escape the hell of the battlefield and there he meets the enemy soldier he killed the day before.

This poem has been called one of Owen's "most haunting and complex war poems". The poem can be paraphrased in the following words. The speaker escapes from battle and proceeds down a long tunnel through ancient granite formations. Along his way he hears the groan of sleepers, either dead or too full of thoughts to get up. As he looks at them one leaps up; the soldier has recognized him and moves his hands as if to bless him. Because of the soldier's "dead smile" the speaker knows that he is in Hell.

On the face of the "vision" the speaker sees a thousand fears, but the blood, guns, or moans of above did not reach into their underground retreat. The speaker tells the soldier that there is no reason to mourn, and he replies that there is it is the "undone years" and the "hopelessness". The soldier says his hope is the same as the speaker's; he also tells him he once went hunting for beauty in the world, but that beauty made a mockery of time. He knows the truth of what he did, which is "the pity of war, the pity war distilled", but now he can never share it.

The soldier/vision continues, saying men will go on with what is left to them, or they will die as well. They will not break their ranks even though "nations trek from progress". He used to have courage and wisdom. He would wash the blood from the wheels of chariots. He wanted to pour his spirit out, but not in war. Finally, he says to the speaker that "I am the enemy you killed, my friend," and that he knew him in the dark. It was yesterday that the speaker "jabbed and killed" him, and now it is time to sleep.

"Strange Meeting" is one of Wilfred Owen's most famous, and most enigmatic, poems. T.S. Eliot referred to "Strange Meeting" as a "technical achievement of great originality" and "one of the most moving pieces of verse inspired by the war." That war, of course, is the central element in most of Owen's poems. The poem is renowned for its technical innovation, particularly the pararhyme, so named by Edmund Blusson in regards to Owen's use of assonant endings. A pararhyme is a slant, or partial rhyme in which the words have similar consonants before and after unlike vowels escaped and scooped, groined and grained, hair and hour. Almost all the end lines in this poem are pararhyme; the last line is a notable exception. The critics have noted, how this rhyme scheme helps Owen create the bleak, gloomy and underground atmosphere of the poem.

In terms of the meaning of the poem, it describes a soldier's descent into Hell where he meets a dead enemy soldier who introduces himself as the man the speaker killed. The dead man talks about the horror of war and the inability for anyone but those involved in fighting to grasp the essential truth of the experience. There is more than what meets the eye, however, and many critics believe that the man in hell is the soldier's "Other", or his double. A man's encounter with his double is a repeated theme in Romantic literature. It is seen in Shelley, Dickens, and Yeats for example. Another critic reads the poem as a dream vision, with the soldier descending into his mind and encountering his poetic self. It is a mythological and psychological journey.

The title of the poem seems to be taken from Shelley's "The revolt of Islam". Most of the critics consider the following lines as the source of the title.

"And one whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside, / With quivering lips and humid eyes; -and all / Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide / Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall / In a strange land." Siegfried Sassoon called this poem "Owen's passport to immortality". On the poet's memorial in the grounds of Shrewsbury Abbey is written the following words: "I am the enemy you killed, my friend."

Structurally the poem comprises 44 lines of iambic pentameter divided into three irregular stanzas which do not correspond exactly with the poem's natural constituents. The pararhymed couplets, as with the metre, are subject to minor variations. Owen was a master of poetic devices; he often used pararhyme, half-rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and assonance to fully involve his reader in the tone of his poem. Pararhyme is when the stressed vowel sounds differ, but are flanked by identical or similar consonants; the second rhyme is usually lower in pitch than the first, which produces the effect of dissonance, and failure. Examples of pararhyme are: groined/groaned (lines 3-4), and hall/hell (lines 9-10). Half-rhyme is consonance on the final consonants of the words involved. Consonance is the repetition of the same consonant two or more times in short succession. Half-rhyme can introduce a slight note

of discord. An example of Half-rhyme is: swiftness/tigress (line 28). Alliteration is the repetition of an initial consonant sound in the first syllables of a series of words and/or phrases, which helps to convey imagery and stress timing. It also helps to make a line more memorable. An example of this is: grieves/grieves (line 21). Onomatopoeia is when a word imitates or suggests the source of the sound that it describes. Examples of this are: groaned (line 4), sprang (line 6), and thumped/moan (line 13). Assonance is the refrain of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences. An example of this would be through/wounds (line 38).

It seemed that out of battle I escaped

Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped

Through granites which titanic wars had groined. (lines 1-3) The narrator begins the poem with "it seemed," which suggests a sense of uncertainty, like it could all be just a dream. There are only a few ways to escape battle, which are: you are injured or wounded and sent home, you are killed, you are captured that is caught by force by the enemy, you become a run away soldier or peace is declared; however, even if you manage to escape the war physically, the war will still be with you mentally. The way that this poem is written makes the reader believe that the soldier is dead, and he is now descending the tunnels into hell. "Dull tunnel" refers to Siegfried Sassoon's poem *The Rear-Guard* which depicts a soldier groping his way along a tunnel that is pitch-black to get to the fresh air of the battlefield above. The fact that the narrator says that the tunnel is profound leads us to believe that there is something special about this tunnel. This tunnel serves as the "mouth of hell." "Long since scooped" means that the tunnel was dug a long time before he went down into the tunnel. This journey through the tunnel is a difficult one, because of the granite that had been shaken loose by the "titanic wars" above. World Wars are characterized by their enormity in size, power, and force, which also happens to be the definition of the word titanic. "Groined" is used here in place of the word grooved; the walls of the tunnel had been grooved by the titanic wars displacing the granite.

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,

Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.

Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.

And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,"

By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell. (lines 4-10)

The "sleepers" in the tunnel are most likely other soldiers that have died in battle. They are encumbered by not only their uniforms and kits, but also by their emotional sufferings; they were not able to rest in peace just yet, because they feel guilty about the things that they had done to their fellow human beings. These men were too caught-up in their own thoughts to rouse to action. It is almost like they are in purgatory. The narrator went along studying the men in the tunnel until he came upon one soldier that sprang up and stared at him. The other soldier recognized the piteous confusion on the narrator's face. The soldier lifted his hands to the narrator in a desperate need to bless him, which makes us think that the soldier is thanking the narrator for some reason. The soldier smiles, which is an example of irony; the two men are in hell, which is supposed to be a dreadful place, but the soldier smiles, which indicates happiness. "Sullen hall" means that the tunnel is gloomily silent: morose; the tunnel is sort of like a lobby or waiting room to hell. "Dead smile" is an oxymoron; if one is dead then that person can't smile, but the narrator uses it to describe how empty the soldier's soul is. The war had caused his emotions to flip much like a soldier's morality is flipped; in a civilized world killing is wrong and punishable, but in war it is expected, so a smile that once meant happiness now means sadness.

With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;

Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,

And no guns thumped, or down.

With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;

Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,

And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan. (lines 11-13)

The "thousand pains" that the narrator is referring to are the number of bad things that the soldier had done or were done to him. The narrator equates the soldier's face with a "vision;" a vision is defined as something seen otherwise than by ordinary sight (as in a dream or trance), which is further evidence that the narrator is dreaming all of this. The soldier's face is described as being "grained" with wrinkles or worry lines much like the tunnel has been "groined" by the "titanic wars." The upper ground refers to the battle field, which usually has wounded or dead bodies of soldiers. This "hall" is a sort of ironic haven from the war; they were free from the sounds and bloodiness of the war. "Flues" are passages (as in a chimney) for directing a current (as of smoke or gases).

"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn." (line 14)

This line marks the beginning of the dialogue between the narrator and the soldier. Aside from this line, the narrator is the listener and the soldier is the orator. This line introduces the paradox (a statement that seems contrary to common sense and yet is perhaps true) of "strange friend." The narrator tells the soldier not to mourn, because he probably feels that hell is better than having to endure the ravages of war.

"None," said that other "save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled. (lines 15-25)

The soldier begins his monologue by saying that he has cause to mourn, because of all the years that he does not get to live. The soldier states that he and the narrator share a similar purpose and identity; they both had grand hopes for their lives, but were cheated out of their futures. He "went hunting wild after the wildest beauty in the world," which corresponds to Owen's quest to find both beauty and truth when he was younger. Owen's early poetry was greatly influenced by two English Romantic poets: John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley; Keats was known for his sensual imagery, and Shelley was known for his idealism. The soldier (and on some level Owen) realizes that the romantic world view that he once had was false.

Boy's dream of girls with braided hair, and they mindlessly flit from one task to another seeking out the "wildest beauty;" but the beauty they seek mocks them for their naivete, because the world is unpredictable and grotesque. Other men laughed at his innocence, but he quickly learned the horrors of war and his innocence was lost. One thing to keep in mind here is that many soldiers during WWI were only eighteen years old, and some were even younger; so they went from the sheltered life of school and parents to one where they had to fight and kill to survive. The war distilled (purified) pity; Owen's preface to his poems stated "my subject is war, and the pity of war. The poetry is in the

pity." Owen wanted people to empathize with what the soldiers had to go through, instead of treating them like they were Greek Gods or superhuman. Killing and feeling like your life is in peril every day wears on men; people back at home expected these men to come home unchanged, but that was often not the case. Many men came home with psychological disorders or with broken or missing limbs; propaganda glorifies war when it is actually not as heroic as the government wants people to believe.

Now men will go content with what we spoiled,

Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.

They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.

None will break ranks, through nations trek from progress. (26-29)

Soldiers are the ones who fight for a country's freedom, and those at home don't really think too hard about how their freedom is achieved; instead they are "content" (satisfied) with what the soldiers have "spoiled" (robbed, pillaged) for them, namely their freedom. The men that the soldier is referring to could also be his fellow soldiers, who were proud of what they had done to their enemies, and for their country. Or these men could be unsatisfied by what they had accomplished. Their blood boils, which is an indication that they are very angry, and blood would be spilled whether it was theirs or their enemies. They are killing machines, natural predators like the tigress hunting her prey. The soldiers will stick together, even though they are far from home, and the modern world; all they have to rely on is their fellow soldiers, they need each other to survive.

Courage was mine, and I had mystery,

Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:

To miss the march of this retreating world

Into vain citadels that are not walled.

Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,

I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,

Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.

I would have poured my spirit without stint

But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.

Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were. (lines 30-39)

In this section, poetry and reality collide; the soldier begins by romanticizing who he was before the war, and about the things he would have done, but he is abruptly brought back to reality. The Romantic Era was between late 18th century and mid-19th century, and it rejected "the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality" (Encyclopedia of Britannica). The soldier (and Owen) embraced this movement in his youth. His youthful ideals made him courageous, and gave him mystery; they also made him wise, which gave him mastery. "March" alludes to soldier's marching the "retreating world." "Retreating world" can have a few meanings: the world is dying, loss of civility, or the loss of humanity; war causes immeasurable consequences on the world, bombs don't just kill humans, they kill nature. The world becomes like a "vain" (worthless) "citadel" (a fortress commanding a city; stronghold) that has no protective barrier; the world becomes unsafe. "Chariot wheels" references an ancient vehicle, which was often used in war. When the blood became too thick and prevented them from traveling any further, the soldier says that he would wash away the blood from the wheel wells. This is a metaphor for cleansing the soul; the soldiers kill to stay alive and therefore they amass large quantities of blood, which bogs-down their souls, and washing the wheels helps them to recover their souls. "Even with truths that lie too deep for taint" refers to William Wordsworth poem "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" : "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears" (line 203). The soldier states that he would have given his all to the war, but he did not sign up for all of this death. "Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were" perhaps means that the soldiers killed so much that they were metaphorically sweating the blood of their victims.

"I am the enemy you killed, my friend.

I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned

Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.

I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.

Let us sleep now -- ." (40-44)

This last stanza solidifies the narrator and the soldier's bond. There is a change of tone; and the language is mostly monosyllabic. The two enemies become friends, and forgiveness is evident. The dark tunnel becomes light, and they can see each other. The narrator killed the soldier the day before. "Parried" means to ward off a weapon or blow; the soldier tried to avoid being stabbed, but his hands were reluctant to do the deed. The final line is further evidence that this poem is describing a dream, because you dream when you sleep. Some could also interpret this line as these men joining together in death, but the ellipses indicates that there is more to come and if they died that would be the end.

Answer the following questions in one or two sentences,.

1. What is unusual about the subject matter of the poem "Strange meeting"? How does it differ from the other war poems?

Ans. In Strange meeting, there is an uncertainty of what is really going on. For some, it seems that the poetic voice is in a coma-like dream, where fantasy is mixed with The past memories of the reality of war. For others, it appears like a monologue of a dead soldier that he delivers when he meets in hell with one of the soldiers he has killed during war. The unusual subject matter arises from the dreamlike or death sensation, which is achieved from the beginning when the poetic voice explains that it "seemed" that out of battle he "escaped". This striking beginning adds mystery to the poem, which makes it different from other war poems.

2. Where exactly does the poem take place? How does the setting affects its tone and meaning?

Ans. The poem takes place in Hell where the dead soldier meets the enemy he has killed. This extraordinary setting plays a great role in giving the poem its bleak, underground and pessimistic tone.

3. How does the speaker understands that he is in Hell?

Ans. Because of the dead smile that the speaker sees on the soldier's face, he concludes that he is in Hell.

4. What according to the speaker is the truth of what he had done?

Ans. According to the speaker the truth of what he had done was the pity of war, the pity that was distilled by the war. However, he says that then he could not share it with the soldier whom he sees in the Hell.

5. What does the soldier say to the speaker finally?

Ans. Finally the soldier says to the speaker that he was the enemy the speaker had killed in the war on the previous day and even in the darkness he could identify the speaker.

6. What is a pararhyme?

Ans. A pararhyme is a slant, or partial rhyme in which the words have similar consonants before and after unlike vowels escaped and scooped, groined and grained, hair and hour. Almost all the end lines in this poem are pararhyme; the last line is a notable exception.

7. What is the importance of Pararhyme in this poem?

Ans. The Pararhyme along with other technical features that Owen uses in this poem play a great role in giving the poem the bleak, melancholic and subteranian atmosphere of the poem.

8. What is the implication of the term 'Titanic wars' in the poem Strange meeting?

Ans. The term 'Titanic wars' implies not only the war that is referred to in this context, but also the conflicts through out the history on a gigantic scale.

9. What can be the message of the poem in his concluding lines?

Ans. The message of the concluding lines of the poem is that mankind must seek reconciliation and the truth untold embrace pity the greater love.

10. Why does the narrator begin the poem with the words "It seems"?

Ans. This beginning words suggest the sense of uncertainty Like it could all be just a dream.

11. What is the implication of the coinage "Long since scooped"?

Ans. It means that The tunnel was dug a long time before he went down into the tunnel. This journey through the tunnel is a difficult one, because the Granites were shaken lose by the Titanic wars above.

12. How are the soldiers in the tunnel burdened or encumbered?

Ans. The soldiers in the tunnel are not only burdened by their uniforms and kits, but they are equally troubled by their emotional suffering. They were not yet able to rest in peace, for, they are still feeling guilty of the cruelties that they had inflicted on their enemies.

13. What is an Oxymoron and give one example for it from the poem?

Ans. Oxymoron is a figure of speech where two contradictory or quiet opposing things are compared or fused in a coinage. Dead smile is a beautiful example for it from the poem.

Write short notes on the following questions in one or two paragraphs.

1. The success of the poem Strange meeting owes much to its technical perfection though the theme is a very notable one. Comment.

Ans. The strange meeting is one of the most famous poems of Wilfred owen. Being a war poem, it tries to communicate to the reader the horror, confusion and agony that wars create. As a War poem written in the context of the First World war, this theme is very

striking. However, the success of the poem owes much to its technical perfection. T.S. Eliot referred to "Strange Meeting" as a "technical achievement of great originality" and "one of the most moving pieces of verse inspired by the war."

Structurally the poem comprises 44 lines of iambic pentameter divided into three irregular stanzas which do not correspond exactly with the poem's natural constituents. The pararhymed couplets, as with the metre, are subject to minor variations.

Owen was a master of poetic devices; he often used pararhyme, half-rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and assonance to fully involve his reader in the tone of his poem. Pararhyme is when the stressed vowel sounds differ, but are flanked by identical or similar consonants; the second rhyme is usually lower in pitch than the first, which produces the effect of dissonance, and failure. Examples of pararhyme are: groined/groaned (lines 3-4), and hall/hell (lines 9-10). Half-rhyme is consonance on the final consonants of the words involved. Consonance is the repetition of the same consonant two or more times in short succession. Half-rhyme can introduce a slight note of discord. An example of Half-rhyme is: swiftness/tigress (line 28). Alliteration is the repetition of an initial consonant sound in the first syllables of a series of words and/or phrases, which helps to convey imagery and stress timing. It also helps to make a line more memorable. An example of this is: grieves/grieves (line 21). Onomatopoeia is when a word imitates or suggests the source of the sound that it describes. Examples of this are: groaned (line 4), sprang (line 6), and thumped/moan (line 13). Assonance is the refrain of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences. An example of this would be through/wounds (line 38). Thus it is Owen's technical skills that helps him achieve the desired goal of shocking the reader.

2. The strange meeting is a poem of ambiguities and confusion. Comment.

Ans. There are different views on what really is happening in the poem Strange meeting. Some critics are of the view that it is a dream, whereas some others consider it as a conversation between two dead soldiers in the Hell. Whatever may be the nature of interpretation, the complex structure of the poem along with its thematic novelty leave the reader with a lot of confusions and ambiguities. Many of the things are merely suggested and the potential for interpreting them may change as per the awareness of the reader.

The opening line beginning "It seemed that....." ushers into a dream-like world in which a meeting for the two protagonists is for us a meeting with ambiguity. "I knew we stood in hell," says the first speaker. A strange meeting in an even stranger meeting place for what will become an act of grace. A strange meeting and an even stranger fate for ones who are war's innocent victims.

Who is the first speaker? We might assume it is Owen himself, the first-person narrator, yet the second speaker is one who delivers the message-Owen's message. There is again ambiguity in Owen's description of the soldiers in the Hell, for although one man springs up and lifts his hands his smile is dead while others are "fast in thought or death...." So often in this poem we find ourselves on the edge of uncertainty. There is again ambiguity in the question, Why the distressful hands are lifted. Is the soldier going to bless the speaker, or is he expressing his gratitude? Even at the close of the poem we are not sure of what is the message that Owen wants to leave for the reader. We may guess that he is advising the humanity to reconcile with the quarrels of the past and present and to construct a bright future. However, the soldier's call to sleep could be viewed as an instance of escapism. Thus the poem is noted for the tone of ambiguity, confusion and dilemma that it creates, as it is for the mastery of construction.

Write essays on the following questions.

1. "The strange meeting is one of Wilfred Owen's most famous and most enigmatic poems". How far do you agree with this statement.

Ans. Please see the summary analysis section for the answer.

2. How apt is the title "Strange meeting" for the poem?

Ans. Refer to the summary analysis section for the answer.

3. The poet Ted Hughes noted in his writings on this poem that "few poets can ever have written with such urgent, defined, practical purpose." Do you agree with this view.

Ans. See the summary analysis section.

The Strange meeting is one of Owen's most haunting and complex war poems. Justify this statement.

Ans. See the summary analysis section.

As a war poet, Wilfred Owen could surpass many of his predecessors and contemporaries belonging to that category. Explain with reference to the poem you have studied.

Ans. See the summary analysis section for the answer.

MODULE IV: DRAMA

ARMS AND THE MAN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

The greatest of the many Irish writers who have written fine plays in English, George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. As opposed to the dictum of the 'art for arts sake' Shaw strongly believed and wrote 'art for life's sake'. Though he began his writing with poetry and novels, it is as a playwright that the world recognizes him. His major works include social plays that explore social issues and draw awareness to the social evils of the day, political plays and of course the 'plays of ideas' that engage his audience intellectually and his plays are often marked by monologues and dialogues in which characters often engage in intellectual debates. There has perhaps been no other writer in history whose works have influenced and reformed the mindset of the people like the works of Shaw did and continues to do. He is, in fact, one of the very few dramatists who has an adjective named after him (eg. "a Shavian wit").

Shaw was born in 1856 to a father who was an unsuccessful corn merchant and a mother who was a professional singer who supported herself and her children. Shaw learned good operatic music from his mother and her friends which later influenced his writing. He went to school in Dublin until he was fifteen and then became a clerk and cashier. His father's incompetence as the head of the family made Shaw independent of mind and spirit which enabled him to look upon mankind objectively without being influenced by custom or other people's conventional ideas of right and wrong.

He shifted to London in 1876 and having gained a love of music from his mother his first profitable writing was as a music critic and literary criticism under the pseudonym "*Corno di Bassetto*" ("basset horn"), in which capacity he wrote many highly articulate pieces of journalism which occupied him until 1898, when he reached the age of forty two. In the same year, Shaw married Charlotte Payne-Townshend, a fellow Fabian, whom he survived.

His initial attempts at creative literary writing produced five unsuccessful novels. His main talent was for drama, and his first play *Widower's Houses* dealt with the evils of London slums. A play on a genuine social evil was new in the English theatres and had no success. His following plays on real human problems such as prostitution (*Mrs. Warren's Profession*), war (*Arms and the Man*), religious intolerance (*The Devil's Disciple*), revenge (*Captain Brassbound's Conversion*) and so on were extremely unpopular with many people

and years passed before he could get money out of them. But for many he became the champion of intellectual freedom and new ways of thought.

As Shaw's experience and popularity increased, his plays and prefaces became more voluble about reforms he advocated, without diminishing their success as entertainments. Such works, including *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906), display Shaw's matured views, for he was approaching 50 when he wrote them. By the 1910s, Shaw was a well-established playwright. New works such as *Fanny's First Play* (1911) and *Pygmalion* (1912) had long runs in front of large London audiences. His later major works include *Back to Methuselah* (1921), *Saint Joan* (1923) and *The Apple Cart* (1929).

Shaw wrote more than 60 plays. He was also an essayist, novelist and short story writer. Nearly all his writings address prevailing social problems, but have a vein of comedy which makes their stark themes more palatable. Issues which engaged Shaw's attention included education, marriage, religion, government, health care, and class privilege. He was most angered by what he perceived as the exploitation of the working class.

An ardent socialist, Shaw wrote many brochures and speeches for the Fabian Society. The Fabians wanted to bring about a gradual revolutionary change. He became an accomplished orator in the furtherance of its causes, which included gaining equal rights for men and women, alleviating abuses of the working class, rescinding private ownership of productive land, and promoting healthy lifestyles. For a short time he was active in local politics, serving on the London County Council.

He is the only person to have been awarded both a Nobel Prize in Literature (1925) and an Oscar (1938), for his contributions to literature and for his work on the film *Pygmalion* (adaptation of his play of the same name), respectively. George Bernard Shaw died on November 2, 1950.

INTRODUCTION

One of Shaw's aims in this play is to attack the romantic heroics of war. He wanted to present a realistic account of war and to remove all pretensions of nobility from war. It is not, however, an anti-war play. Instead, it is a satire on those attitudes which would glorify war. In order to create this satire, Shaw chose as his title the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the Roman epic which glorifies war and the heroic feats of man in war, and which begins, "Of arms and the man I sing. . . ." Virgil's poem sings of several battles, and of a hero, Aeneas, who led the defeated Trojans to Rome to found there a new nation. Virgil glorifies war and the heroic deeds of Aeneas on the battle field.

Shaw had already become a successful art critic and socialist lecturer when he wrote *Arms and the Man* in 1894. It was one of Shaw's earliest attempts at writing for the theatre, and also his first commercial success as a playwright. Accustomed to the melodramas of the age, however, even sophisticated audiences often did not recognize the serious purpose of Shaw's play.

Acceptance of the play did not come until 1898, when *Arms and the Man* was published as one of the "pleasant" plays in Shaw's collection called *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*, and it subsequently gained popularity as a written work. The other pleasant plays included are *Candida*, *You Never Can Tell*, and *The Man of Destiny*. In place of brief stage directions, Shaw's plays also included lengthy instructions and descriptions.

Set during the short war between Serbia and Bulgaria, when the play opens, we hear about the magnificent exploits which were performed by Major Sergius Saranoff during his daring cavalry raid, an event that turned the war against the Serbs and gave victory for the Bulgarians. He thus becomes Raina Petkoff's ideal hero. But the more that we learn about this raid, the more we realize that it was a futile, ridiculous gesture, one that bordered on an utter suicidal escapade. In contrast, Captain Bluntschli's actions in Raina's bedroom strike us, at first, as being the actions of a coward. (Bluntschli is a Swiss, a professional soldier fighting for the Serbs.) He climbs up a waterpipe and onto a balcony to escape capture, he threatens a defenseless woman with his gun, he allows her to hide him behind the curtains, and then he reveals that he carries chocolates rather than cartridges in his cartridge box because chocolates are more practical on the battlefield. Yet, as the play progresses, Bluntschli's unheroic actions become reasonable when we see that he survives, whereas had the war continued, Sergius' absurd heroic exploits would soon have left him dead.

Throughout the play, Shaw presents his material so as to satirize the glories associated with war and to ultimately suggest that aristocratic pretensions have no place in today's wars, which are won by using business-like efficiency, such as the practical matters of which Bluntschli is a master. For example, Bluntschli is able to deal with the business of dispensing an army to another town with ease, while this was a feat that left the aristocrats (Major Petkoff and Saranoff) completely baffled. Similarly, the play is also a satire on the foolishness of basing your affections on romantic idealistic notions of love and marriage.

This early play by Shaw, therefore, cuts through the noble ideals of war and the 'higher love' that Raina and Sergius claim to share; *Arms and the Man* presents a world where the practical man who lives with no illusions and no poetic views about either love or war is shown to be the superior creature.

PREFACE

Unlike many of Shaw's other plays, there is no actual, separate preface to this particular play. However, there was a preface to the original volume of plays which contains this play and three others: *The Pleasant Plays*, 1898, revised in 1921. As Shaw mentioned elsewhere, a preface seldom or never concerns the play which is to follow the preface, and this preface is no exception. Instead, Shaw used this preface to comment upon the new style of drama (or simply what he calls New Drama). It is a name applied to dramas such as his or the Norwegian writer Ibsen's, plays which were not written to be commercial successes, but to be intellectual vehicles which would make the audience think about their life—plays of ideas. Shaw refuses to be influenced by popular demands for romantic, unrealistic situations. According to Shaw, theater should become a place for the discussion of ideas in a way that is delightful to the audience.

CHARACTERS

Raina Petkoff: A high spirited romantic idealist of twenty-three who views war in terms of noble and heroic deeds. The only child of Major Petkoff and Catherine Petkoff.

Catherine Petkoff: Raina's mother. She looks and acts like a peasant, but wears fashionable dressing gowns and tea gowns all the time in an effort to appear to be a Viennese lady.

Louka: The Petkoffs' female servant who is proud and looks down on servility. She is young, ambitious and wishes to rise in life. Nicola wishes to marry her but she has other plans.

Major Petkoff: The inept, fifty-year-old father of Raina; he is wealthy by Bulgarian standards, but he is also unread, uncouth, and incompetent. Acquired his rank in the Bulgarian army mainly because of his family wealth than ability.

SergiusSaranoff: The extremely handsome young Bulgarian officer who leads an attack against the Serbs which was an overwhelming success. Romantic hero filled with bravado and idealistic morals. He too has gained his high military ranking through charm and family position rather than common sense or training. Engaged to Raina but flirts with Louka.

Captain Bluntschli: A professional soldier from Switzerland who is serving in the Serbian army. He is thirty-four years old, energetic, practical and totally realistic about the stupidity of war.

Nicola: A realistic, middle-aged servant who is very practical. He is fond of Louka.

SYNOPSIS AND COMMENTARY

ACT I

The play begins in the bedroom of Raina Petkoff in a Bulgarian town in 1885, during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. As the play opens, Catherine Petkoff and her daughter, Raina, have just heard that the Bulgarians have achieved a tremendous victory in a cavalry charge led by Raina's fiancé, Major Sergius Saranoff. He is in the same regiment as Raina's father, Major Paul Petkoff. Raina is so impressed with the noble deeds of her fiancé that she fears that she might never be able to live up to his nobility. At this very moment, the maid, Louka, rushes in with the news that the Serbs are being chased through the streets and that it is necessary to lock up the house and all of the windows. Raina promises to do so later, and Louka leaves. But as Raina is reading in bed, shots are heard, there is a noise at the balcony window, and a bedraggled enemy soldier with a gun appears and threatens to kill her if she makes a sound. After the soldier and Raina exchange some words, Louka calls from outside the door. She says that several soldiers want to search the house and investigate a report that an enemy Serbian soldier was seen climbing her balcony. When Raina hears the news, she turns to the soldier. He says that he is prepared to die, but he certainly plans to kill a few Bulgarian soldiers in her bedroom before he dies. Thus, Raina impulsively decides to hide him. The soldiers investigate, find no one, and leave. Raina then calls the man out from hiding. She nervously and absentmindedly sits on his gun, but she learns that it is not loaded; the soldier carries no cartridges. He explains that instead of carrying bullets, he always carries chocolates into battle. Furthermore, he is not an enemy; he is a Swiss, a professional soldier hired by Serbia. Raina gives him the last of her chocolate creams, which he devours, telling her that she has indeed saved his life. Now that the Bulgarian soldiers are gone, Raina wants the "chocolate cream soldier" (as she calls him) to climb back down the drainpipe, but he refuses to; whereas he could climb up, he hasn't the strength to climb down. When Raina goes after her mother to help, the "chocolate cream soldier" crawls into Raina's bed and falls instantly asleep. In fact, when they re-enter, he is sleeping so soundly that they cannot awaken him.

Commentary

In a Shawian play, a lot of attention should be given to Shaw's staging directions at the beginning of the act. The stage directions here convey the impression of cheap Viennese pretentious aristocracy inappropriately combined with good, solid Bulgarian commonplace items. Likewise, since Raina will ultimately be seen as a person who will often assume a pose for dramatic effect, the act opens with her being (in Shaw's words) "intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." As we find out later, she even listens at doors and waits until the proper moment to make the most effective, dramatic entrance.

As noted in the “Introduction” to these notes, the title of this play is ironic since it comes from the opening line of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (“Of arms and the man I sing. . .”), an epic which glorifies war and the hero in battle. Shaw uses the idea of the hero (Sergius) in war in order to satirize not merely war itself, but the romantic glorification of war. In addition to this goal, he also satirizes romantic notions of bravery and courage, affectation and pretense, and most important, misguided idealism. The dramatic shift occurs in the play when the two romantic idealists (Raina and Sergius) reject their original decision to marrying each other and become engaged to a practical realist—Sergius to the practical and attractive servant, Louka, and Raina to the professional realist, Captain Bluntschli.

Raina is seen, at first, as the romantic idealist, but she is also characterized as being a potential realist when she wonders if her idealism and Sergius’ idealism might be due simply to the fact that they have read so much poetry by Byron and other romantics. Likewise, Raina wants to glorify the noble idealism of war, but she is also deeply troubled by its cruelty: “What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?” In this early comment, we have her reason for her later hiding and, thus, saving Bluntschli’s life.

Before meeting Bluntschli, Raina seems to want to live according to the romantic idealism to which she and Sergius aspire. She knows that he has, placed her on a high pedestal, but she does want to make an effort to live “up to his high standards.” For example, after hearing of his heroic feats, she holds up his photo and “elevates it, like a priestess,” vowing never to be unworthy of him. This vow, however, as we soon see, will not last too long.

Captain Bluntschli’s arrival through the balcony doors is, in itself, a highly melodramatic and romantic stage entrance. In fact, almost everything about Act I is contrived—the lady’s bedroom, the concealment of the fugitive behind a curtain, the threat of a bloody fight, the matter of chocolate creams, and, finally, the enemy soldier falling asleep in the lady’s bed—all of this shows of artificiality and is contrasted against Captain Bluntschli’s realistic appraisal of war and his matter-of-fact assertion that, from a practical viewpoint, Sergius’ military charge was as foolish as Don Quixote’s charge on the Windmills. And while Raina ridicules Captain Bluntschli for his cowardice, for his hiding behind a woman’s curtains, for his inordinate fear (he has been under fire for three days and his nerves are “shot to pieces”), and for his extraordinary desire for chocolate creams, she is nevertheless attracted to him. And even though she pretends to be offended at his comments about Sergius, she is secretly happy that her fiancé is not as perfect as we were earlier led to believe that he was.

At the end of the act, Raina returns to her artificial pretensions as she tries to impress Bluntschli with her family’s aristocratic aspirations, bragging that her father chose the only house in the city with an inside stairway, and a library, and, furthermore, Raina says,

she attends the opera every year in Bucharest. Ironically, it is from romantic operas that Raina derives many of her romantic ideals, and she uses a romantic opera as her reason for hiding this practical Swiss professional soldier. The final irony of the act is that the professional man of war is sleeping as soundly as a baby in Raina's bed, with her hovering over him, feeling protective about him.

ACT II

Act II begins four months later in the garden of Major Petkoff's house. The middle-aged servant Nicola is lecturing Louka on the importance of having proper respect for the upper class, but Louka has too independent a soul to ever be a "proper" servant. She has higher plans for herself than to marry someone like Nicola, who, she says, has the "soul of a servant." Major Petkoff arrives home from the war, and his wife Catherine greets him with two bits of information: she suggests that Bulgaria should have annexed Serbia, and she tells him that she has had an electric bell installed in the library. Major SergiusSaranoff, Raina's fiance and leader of the successful cavalry charge, arrives, and in the course of discussing the end of the war, he and Major Petkoff recount the now-famous story of how a Swiss soldier escaped by climbing up a balcony and into the bedroom of a noble Bulgarian woman. The women are shocked that such a crude story would be told in front of them. When the Petkoffs go into the house, Raina and Sergius discuss their love for one another, and Raina romantically declares that the two of them have found a "higher love."

When Raina goes to get her hat so that they can go for a walk, Louka comes in, and Sergius asks if she knows how tiring it is to be involved with a "higher love." Then he immediately tries to embrace the attractive maid. Since he is being so blatantly familiar, Louka declares that Miss Raina is no better than she. Raina, she says, has been having an affair while Sergius was away, but she refuses to tell Sergius who Raina's lover is, even though Sergius accidently bruises Louka's arm while trying to wrest a confession from her. When he apologizes, Louka insists that he kiss her arm, but Sergius refuses and, at that moment, Raina re-enters. Sergius is then called away, and Catherine enters. The two ladies discuss how incensed they both are that Sergius related the tale about the escaping soldier. Raina, however, doesn't care if Sergius hears about it; she is tired of his stiff propriety. At that moment, Louka announces the presence of a Swiss officer with a carpetbag, calling for the lady of the house. His name is Captain Bluntschli. Instantly, they both know he is the "chocolate cream soldier" who is returning the Major's old coat that they disguised him in. As they make rapid, desperate plans to send him away, Major Petkoff hails Bluntschli and greets him warmly as the person who aided them in the final negotiations of the war; the old Major insists that Bluntschli must their houseguest until he has to return to Switzerland.

Commentary

Arms and the Man is an early Shawian play, and in it, Shaw used certain techniques that he was never to use again. In the first act, for example, the entire act has a comical note about it and the use of a screen or a curtain for a character to hide behind was a traditional technique used only in comedies. The coat episode in the third act is a comical event that amuses the audience, but it cheapens the intellectual aspect of the drama because it contributes nothing other than its own comical element.

In Act II, the structure of the act is more serious, but it also uses several traditional comical elements. For example, there is the use of the exaggerated means whereby Sergius can deceive Raina while trying to make love with Raina's maid, the story told in the army camp about the soldier who escapes into a lady's bedroom (while the ladies of the story have to listen in pretended dismay), the sudden appearance of the captain and the hasty decisions which the ladies must undertake, and finally the sudden surprise that occurs when we discover that Captain Petkoff knows Bluntschli—all of these circumstances are elements of melodrama.

In the early part of the act, we see Louka as an ingenious maid who refuses to acknowledge that she has "the soul of a servant," a fault that she accuses Nicola of having. Later, however, when Sergius tells her that she possesses the soul of a servant, his comment stings. We do, however, admire the way that Louka is able to dismiss Nicola and to manipulate the supposedly superior and aristocratic Sergius.

When we meet Sergius and hear of his total disillusionment with war and with "soldiering [which] is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of the way when you are weak," we are then prepared for the fact that Sergius will not be a romantic idealist for long. His new views on war should prepare us for a significant change in his total outlook on life; thus, he will soon reject Raina's idealistic "higher love" in favor of a more direct love with the attractive and practical Louka, a maid who says forthrightly that if Sergius is going to embrace her, then at least they should stand back where they can't be seen.

With Louka, Sergius can admit that there are at least six different people occupying himself and then wonder aloud, "Which of the six is the real man? That's the question that torments me." We now know that the real Sergius is not the one with whom Raina has fallen in love, the one with the "higher love." Thus, by the end of this act, Shaw has set up all of the necessary motives and reasons for Sergius and Raina to break off their engagement and marry someone else.

ACT III

Act III begins shortly after lunch and takes place in the library. Captain Bluntschli is attending to a large amount of confusing paperwork in a very efficient manner, while Sergius and Major Petkoff merely observe. Major Petkoff complains about a favorite old coat being lost, but at that moment Catherine rings the new library bell, sends Nicola after the coat, and astounds the Major by thus retrieving his lost coat. When Raina and Bluntschli are left alone, she compliments him on his looking so handsome now that he is washed and brushed. Then she assumes a high and noble tone and chides him concerning certain stories which he has told and the fact that she has had to lie for him. Bluntschli laughs at her "noble attitude" and says that he is pleased with her demeanor. Raina is amused; she says that Bluntschli is the first person to ever see through her pretensions, but she is perplexed that he didn't feel into the pockets of the old coat which she lent him; she had placed a photo of herself there with the inscription "To my Chocolate Cream Soldier." At this moment, a telegram is brought to Bluntschli relating the death of his father and the necessity of his coming home immediately to make arrangements for the six hotels that he has inherited. As Raina and Bluntschli leave the room, Louka comes in wearing her sleeve in a ridiculous fashion so that her bruise will be obvious. Sergius enters and asks if he can cure it now with a kiss. Louka questions his true bravery; she wonders if he has the courage to marry a woman who is socially beneath him, even if he loved the woman. Sergius asserts that he would, but he is now engaged to a girl so noble that all such talk is absurd. Louka then lets him know that Bluntschli is his rival and that Raina will marry the Swiss soldier. Sergius is incensed. He sees Bluntschli and immediately challenges him to a duel; then he retracts when Raina comes in and accuses him of making love to Louka merely to spy on her and Bluntschli. As they are arguing, Bluntschli asks for Louka, who has been eavesdropping at the door. She is brought in, Sergius apologizes to her, kisses her hand, and thus they become engaged. Bluntschli asks permission to become a suitor for Raina's hand, and when he lists all of the possessions which he has (200 horses, 9600 pairs of sheets, ten thousand knives and forks, etc.), permission for the marriage is granted, and Bluntschli says that he will return in two weeks to marry Raina. Succumbing with pleasure, Raina gives a loving smile to her "chocolate cream soldier."

Commentary

After the comical bit about the discovery of the old coat in the blue closet, which perplexes Major Petkoff, Shaw begins the conclusion of the drama, which involves the revealing of Raina's, Sergius', and Bluntschli's true natures. First, in Bluntschli's interview with Raina, we see him as the practical man who will not let Raina assume any of her poses. He will laugh at all of the poses that she assumes. Captain Bluntschli, while being charmed and

captivated by Raina, refuses to take her poses seriously; that is, he delights in her posturing, but he is not deceived by them: "When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say." Thus, Bluntschli forces Raina to reveal her true nature, and she is delighted that someone has seen through her guise and has allowed her to come down off her pedestal. We were earlier prepared for this revelation when she told her mother that she would like to shock Sergius; already, we have seen that she finds "higher love" to be something of a strain on her. Thus, it is ultimately a relief for her to discard all of her artificial poses and finally become herself. Likewise, Bluntschli also changes. While he will not tolerate posturing, yet, since he is such a plainspoken man, we are surprised to discover that beneath his exterior, he has a romantic soul—that is, he came back with the Major's coat only to have one more glimpse of Raina, with whom he is infatuated. Therefore, as the practical man is seen to change, so also does Sergius, whom we saw very early in the second act confess that he is tired of playing this game of the ideal of the "higher love." He is immensely relieved not to have to be the over-idealized, noble object of Raina's love; he found trying to live up to her expectations tiresome. After discovering that there is no nobility or heroics connected with war, he is delighted to discover that Raina's heroics are not for him; as a result, he turns to the more basic but yet attractive Louka.

The resolution of the drama is brought about by the simple technique of having all of the characters recognize their basic nature and yield to it. Consequently, the ending of this comedy is similar to most classic comedies—that is, after a mix-up or confusion between the lovers, everyone is paired with the proper person finally.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Raina Petkoff

Raina is one of Shaw's most delightful heroines from his early plays. In the opening scenes of the play, she is presented as being a romantically idealistic person in love with the noble ideal of war and love; yet, she is also aware that she is playing a game, that she enjoys making dramatic entrances (her mother is aware that Raina listens at doors in order to know when to make an effective entrance), and she is very idealistic in her views on love and war. Whenever Raina strikes a pose, she is fully aware "of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." When she accuses Bluntschli of being "incapable of gratitude" and "incapable of any noble sentiments," she is also amused, and she is later delighted that he sees through her "noble attitude" and her pretensions. In fact, her attraction for Bluntschli is partly due to the fact that she can step down off the pedestal which she must be upon, metaphorically, whenever she is in Sergius' presence. She shocks her mother when she says that she would like to shock Sergius' propriety since he is such a "stuffed shirt." Yet, at first, she is filled with undefined ideals. She admires Sergius'

victories, but she is also genuinely troubled by the reports of the suffering and slaughter that accompany the war. She does respond immediately to the plight of the Serbian soldier (Captain Bluntschli), even though just a few moments earlier, she was delighting in Sergius' victory over the Serbs. And when there is the possibility of an actual slaughter taking place in her room (the Swiss soldier vowed to kill rather than be killed—even though we later discover that this was a bluff since he had no bullets), she impetuously decides to hide him and help him escape. When Bluntschli ridicules Sergius' quixotic cavalry charge, she pretends to be offended, but she is secretly glad that her intended is not "perfect."

Of Raina, Shaw wrote in an essay entitled "A Dramatic Realist to his Critics": "The heroine [Raina] has been classified by critics as a minx, a liar, and a poseuse; I have nothing to do with that: the only moral question for me is, does she do good or harm? If you admit that she does good, that she generously saves a man's life and wisely extricates herself from a false position with another man, then you may classify her as you please—brave, generous and affectionate; or artful, dangerous, faithless—it is all one to me. . . ." Raina, then, is perhaps a combination of all the above qualities. She is romantic, for example, when she remembers an opera (Verdi's *Ernani*) in which a member of the aristocracy shelters an enemy; thus, she shelters Bluntschli, since it is "noble" to protect him. She does possess exalted ideals, but she is also pleased to step down from her pedestal and enjoy life directly. Finally, in spite of her aristocratic background, she marries a person with "the soul of a hotel keeper."

Captain Bluntschli

Captain Bluntschli is a thirty-four-year-old realist who sees through the absurd romanticism of war. Furthermore, unlike the aristocratic volunteers who are untrained, amateurish idealists, Captain Bluntschli is a professional soldier, trained in waging a war in a highly efficient, businesslike manner. These methods allow Sergius to refer to his ability to wage a war as being lowclass commercialism, devoid of any honor and nobility. Bluntschli would agree with this appraisal since he sees nothing romantic about the violent and senseless slaughter of human beings, even though it is his profession.

Being a professional soldier, he adopts a practical and wise view (his name is a combination of *Blunt*, plus the ending, which in Swiss means "sweet" or "endearing" or "lovable"). Given the choice of being killed or saving his life by climbing up a balcony and into a lady's bedroom, he chooses unheroically not to be killed. Practically, he knows that a dead professional soldier is of no value to anyone; thus, he saves his life by the most expedient method available—he hides in a lady's bedchamber. Likewise, given the choice of killing someone or of not going hungry, he chooses to eat rather than to kill; thus, he

carries chocolates rather than cartridges, a highly unromantic but very practical thing to do.

When Bluntschli first hears of Sergius' cavalry charge and refuses to view Sergius' actions in any way except as a foolhardy display of false heroics, he reveals his complete practicality and subjects himself to Raina's charge that he is "incapable of appreciating honor and courage." Yet, his questioning of Sergius' actions causes Raina to question Sergius' qualities. Bluntschli does possess some qualities which cause Raina to exchange the "noble and heroic" Sergius in favor of him. Raina's perfect honesty, in fact, allows her to relax and to come down from her pedestal. Bluntschli's fondness for chocolates in the midst of war is appealingly incongruous. His docility, combined with his efficiency, endears him to others, especially the entire Petkoff family, and, finally, he reveals to the established group that he is an incurable romantic. He explains that he could have sent the old coat back, but that he wanted to return it personally so that he could have one more glimpse of the entrancing Raina. Thus, he wins her for his "affianced wife."

SergiusSaranoff

Sergius is the epitome of what every romantic hero should be: He is dashing, swashbuckling, devastatingly handsome, idealistic, wealthy, aristocratic, brave, and the acclaimed hero of a recent crushing victory in a recent cavalry raid which he led. He possesses the loftiest and most noble ideals concerning war, romance, and chivalry, and he is the perfect example of what a noble Bulgarian aristocrat should be. Yet Sergius is more than this. He is an aristocrat, but he has certain ideals, and he is likely to become thoroughly disillusioned when these ideals fail. For example, Sergius went to war filled with high ideals, and led a heroic and courageous cavalry attack. But later, however, he discovered that wars are not conducted by bravery and courage, they are more often waged and won better by efficient and practical planning than they are won by glorious and chivalric deeds. For Sergius, then, war is only fit for sons of hotel keepers, who are familiar with commerce. For that reason, Sergius has resigned from the army in complete disillusionment.

After having become cynical about soldiering, Sergius becomes skeptical about his relationship with Raina. After all, as he tells Louka, it is rather tiresome having to live up to Raina's "ideal of the higher love." It was he, however, who placed Raina on a pedestal so high, in fact, that he was blinded to any possible fault she might have. When Louka reveals all of Raina's faults—Raina lies, she pretends, and she has entertained another man in her bedroom—Sergius then feels free to cast his affections where they normally lead him—into marriage with the attractive Louka.

REVISIONARY QUESTIONS

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. What is Raina's apprehension when she hears of Sergius's heroic deeds?

Raina wonders if such a popular hero will care any longer for her little affections and whether she is worthy of such a hero.

2. Why is there a need to close all doors and windows?

There has been an announcement that the Serbs have been routed and have scattered throughout the town and that some of the fugitives have been chased into the neighborhood. Thus, the doors must be secured since there might be fighting and shooting in the street below.

3. Why is Bluntschli who is neither Serbian nor Bulgarian caught up in the war?

Bluntschli is a professional soldier from Switzerland who had joined the Serbian army merely because it was nearer to his country.

4. Sergius is compared to which famous literary character by Bluntschli?

Bluntschli compares Sergius's foolhardy charging of the Serbian army to Don Quixote charging at the windmills with flashing eyes.

5. What had Raina put in the pocket of the old coat of Petkoff with which Bluntschli was sent off?

Raina had put a portrait of hers signed "to my chocolate-cream soldier" in the coat pocket.

6. Why does Louka not like Nicola?

Louka is an ambitious young woman who looks down on servility. She dislikes Nicola because according to her he has the "soul of a servant".

7. What is Major Petkoff's opinion on bathing?

Major Petkoff considers bathing as unnatural and unhealthy. He gives the example of his father to prove his point. His father lived to be ninety-eight years old and never had a bath in his entire life.

8. What is Sergius's view of war in the second act?

By the second act Sergius's view of war is that it is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak.

9. Why did Bluntschli come back to Petkoff's house?

He came back in order to return the old coat of Petkoff and to see Raina again.

10. How does the ending of the play make it a conventional comedy?

the ending of this comedy is similar to most classic comedies—that is, after a mix-up or confusion between the lovers, everyone is paired with the proper person finally with weddings in the near future.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

1. What is the source and irony of the title of this play?

The title of this play is ironic since it comes from the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("Of arms and the man I sing. . ."), an epic which glorifies war and the hero in battle. Shaw uses the idea of the hero (Sergius) in war in order to satirize not merely war itself, but the romantic glorification of war. In addition to this goal, he also satirizes romantic notions of bravery and courage, affectation and pretense, and most important, misguided idealism.

The irony of the title lies in the fact that Shaw takes the title of his play that satirizes the glorification of war from a work that genuinely glorifies war. Virgil's poem sings of several battles, and of a hero, Aeneas, who led the defeated Trojans to Rome to found there a new nation. Virgil glorifies war and the heroic deeds of Aeneas on the battle field. However, Shaw's purpose in this play is to attack the romantic notion of war by presenting a more realistic depiction of war, devoid of the idea that such death and destruction speaks to nobility.

2. Comment on Raina's use of the term "chocolate-cream soldier" to address Bluntschli.

Raina refers to Bluntschli as her "chocolate-cream soldier" because he carries chocolates instead of ammunition. The metaphor has several implications. It is an anti-romantic image, suggesting either a cowardly effeminate soldier, or at best, a practical soldier, who thinks of food and survival more than the art of warfare. Shaw humorously criticizes the value of warfare through this unusual metaphor. The soldiers are not thinking noble thoughts of patriotism as they risk their lives; they are just blundering through to the next bed or meal.

Chocolate also has sexual overtones. Raina significantly hides and feeds Bluntschli chocolates in her bedroom and lets him sleep in her bed, symbolizing her attraction to him. She covers up her act and the nickname to her family by pretending that she means something innocent: a chocolate-cream soldier on a pastry. The title and image of the

chocolate soldier are anti-heroic. Bluntschli is not a fierce fighter at all. He is homey, tasty, domestic, and somewhat passive. He is as manageable by Raina as a chocolate figure on a dessert cake. She prefers a chocolate-cream soldier whom she can consume rather than the pretentious Sergius she would have to admire and look up to.

3. Discuss the contrast between the two central characters, Saranoff and Bluntschli.

An ironic contrast between the two central characters is developed in the play. The play begins with accounts of the glorious exploits of Major Sergius Saranoff, a handsome young Bulgarian officer, in a daring cavalry raid, which turned the war in favour of the Bulgarians over the Serbs. In contrast, Bluntschli, a professional soldier from Switzerland acts like a coward. He climbs up to a balcony to escape capture, he threatens a woman with a gun, and he carries chocolates instead of cartridges because he claims sweets are more useful on the battlefield.

In the eyes of Raina Petkoff, the young romantic idealist who believes in battlefield heroism, Saranoff is her ideal hero. However, as the play proceeds, we learn more about this raid and that despite its success, it was a suicidal attempt which should have failed. Eventually Saranoff is going to end up dead if he continues to engage in such ridiculous heroics. Meanwhile, we realize that Bluntschli has no misconceptions about the stupidity of war and that his actions have kept him alive.

III. Write an essay

Comment on the subtitle of the play "An Anti-Romantic Comedy in Three Acts"?

Or

Discuss *Arms and the Man* as a "drama of ideas".

Set during the four-month-long Serbo-Bulgarian War that occurred between November 1885 and March 1886, *Arms and the Man* is called as an anti-romantic comedy. This play is a satire on the foolishness of glorifying something so terrible as war, as well as a satire on the foolishness of basing your affections on idealistic notions of love. These themes brought reality and a timeless lesson to the comic stage.

In the very beginning of the play, a romantic picture is set. Raina, a romantic girl, stands on her balcony to enjoy the beauty of the Bulgarian night. When Raina is told by her mother Catherine that Raina's fiancée Sergius who has gone in the battle-field has made a heroic cavalry charge and has won a splendid victory against the Serbians, Raina becomes very excited and tells her mother that her romantic ideas about war have been proved true. Afterwards, when Sergius returns from the battlefield, Raina adoringly calls him her

'hero' and 'king'. Sergius also addresses Raina as his 'queen' and his 'inspiration'. So, both Raina and Sergius are living in a romantic world of "higher love".

However, Raina's romantic outlook of life changes with the appearance of Bluntschli. After winning the battle, Bulgarian cavalry are now in search of the Serbian fugitives. Bluntschli, a Serbian fugitive, enters into Raina's bedchamber in order to take shelter there. In the conversation with Raina, Bluntschli exposes the real fact about Sergius's cavalry charge. Bluntschli tells Raina that the charge ordered by Sergius could be suicidal for them if the Serbian army had right kind of ammunition in their machine-guns. So, Sergius should not be awarded for the charge, rather he should be court-martialed for the blunder. Bluntschli also exposes the real fact of soldiering to Raina. He says that the duty of a soldier is to live as long as he can. He says that nine out of ten soldiers are fools and that experienced soldiers carry chocolates in their pockets while young and inexperienced soldiers carry only weapons. This remark of Bluntschli comes as a shock to Raina's romantic notion of soldiering and war. Before meeting Bluntschli, Raina thought that to be a soldier was something great, but now after hearing the real facts from Bluntschli, she is totally surprised.

Sergius's romantic notion of war also changes when he faces the harsh reality of life. He has won a great victory for the Bulgarians, but he is not promoted to a higher rank. All these days he thought that a soldier's duty was to fight and attack enemies in all circumstances, but now he learns that soldiering is a trade like any other trade. It is not heroism but a coward's act of attacking enemies when the enemies are weak and keeping away from enemies when the enemies are strong.

The dramatic shift occurs in the play when the two romantic idealists (Raina and Sergius) reject their original decision to marrying each other and become engaged to a practical realist—Sergius to the practical and attractive servant, Louka, and Raina to the professional realist, Captain Bluntschli.

Throughout the drama Shaw denounces idealism and insists on realism. He does it through humor of character and humor of situation at the same time. The anti-romantic elements of the play begins with his ironic use of the opening line of Virgil's great epic Aeneid, which reads as follows: "Armavirumquecano", meaning "Of arms and the man I sing" as the title of the play. He uses a work that romanticizes war in order to attack the romantic ideals of war and love.

In *Arms and the Man* the dramatist's intention is to expose romantic ideals of love and war as being impractical and pointless which will eventually fail. He shows this failure with the use of anti-climax through which the play achieves its comic element. Sergius and Raina become comic figures as the insincerity of their romantic love and their romantic

attitude is exposed. Raina and Sergius come down to the level of Louka and Bluntschli. The dramatist has succeeded in his comic intention. He shows that war is not heroic but something horrible and brutal because soldiers are not heroes but fools and cowards who fight only because they are compelled to fight. Sergius's heroic victory appears in a comic light when it is discovered that he could win only because the Serbian gunmen had the wrong ammunition with them. Sergius makes love to Louka as soon as Raina's back is turned, soon after "the higher love scene". This way Shaw has shown the flaw of romantic ideals of love and war, his purpose in writing the play.

The conflict between the romantic and the realistic is another means through which Shaw brings in the anti romantic element in the play. For this purpose the dramatist contrasts the various characters as romantics and realists. The romantic ideal of war as a glorious opportunity for a man to display courage and honor is dispelled when Sergius admits that his heroic cavalry charge that won the battle was the wrong thing to do. His notable action does not get him his promotion and Sergius learns the realism. Much of Bluntschli is made of realism – i.e., keeping chocolates instead of ammunition in his cartridge belt, showing contempt for sentimentality, and reacting in a practical manner to his father's death. Raina, the idealist is placed opposite Louka the practical servant. However, Nicola is the consummate realist in the play. Nicola's message is: adapt, and survive. Bluntschli proves to have a romantic side, after all, and thus is the most balanced character in the play in that he seems to know when to temper his romanticism with realism and when to stick to his ideals.

Hence, though the play opens with a romantic setting the author succeeds in transforming it into an anti-romantic comedy. The object of the play, that is, to satirize the romantic notions of war, love and marriage, is achieved by the author through a medium that is delightful to the audience – comedy.

2. Character sketch of Sergius Saranoff.
3. Character sketch of Bluntschli.
4. Character sketch of Raina Petkoff.
5. Shaw rejected romanticism and embraced realism. How realistic is *Arms and the Man*? How much of it is 'unrealistic'?
6. Which character best serves as Shaw's spokesman? Justify your answer.

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