

READING POETRY

BA ENGLISH

2011 Admission (IV Semester)

2012 Admission (I Semester)

CORE COURSE



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

CALICUT UNIVERSITY.P.O., MALAPPURAM, KERALA, INDIA – 673 635

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MODULE I

BASIC ELEMENTS OF POETRY

Objectives

At the end of this module the student will:

- a) learn the basic elements of poetry.
- b) understand the stylistic and rhetorical devices employed in poetry.
- c) get an idea about the various genres of poetry.

Prosody: Rhythm, metre-Rhyme- Hard rhyme, soft rhyme, internal rhyme- Alliteration, Assonance- Diction

Forms

Lyric, Ode, Haiku, Jintishi, Ghasal, Rubai etc.

Genres

1. Narrative Poetry
2. Epic Poetry
3. Dramatic Poetry
4. Satirical Poetry
5. Lyric Poetry

Prosody

Prosody is the study of versification, covering the principles of metre, rhythm, rhyme and stanza forms. Rhythm and metre are different, although closely related. Metre is the definitive pattern established for a verse, while rhythm is the actual sound that results from a line of poetry.

Metre depends on two factors:

- 1) The accentuation of syllables
- 2) The number of accented syllables in a line.

Foot

The foot is a certain fixed combination of syllables, each of which is counted as being either stressed or unstressed.

Greek names for various feet:-

| | | |
|------------|---|------------|
| Monometre | : | One foot |
| Dimetre | : | Two feet |
| Trimetre | : | Three feet |
| Tetrametre | : | Four feet |
| Pentametre | : | Five feet |
| Hexametre | : | Six feet |
| Heptametre | : | Seven feet |
| Octametre | : | Eight feet |

Feet are classified according to the sequence of stressed and sequence of unstressed syllables they contain. There are four different kinds of feet and they are: 1) Iambic 2) Trochaic 3) Anapestic and 4) Dactylic.

1. Iambic Metre

It consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

2. Trochaic Metre

It has first syllable stressed and second unstressed.

3. Anapestic Metre

It consists of first two syllables unstressed and the third stressed.

4. Dactylic Metre

It consists of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables.

Rhyme

It is the identity of sound between syllables or paired groups of syllables, usually at the end of verse lines. Normally the last stressed vowel in the line and all sounds following it make up the rhyming element.

Hard Rhyme

It is a rhyme pattern in which the final accented vowel and all succeeding consonants or syllables are identical, while the preceding consonants are different.

Eg:- time/lime/crime/dime.

Soft Rhyme

It is a rhyme pattern in which the same vowel sounds are used with different consonants in the stressed syllables of the rhyming words.

Internal Rhyme

It is a poetic device by which two or more words rhyme within the same line of verse.

Eg:- which alters when alteration finds (Shakespeare)

Alliteration

The repetition of the same sounds, usually initial consonants of words or of stressed syllables, in any sequence of neighboring words.

Eg:- Love is not love (Shakespeare)

Assonance

The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllables and sometimes in the following unstressed syllables of neighbouring words.

Diction

Diction in poetry refers to that specialized language which employs words and figures not normally found in common speech or prose.

Forms

Lyric

A lyric is a short musical composition meant to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre by a single singer. Now the term is used for any short non-narrative poem expressing a single thought or feeling of the poet.

Ode

Ode is an elaborately formal lyric poem, often in the form of a lengthy ceremonious address to a person or abstract entity, always serious and elevated in tone.

Haiku

A form of Japanese lyric verse that encapsulates a single impression of a natural object or scene, within a particular season, in seventeen syllables arranged in three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Arising in the 16th century, it flourished in the hands of Basho, (1644-94) and Buson (1715-83). At first an opening stanza of a longer sequence, it became a separate form in the modern period under the influence of Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902).

Tanka

Tanka is a genre of classical Japanese poetry and one of the major genres of Japanese literature. It is a lyric poem consisting of 31 Syllables arranged in lines of 5,7,5,7, and 7 syllables. It has had fewer western imitators than the haiku.

Jintishi

Chinese poetic term which literally means ‘modern-form poetry’. It refers to a regulated style of poetry which developed from the fifth century onwards and employed four tones: the level tone and three deflected tones (rising, falling and entering) Tu fu was the most accomplished exponent of Jintishi.

Ghazal

A short lyric poem written in couplets using a single rhyme (aa, ba, ca, da, etc.), sometimes mentioning the poet’s name in the last couplet. The ghazal is an important lyric form in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu poetry, often providing the basis for popular love songs. Its usual subject-matter is amatory, although it has been adapted for religious, political, and other uses. Goethe and other German poets of the early 19th century wrote some imitations of the Persian Ghazal, and the form has been adopted by a number of modern American poets, notably Adrienne Rich.

Rubai

Rubai is a poetry style, the Arabic term for “quatrain”. It is used to describe a Persian quatrain, or its derivative form in English and other languages. Rubai is like a poetry which contains 4 lines. The plural form of the word, rubaiyat, is used to describe a collection of such quatrains. The term is most often associated with *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859), a free English translation by Edward Fitzgerald of the 12th century Persian poet’s quatrains.

Genres

A poetic genre is generally a tradition or classification of poetry based on the subject matter, style, or other broader literary characteristics.

Narrative Poetry

It is a form of poetry which tells a story, often making use of the voices of a narrator and character as well and the entire story is usually written in metered verse. The poems that make up this genre may be short or long, and the story it relates to may be complex. Narrative poetry includes ballads, epics, and verse romances.

Epic poetry

It is a genre of poetry and a major form of narrative literature. This genre is often defined as lengthy poems celebrating the great deeds of one or more legendary heroes, in a grand ceremonious style. Most notable examples of epic poetry are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

Dramatic Poetry

Dramatic poetry is a category of verse composition for theatrical performance. The term is now commonly extended, however to non-theatrical poems that involve a similar kind of impersonation, as in the closet drama and the dramatic monologue.

Satirical Poetry

Poetry can be a powerful vehicle for satire. The Romans had a strong tradition of satirical poetry, often written for political purposes. A notable example is the Roman poet Juvenal's *Satires*.

Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry is a genre that, unlike epic and dramatic poetry, does not attempt to tell a story but instead is of a more personal nature. Poems in this genre tend to be shorter, melodic, and contemplative. Rather than depicting characters and actions, it portrays the poet's own feelings, states of mind, and perceptions. Notable poets in this genre include John Donne, G.M. Hopkins and Andrew Marvell.

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences

1. What is meant by prosody?
2. Define hard rhyme and soft rhyme.
3. Give an example for alliteration.
4. What is a lyric?
5. Define Jintishi
6. Define haiku.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words.

1. Explain the different genres of poetry. [Refer the notes]

MODULE II

READING ENGLISH POETS

Objectives

At the end of this module the student will be:

- a) acquainted with the famous English poets of various centuries.
- b) able to understand the peculiar features of their poetry.

1. A SONNET 116

:- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

About the poet

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is generally regarded as the greatest writer ever in the English Language. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. His father, John Shakespeare was a prosperous farmer and wool and timber merchant. His mother Mary Arden, was the daughter of a prosperous farmer, descended from an old Warwickshire family of mixed Anglo-Saxon and Norman blood. It is said that Shakespeare probably attended the endowed grammar school at Stratford, where he picked up the “Small Latin and less Greek” to which his learned friend Ben Jonson refers.

When he was about fourteen years old, his father’s fortunes declined. In 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a peasant family of Shottery, who was eight years his senior. Around the year 1587 Shakespeare left his family and went to London. There he began a successful career as an actor, writer and part owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. He appears to have retired to Stratford around 1613, where he died three years later on 23rd April, 1616 and was buried in the Stratford Church.

Shakespeare’s dramatic career extends over a period of nearly twenty two years, from 1590 to 1612. During this period, the dramatist worked hard producing, about two plays a year, besides two poems- “Rape of Lucrece” and “Venus and Adonis”- and a sequence of 154 sonnets. A study of his plays in chronological order reveals a gradual development of his mind and art. To emphasize this gradual growth of his art, Prof. Dowden has divided his dramatic career into four parts, each showing a definite advance over the previous one.

The first stage is apprenticeship which was a period of early experimentation for the poet. It is marked by excessive use of rhymes, pun, conceits and other forms of word jugglery. Typical works of this period are his early poems, *Loves’ Labour’s Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Richard III*.

The second stage is a period of rapid growth and development. Some of the works of this period are *Midsummer Nights Dream*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As you Like It* and *Henry V*.

The third stage is a period of gloom and depression which marks the full maturity of his powers. The *Sonnets* with their note of personal disappointment and the four great tragedies *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Othello* belong to this period.

The fourth stage marks the last years of the poet’s literary work. The plays written during this period are *Coriolanus*, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Henry VIII*.

Sonnet

A Sonnet is a short poem of 14 lines. The term 'sonnet' is derived from the Italian word 'sonetto' which means "little sound". It has its origin in Italy and it was perfected by the Italian poet Petrarch. The Petrarchan sonnet has two parts, an octave and a sestet. The first eight lines comprise the octave and the last six lines, the sestet. It has the rhyme scheme abba, abba, cde, cde. In the early part of the sixteenth century Surrey and Wyatt ushered the sonnet form into English verse. Later Shakespeare modified the Petrarchan sonnet. The Shakespearean sonnet is made up of three decasyllabic quatrains rhyming alternatively followed by a concluding couplet. It has the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

Shakespeare's Sonnets

Shakespeare's Sonnets are a collection of 154 sonnets, dealing with themes such as the passage of time, love, beauty and mortality. They were published together in 1609. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to an unnamed young nobleman with whom the poet is helplessly emotionally bound. The final sonnets are addressed to a mysterious woman, whom the speaker loves, hates and lusts for simultaneously. The young nobleman is referred to as 'Mr. W.H' and the mysterious woman is referred to as the 'dark lady'.

Poem

Sonnet 116

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

Introduction to the poem

In this sonnet Shakespeare glorifies ideal and eternal love which withstands the ravages of Time. The predominant themes of this sonnet is true love which is constant and permanent.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-4

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Let me not...impediments | : | allusion to the words of the Marriage |
| Service | : | 'If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony...' |
| impediments | : | obstacles; obstructions |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| alters | : | changes |
| alternation finds | : | under changed circumstances |
| the remover to remove | : | when a lover is unfaithful |

Summary

The poet is talking of the marriage of true minds. The first two lines draw us to the Christian marriage service and its accompanying ceremonies. Love is not love if it changes under changed circumstances. Love is not true if it agrees with the one who wants to dissolve the lover's union.

Line 5-8

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| ever-fixed mark | : | a light house |
| star | : | Polaris, the north star |
| wandering bark | : | ship lost in the ocean. |
| whose worth's unknown | : | whose value can't be calculated |
| height be taken | : | altitude can be measured |

Summary

Love is an ever fixed mark, a light house which looks on tempests but is never shaken. True love is like the pole star which guides every passing ship. Its value is unknown though its height be calculated.

Lines 8-12

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Love's not Time's fool | : | Love is not at the mercy of Time |
| rosy lips and cheeks | : | refers to youth and physical beauty |
| within his bending sickle's compass | : | Time is personified as a man carrying a sickle with which he cuts man's life, looks and possessions. |
| edge of doom | : | end of the world, Day of judgment |

Summary

True love is not Time's fool. Time can destroy the rosy lips and cheeks which are indicative of youth and physical beauty. Time is personified as a reaper carrying a sickle with which he cuts man's life, looks and possessions. But true love is constant and it never alters with the passage of time. It can surmount all the obstacles. True love lasts till the end of the world. Nothing can destroy true love.

Lines 13-14

| | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| error | : | false |
| writ | : | wrote |

Summary

In this concluding couple, the poet justifies and reaffirms his statement that true love is constant and permanent. If any one proves this statement to be false, then the poet says that he had never written anything and no man ever experienced true love.

Answer the following questions

1. A sonnet is a short poem oflines
14
2. The rhyme scheme of the Petrarchan sonnet is.....
abba, abba, cde, cde
3. The sonnet had its origin in.....
Italy
4. The rhyme scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet is.....
abab, cdcd, efef, gg
5. Shakespeare has written.....sonnets.
154

Discuss

1. What are the different aspects of love that the poet discusses in the sonnet?
The poet distinguishes between true love and unfaithful love. Love is not love which alters under changed circumstances. True love is constant and permanent which never alters with the passage of time. Nothing can destroy it.
2. How will the mutual transfer of the lines 5 and 7 affect the appreciation of the poem?
The mutual transfer of the lines 5 and 7 does not make any difference in the appreciation of the poem. The lighthouse, an ever fixed mark is replaced by the pole star which guides every passing ship in the ocean. Both the light house and the pole star refer to the permanence of true love.
3. How many syllables are there in each line? How many words contain more than two syllables?
There are ten syllables in each line. Words like 'impediments', 'alteration', 'remover', and 'wandering' contain more than two syllables.
4. Majority of the words (more than 75 per cent) in the sonnet are monosyllabic. Do they produce any special effect?
The use of monosyllabic words in each line gives a special tone and rhythm to the poem.
5. Did you closely examine the content words? Are they simple and familiar?
The content words like love, time, ever-fixed mark, star are simple and familiar.
6. Spot instances of alliteration, personification, internal rhyme.

Alliteration :- 1) Love is not Love
2) alters when it alteration finds
3) remover to remove

Personification:- Time is personified as a man carrying a sickle with which he cuts man's life, looks and possessions.

Internal rhyme:- Which alters when it alteration finds. Bends with the remover to remove.

7. What is the rhyme scheme of the sonnet?

The rhyme scheme of this sonnet is abab, cdcd, efef, gg

Paragraph question:-

1. Write a note on the theme of the poem.

Love is the predominant theme of sonnet 116. The poet describes true love as constant and permanent. True love never alters under any changed circumstances. It never changes even when one of the lovers become unfaithful to the other. The poet makes use of two metaphors to bring out the nature of true love. True love is an ever-fixed mark, a light house that looks on tempests but is never shaken. It is the pole star that guides every wandering ship. Love is not subject to the ravages of time. Time can destroy the rosy lips and cheeks which is indicative of youth and beauty. But true love never changes with the passage of time. It can surmount all the obstacles and it lasts till the end of the world.

Essay Question:-

1. Write a critical appreciation of the poem sonnet 116.

Shakespeare has written 154 sonnets and they all deal with the theme of love, time, beauty, friendship and mortality. Sonnet 116 is one of the most widely-read poems among them. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to a young man with whom the speaker of the poem is emotionally bound. The rest of the sonnets are addressed to 'the dark lady'.

Love is the most prominent theme of sonnet 116. The poet glorifies the meaning of true love which can surpass all the obstacles and thus remains unchanged even with the passage of time.

The poet begins this sonnet with a reference to the Christian marriage service and its accompanying ceremonies. He talks of the union of true minds. The poet makes a distinction between true love and unfaithful love. According to him, love is not love which alters under changed circumstances. True love never changes even when one of the lovers becomes unfaithful to the other.

In the next quatrain Shakespeare makes use of two metaphors to bring out the permanence of true love. First, the poet says that love is an ever-fixed mark, a light house that looks on tempests but is never shaken. Next he says that love is the pole star which guides every wandering ship in the ocean. Its value is unknown though its height be calculated.

In the third quatrain, the poet brings out the ravages of time. Time is personified as a reaper carrying a sickle with which he cuts man's life, looks and possessions. Time can destroy the rosy lips and cheeks but true love does not depend on physical beauty. True love will remain unchanged even with the passage of time. It will remain the same till the end of the world. It is constant and permanent and nothing can change it.

The last two lines reaffirm the poet's statement that true love is constant and permanent. If this statement is proved wrong by any one, then the poet says that he had never written any poems and no man ever experienced true love.

1. B HOW DO I LOVE THEE

:- ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

About the poet

Elizabeth Barret Browning (1806-1861) was one of the most prominent poets of the Victorian era. She was born on 6 March 1806, in Coxhoe Hall, near Durham. She was the eldest of the 12 children of Edward Barrett Moulton and Mary Graham Clarke. Elizabeth's childhood was spent in the country, chiefly at Hope End, a house bought by her father in the beautiful country in sight of the Malvern Hills. A precocious and ardent student, Elizabeth Barrett studied with a governess and undertook to share her brother's lessons in Latin and Greek. A severe respiratory ailment at the age of 15, along with spine injury from a horse riding accident made her a recluse. A voracious reader, she found solace in books.

She began to write verse at an early age. In 1832, Mr. Barrett sold his house of Hope End, and brought his family to Sid mouth, Devon, for some three years. There Elizabeth made a translation of the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus. In 1838, she published a collection of poems titled *The Seraphim and Other Poems*. The volume of *Poems* published in 1844 won her much critical acclaim. Robert Browning was very much captivated by her poetic charms and he was prompted to write expressing his appreciation: 'I do, as I say, love these books with all my heart and I love you too.' This was the beginning of their life-long relationship. They were married secretly in 1846 and moved to Italy. Her best known poems were the ones that she wrote for her love Robert Browning between 1845 and 1847 under the title *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. After the death of William Wordsworth, her name was even suggested as his successor as Poet Laureate of England.

In June 1861, saddened by the death of her sister, she fell ill at Casa Guidi and died there.

Poem

How do I Love Thee

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,- I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!- and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Introduction to the poem

Elizabeth Barret Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is a collection of 44 Petrarchan sonnets. This sonnet *How do I Love Thee*, being the 43rd sonnet, expresses the courtship between Robert Browning and Elizabeth. The theme of this sonnet is that love is not an earthly concept but an eternal, everlasting thing that lasts well beyond the cold grave. Though it is a Petrarchan sonnet, it violates many of the characteristics of the traditional form.

Petrarchan Sonnet

Petrarch, the Italian humanist and writer developed the Italian sonnet pattern, which is known as the petrarchan sonnet or the Italian sonnet. The original Italian Sonnet divides the poem's 14 lines into two parts octave and a sestet. The octave (first eight lines) typically introduces the theme or problem using a rhyme scheme of abba, abba. The sestet (last six lines) provides resolution for the poem and rhymes variously, sometimes cde cde or cdc cdc.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-4

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| thee | : | you; the poet's husband Robert Browning |
| depth and breadth and height | : | the three dimensional nature of love |
| when feeling...Grace | : | the very essence of her existence is to attain salvation and to her, salvation is belonging to her love |

Summary

The poet wants to express her love for her husband. Her love for her husband is deep, noble and it transcends space. She wants to measure her love though it is an abstract feeling. With her soul, she tries to measure the depth, breadth and height of her love. The very essence of her existence is to attain salvation and to her, salvation is belonging to her love.

Lines 5-8

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| most quiet need | : | simple needs |
| sun and candle-light | : | day and night |
| freely | : | sincerely |
| purely | : | genuinely |
| as they...praise | : | those, who without any desire for praise put all their heart into the struggle they have taken up |

Summary

She loves him enough to meet all of his simple needs during the day and also during the night. She loves him just as intensely as men who fight for freedom. She loves him genuinely without any desire for praise. Her love is true and sincere.

Lines 9-12

| | | |
|------------|---|---|
| old griefs | : | refers to the despair caused by the death of her mother and brother |
| smiles | : | happiness |
| tears | : | sorrow |

Summary

She even loves him with an intensity of the suffering during times of grief. She loves him with the blind faith of a child. She loves him with a childlike fervour for saints and holiness. She loves him in every breath. She also says that she loves him always, both in happiness and sorrow.

Lines 13-14

Shall but...death : refers to eternal love

Summary

In the concluding lines, the poet says that if god favours then she will continue to love him and also says that even after death her love will remain the same.

Answer the following questions:

1. *Sonnets from the Portuguese* is written by.....
Elizabeth Barret Browning
2. The octave contains.....lines
8
3. The sestet contains.....lines
6
4. The octave has the rhyme scheme.....
abba, abba

Discuss

1. "I love thee to the depth and breadth and height/my soul can reach", says the poet. Do you find anything illogical to think of logic in poetry? Comment on her attempt to describe the immeasurable nature of her love, by measuring the immeasurable?
Ans. The poet loves her husband so intensely that she tries to measure the depth, breadth and height of her love with her soul. Love is an abstract feeling and not a concrete object and therefore it is illogical to think that it can be measured. But, in poetry, imagination is more important than logic. A poet's imagination cannot be bound by logic. So it can be said that it is illogical to think of logic in poetry. The poet only wants to show the immeasurable nature of love, by measuring the immeasurable.
2. The poet speaks of "everyday's most quiet need". Discuss the various possible interpretations.
Ans. By "everyday's most quiet need", the poet means the simple needs in a person's daily life. The poet wants the presence of her husband in everything that she does. She wants to take care of him and assist him in his every needs.
3. Treat the poem as a prayer of a devotee before his/her deity. How will your reading of the poem alter?
Ans. If the poem is considered as a prayer, then the poet's love for her husband can be taken as her devotion to her deity. Her devotion is three dimensional which is deep, noble and transcends space.

Paragraph question

1. Compare the sonnet with Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116* in style and treatment.

Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116* glorifies ideal and eternal love which withstand the ravages of time. This sonnet is addressed to a young man whom the poet is emotionally bound to. True love is constant and permanent which never alters with the passage of time. Shakespeare uses two metaphors to bring out the nature of true love. First he says that love is an ever-fixed mark, a light house that looks on tempests but is never shaken. Then he says that love is like the pole star that guides the wandering ships in the ocean. Time is personified as a reaper carrying a sickle with which he cuts man's life, looks and possessions. The rhyme scheme used in this sonnet is abab, cdcd, efef, gg. Elizabeth Barret Browning's sonnet *How do I love Thee* is a Petrarchan sonnet and it is addressed to her husband. Its theme is that love is not an earthly concept but an eternal, everlasting thing that lasts well beyond the cold grave. She expresses her intense love for her husband. She tries to measure the depth, breadth and height of her love with her soul. Her love is three dimensional, i.e., deep, noble and transcending space. She loves him as genuinely as men who struggle for freedom without expecting any personal gains. She loves him both in happiness and sorrow. She also says that her love will continue even after death.

Essay question

1. Explain the sonnet *How do I love Thee* as a love poem.

The sonnet *How do I Love Thee* is written by the famous Victorian poet Elizabeth Barret Browning. This poem is the 43rd sonnet in her collection *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The poet addresses the poem to her husband Robert Browning. Love is the most prominent theme of this sonnet. She wants to express her love which is intense and sincere.

The poet deeply loves her husband and she wants to measure her love. Love is not a concrete object but an abstract feeling which can't be measured. But the poet says that with her soul she can measure the depth, breadth and height of her love. Her love is three dimensional, i.e., deep, noble and that transcends space. The very essence of her existence is to attain salvation and to her, salvation is belonging to her love.

The poet goes on to explain how much she loves her husband. She loves him enough to meet all his simple needs during the day and also during the night. She loves him sincerely as men who struggle for freedom. Her love is so genuine that she does not expect any personal gain from it.

She even loves him with an intensity of the suffering during times of grief. She loves him with the blind faith of a child and her love is so innocent as a child. She loves him with a child like fervour for saints and holiness. Happiness and sorrow do not make any difference in her love for her love is not an earthly concept but it is eternal and sincere.

The poet proclaims that she will continue to love him and also says that she will love him better after death. This sonnet celebrates true love which will go beyond the cold grave.

1. C LONGING

: - MATTHEW ARNOLD

About the poet

Matthew Arnold(1822-1888) one of the major poets of the Victorian period, was born in Laleham, in the valley of the Thames, in 1822. He was the son of Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby School. He was educated at Winchester, Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford, where he was distinguished by winning prizes in poetry and by general excellence in the classics. Arnold started his career as a teacher of classics at Rugby. Then in 1847, he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. In 1851, he was appointed the Inspector of schools and he served in this position for 35 years. For ten years (1857-1867) he was professor of poetry at oxford, where his famous lectures *On Translating Homer* were given.

Matthew Arnold published his first Volume of poems, *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* in 1849. Some years later he published *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (1852), *Poems* (1853), *Poem's Second Series* (1855) and *Merope* (1858). His most important poems are *Dover Beach*, *Scholar-Gipsy*, *Thyrsis*, and *The Forsaken Merman* and these works are well noted for their variety of poetic expression. Another most significant work is *Essays in Criticism* (two volumes) which made Arnold one of the best known literary men in England. *Culture and Anarchy* which is a prose work, was published in 1869. These works were followed by four books on religious subjects- *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1875), and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877). At the height of his fame and influence he died suddenly, in 1888, and was buried in the churchyard at Laleham.

Poem

LONGING

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For so the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to others as to me!

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth,
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say, *My love why sufferest thou?*

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For so the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Introduction to the poem

This poem *Longing* is a love poem. The poet expresses his longing for the presence of his beloved. He wants her to come to him in his dreams and fulfil his desires. According to Freud, dreams are representations of imaginary fulfillment of a wish.

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|----------|---|------------------|
| hopeless | : | without any hope |
| longing | : | strong desire |

Summary

The poet begins the poem by expressing his longing for the presence of his beloved. He wants her to come to him in his dreams and he hopes that it will make his day happy. During the day he strongly desires for the company of his beloved. But she doesn't come. So he says that if she comes in his dreams at night then it can compensate the hopeless longing of the day.

Stanza 2

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| radiant | : | obviously very happy, or very beautiful, (here) the origin point of meteors. |
| climes | : | the seven climes- the idea of dividing earth into seven climatic zones. |

Summary

He wants his beloved to come to him as she has visited him a thousand times. He considers her as one who comes from a new world which is bright and shining. As she is new to this world, the poet requests her not to be strange but to smile on her new world. He also wants her to be so kind to everybody as she is to him.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| in sooth | : | in reality |
|----------|---|------------|

Summary

In reality, his beloved has never come to him. And so his desires are left unfulfilled. Hence he wants to materialise his wishes through his dreams. He pleads her to part his hair and kiss him on his forehead and say she is with him and there is no need to suffer any more.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|---------------|---|------------|
| more than pay | : | compensate |
|---------------|---|------------|

Summary

The poet once again asks his beloved to come to him in his dreams for he hopes that it will make him happy during the day. He wants to compensate his wishes of the day by dreaming about his beloved at night.

Answer the following questions

1. *Culture and Anarchy* is written by.....
Matthew Arnold
2. In the poem *Longing*, the poet asks his beloved to come to him in his.....
dreams

Discuss

1. Who is the “thou” in the poem? A dream girl? A dear departed? A dame sans Mercy” Discuss.

The “thou” in the poem is the poet’s beloved. She may be a dream girl for she visits the poet only in his dreams. She may also be a dear departed for the poet is much worried during the day because of her absence. She can’t be a dame sans mercy because she brings happiness and relief to the poet in his dreams at night.

2. “...and be/As kind to others as to me!” Lovers are often jealous by nature. How do you explain the poet’s stance?

The poet’s love for his beloved is sincere and genuine that there can be no place for jealousy. That is why he wants her to be so kind to everybody as she is to him.

3. “As thou never cam’st in sooth”. Was she a deceitful woman?

The beloved may be a dear departed and that is why she couldn’t come to him in reality any more. She was not a deceitful woman.

4. “And let me dream it truth”. How does it help to reflect the intensity of his longing?

The poet longs for the presence of his beloved but she never comes to him in reality. So he wants her to come to him in his dreams and caress him. His love is so intense that he wants to believe his dreams to be true.

Essay question

1. Theme of love and longing in the poem *Longing*.

The poem *Longing* by the famous Victorian poet Matthew Arnold is a typical love poem. This poem is an expression of the poet’s longing for the presence of his beloved. The poet’s love is very intense and sincere.

The poet seems to be much worried about the absence of his beloved during the day. So the poet wants his beloved to come to him in his dreams and he hopes that it will make him happy throughout the day. He really wants to have a great time with his beloved during day time, but she doesn’t come to him. He pleads his beloved to visit him in his dreams so that he can compensate his hopeless longing of the day through his dreams at night.

The poet wants her to come as she has visited him a thousand times. He considers her as one who comes from a new world which is bright and shining. She brings happiness and relief to the poet’s life. He does not want his beloved to show any hostility as she is new to this world but to smile on her new world. His love is so sincere that he tells her to be as kind to others as to himself.

The poet sadly admits the fact that his beloved has never come to him in reality. Even then he does not reject her love. He believes that what he sees in his dreams are real. He pleads his beloved to come to him in his dreams and delight him by parting his hair and kissing his brow and wants her to say there is no need to suffer any more as she is with him always.

The poet once again asks his beloved to visit him in his dreams and to make his day happy. This poem is a true expression of the poet’s love and longing for his beloved.

1. D WHEN WE TWO PARTED

:- LORD BYRON

About the poet

Lord Byron (George Gordon) (1788-1824) the son of Captain John. Byron and Catherine Gordon, was born in London in 1788, was a British poet and a leading figure in the Romantic Movement. His father was a profligate who squandered his wife's money as well as his own. Byron's father died when he was three and the boy was educated at home and later at Aberdeen Grammar school. In 1798, George succeeded to the title, Baron Byron of Rochdale, on the death of his great uncle.

He went to Harrow in 1810 and in 1805 Byron proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. While at Cambridge, Byron published his first volume of poems, *Hours of Idleness* in 1807. The poems were savagely attacked by Henry Brougham in the *Edinburg Review*. Byron replied with a publication of his satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) a poetical account of his travel through Spain, Malta, Albania and Greece, that established Byron as one of England's leading poets. "I awoke one morning and found myself famous," he later said.

In 1815 Byron married Anne Isabella Milbanke but the relationship came to an end the following year. Byron then moved to Venice where he met the Countess Teresa Guiccioli, who became his mistress. Lord Byron also began contributing to the radical journal the *Examiner*, edited by his friend, Leigh Hunt. In 1822, Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Percy Bysshe Shelley travelled to Italy where the three men published the political journal, *The Liberal*. Some of his most important works are *Manfred*, *Mazeppa*, *Cain*, *Don Juan* and *The Prisoner of Chillon*. In April 1824, Lord Byron died of fever in Missolonghi.

Poem

When We Two Parted

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted,
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sank chill on my brow
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well:
Long, long shall I rue thee
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met
In silence I grieve
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?
With silence and tears.

Introduction to the poem

When We Two Parted was published in 1813, in the *Poetical Works of Byron*. It is one of the best and most poignant of all 'break up' or 'missing you' love poetry.

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| parted | : | separated |
| in silence and tears | : | The lovers were so sad that they didn't tell anything to each other. |
| sever | : | to break |
| foretold | : | predict |

Summary

The first stanza sets up the parting of the two lovers. They parted in silence and tears. They felt very sad that they didn't even exchange a single word to each other. Silence spoke volumes on the grief they shared. They were half broken-hearted when they decided to part. Upon parting, the speaker's beloved became physically cold and pale. When they kissed for the last time he felt her cheek cold. Her kiss was as cold as her cheek, a change foreshadowing later sorrow which the poet feels at present.

Stanza II

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| The dew...my brow | : | he was totally benumbed and unnerved |
| vows | : | promises |
| light is thy name | : | the loss of fame that resulted when her secret affair was discovered. |
| I hear thy name spoken | : | she became a subject of gossip |

Summary

The poet felt the chill of the morning dew on his brow. In a way, it was like a warning to him that their love also will grow cold and come to a sad end. The poet says that his beloved had broken all her promises. She had lost her fame and become a subject of gossip. He too heard those gossips and felt guilty and shame because he knew that he was also responsible for it.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------------------|
| knell | : | bell ringing at death or funeral |
| shudder | : | shiver as from fear, horror or cold |
| rue | : | feel remorse or regret |

Summary

People talk badly about her in his presence. He feels their words like a church bell tolling a funeral. He shudders to think of the tragic end of their relationship. He wonders why he loved her so dearly. Those who spread stories about her do not know that the poet loved her deeply. The poet regrets of his past actions. He can't really express how he feels about it now.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|---------|---|---------------|
| grieve | : | feel very sad |
| deceive | : | cheat |

Summary

They met in secret. Now he grieves over it in silence. He wonders how she can forget everything so soon and throw away his love and trust. He even wonders how he should greet his beloved if he happens to meet her after many years. May be ‘with silence and tears’ he says.

Answer the following questions

1. *Hours of Idleness* is a collection of poems by.....
Lord Byron
2. Who said, “I awoke one morning and found myself famous”?
Lord Byron
3. The poem *When we Two Parted* appeared in the.....
Poetical works of Byron

Discuss

1. How does the structure of the poem reflect the subject treated?
The poem tells about the parting of two lovers. The lover feels very sad that his beloved had left him by denying his love and trust. The poem consists of four 8 line stanzas with the rhyme scheme abab cdcd. The structure of the poem is in keeping with this subject matter.
2. What is the tone of the poem? Is the poet divided between love and hate for the lady who has betrayed him?
The tone of the poem is melancholic. The poet’s love is so deep and sincere that he felt extremely sad at the time of parting. At the same time, he blames his beloved for betraying his trust.
3. What evidence do you find in the poem to support the idea that the relationship the poet had with the lady was platonic?
Platonic love means an emotional and spiritual relationship between two lovers that does not involve sexual desire. We can find no evidence in the poem to support the idea that the relationship between the poet and his beloved was platonic.
4. Find out the different meanings that “half broken hearted” conveys. Does it, in anyway, tell you that the lady had no regrets?
The poet says that he and his beloved were half broken-hearted at the time of parting. ‘Broken-hearted’ means stricken with grief and sorrow. Here the lovers are only ‘half broken-hearted’. That means their grief is not uncontrollable. We can’t say that the lady had no regrets for she too felt sad at the time of parting.
5. How will the poet greet her if he happens to meet her after long years? Again “in silence and tears”?
The poet wonders how he should greet his beloved if he happens to meet her after long years. The poet himself is doubtful about it. May be he will greet her in silence and tears as he did at the time of their parting.
6. Do you think a detailed biography of Byron is necessary for a better understanding of the poem?
A detailed biography of Byron will help us to get a better understanding of the poem for the poem contains some personal elements of the poet.

Paragraph question

1. What do you feel about the poet's love to his beloved?

The poet's love to his beloved is deep and sincere. That is why he felt very disappointed at the time of their parting. The poet says that his beloved had broken all her promises. His beloved had lost her fame and become a subject of gossip. The poet too felt very guilty because he knew very well that he was also responsible for it. People talked badly about his beloved in his presence and he felt their words like a church bell tolling a funeral. Only a man who loved his beloved sincerely could have such a feeling. He says that those who spread stories about her do not know how deeply he loved her. He even wonders how she can so soon forget everything and throw away his trust and love. He still longs to meet his beloved and wonders how he should greet her if he happens to meet her after many years.

Essay question

1. Write a critical appreciation of the poem *When We Two Parted*.

The poem *When We Two Parted* is written by the famous romantic poet Lord Byron and it is taken from the *Poetical Works of Byron* (1813). It is one of the best of all 'break up' or 'missing you' love poetry.

The first stanza sets up the parting of the two lovers. They parted in silence and tears. They felt very sad at the time of parting and they didn't tell anything to each other. Silence spoke volumes on the grief they shared. They were half broken-hearted. Upon parting, the poet's beloved became physically cold and pale. They kissed for the last time. The poet felt her cheek cold. There was no warmth in her kiss and it was as cold as her cheek, a change foreshadowing later sorrow which the poet feels at present.

The second stanza continues the sense of foreboding as he felt the chill of the morning dew on his brow. It was like a warning to him that their love also will grow cold and come to a sad end. The poet laments that his beloved had broken all her promises. She had lost her fame and thus became a subject of gossip. The poet too heard those gossips and felt guilty and ashamed because he knew that he was also responsible for it.

The poet loved her sincerely and deeply, but people talked badly about his beloved in his presence. He feels their words like a church bell tolling a funeral. He shudders to think of the tragic end of their relationship. He wonders why she was so dear to him. The people who spread stories about her do not know how deeply he loved her. The poet regrets of his past actions and words fail him to express his true feelings.

The last stanza gives an expression to the poet's grief. They met in secret and now he grieves over it in silence. He wonders how she can forget everything so soon and give up his trust and love. He also expresses his wish to see his beloved and even wonders how he should greet her if he happens to meet her after many years. Maybe with silence and tears as he did at the time of parting.

2. A VALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING

: - JOHN DONNE

About the poet

John Donne(1572-1631), the most prominent poet of the metaphysical school of poetry, was born in London, into a Roman Catholic family when practice of that religion was illegal in England. His father was John Donne, a prosperous ironmonger and his mother was Elizabeth Heywood, the daughter of John Heywood, the playwright. He attended Oxford and Cambridge Universities. But he was unable to obtain a degree from either institution because of his Catholicism, since he could not take the oath of Supremacy required of graduates.

He joined the expedition of Essex for Cadiz in 1596, and for the Azores in 1597 where he wrote 'The Calm'. Returning home, he became secretary to Lord Egerton and fell in love with the latter's young niece, Anne More. In 1601, he secretly married Anne More, risking his worldly prospects. The marriage was happy, but he was imprisoned and dismissed from his job.

Many of his poems were written for wealthy friends or patrons, especially Sir Robert Drury, who came to be Donne's Chief Patron in 1610. Donne wrote the two Anniversaries, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611) and *Of the Progress of the Soul* (1612), for Drury. In 1610 and 1611 he wrote two anti- catholic polemics: *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius His Conclave*. In 1615, he took Holy Orders. James I appointed him a royal chaplain and he began to acquire a reputation as a fine preacher. Donne became unwell in 1630 and he died on 31 March 1631.

A superbly prolific writer, Donne has innumerable songs and sonnets, divine poems, satires, epigrams, sermons and other similar works to his credit. Some of his important works are *A Nocturnall upon Lucies Day*, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, *The Extasie*, *Devotions* and *Death's Duell*.

The Metaphysical School of Poets

The term 'metaphysical' was first used by Dryden and further extended by Dr. Johnson. It refers to a group of British lyric poets of the 17th century who employed far-fetched imagery, abstruse arguments, scholastic philosophical terms, and subtle logic. John Donne was the leading figure of the metaphysical school of poets. The other poets who belonged to this group were George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Thomas Carew and Abraham Cowley. In the chapter on Abraham Cowley in his *Lives of the Poets*, Dr. Johnson has given an analysis of the characterisation of metaphysical poetry. According to him, the metaphysical poets were men of great learning and to show their learning was their whole endeavour. They were metaphysical in the sense that they were deeply learned. Donne had an intimate knowledge of medieval scholasticism. Cowley was well- versed in the achievements of science. Besides they were metaphysical not only by virtue of their learning but also by their deep reflective interest in the experiences of life namely, love, religion, death etc.

Their peculiar quality is the fantastic imagery, for example, the comparison of parted lovers to the legs of a pair of compasses (*A valediction Forbidding Mourning*). There is again the intellectual character of their wit, that is use of conceits and hyperboles. The evolution of their lyrics is more argumentative than emotional. In them we find a peculiar blend of passion and thought.

Poem

A Valediction Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
 And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
 “Now his breath goes,” and some say, “No”.

So let us melt, and make no noise,
 No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
‘Twere profanation of our joys
 To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th’ earth brings harms and tears;
 Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
 Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers; love
 -whose soul is sense-cannot admit
of absence, ‘cause it doth remove
 The thing which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
 That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
 Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss.

Out two souls therefore, which are one,
 Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to aery thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
 As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fix’d foot, makes no show
 To more, but doth, if th’ other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
 Yet, when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
 And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
 Like th’ other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
 And makes me end where I began.

Introduction to the Poem

A *valediction Forbidding Mourning* is one of the better known poems of Donne for its conceit of the compass. It was written in 1611. The poem was addressed to the poet's wife. It was written on the occasion of the poet's departure for France with Sir Robert Drury. It is a typical metaphysical poem, remarkable for its ingenious comparisons, mockery of the sentiments, display of logical arguments and use of hyperbole.

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------|
| valediction | : | bidding farewell |
| mildly | : | gently, calmly |
| whisper | : | speak with a low hissing voice |
| whilst | : | while |

Summary

Virtuous men are not afraid of death they pass away quietly, and gently ask their souls to depart from this world without any fret or fever, even though their friends are sad at their death, and want that they should live here for sometime more. Others do not want them to die at all.

Stanza 2

| | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| melt | : | depart |
| tear-floods | : | flood caused by tears |
| sigh-tempests | : | tempests caused by sighs |
| profanation | : | treating something sacred with irreverence, such as admitting the unworthy into a shrine reserved for priests and priestesses (of love) |
| laity | : | laymen; common people |

Summary

Speaking to his wife the poet says that like virtuous people, let them also bid good-bye to each other without making any noise about it. The poet does not want to raise floods by their tears nor tempests by their sighs. It would be a vulgarisation of their love, to mourn and weep and in this way tell the world of it. Their love is something sacred and they must not defile it. The poet is actually making fun of the ordinary lovers who often make a show off of their love.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| reckon | : | count; esteem |
| trepidation | : | tremor; trembling |

Summary

Moving of the earth, as during an earth quake, bring disaster and frightens people. People calculate the damage it does. But the movement of the sun and other heavenly bodies, though much greater, causes no damage and people are not afraid of it. Their parting is like the trepidation of the heavenly bodies and so it is not to be dreaded.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------|
| dull sublunary lovers | : | stupid, earthly lovers |
| cannot admit | : | cannot endure |
| elemented | : | made; constituted |

Summary

Stupid, earthly lovers, who are united solely by the senses, cannot endure the absence of the object of their love. For absence removes the physical self of the beloved on which their love is based.

Stanza 5

refined : pure

Summary

Their love is so spiritual and refined that even they themselves do not understand its real nature. They are sure that their love will not diminish by the absence of the beloved. There is a spiritual passion that the physical self, eyes, ears, lips, hands etc do not matter at all to them.

Stanza 6

endure : tolerate
breach : separation
expansion : enlargement

Summary

Their souls are one and they are rather more strongly united by the temporary separation. The departure of the poet would not cause any breach in his love. Rather it will expand, like gold, when beaten, does not break but expands wider and wider.

Stanza 7

stiff : rigid; stubborn

Summary

If their souls are considered as two, they will be like the two legs of a compass. Her soul is the fixed foot which does not want to move itself but is made to move because the other soul (the other foot of the compass) moves.

Stanza 8

roam : rove; wander over
leans : inclines
hearkens : listens
erect : upright; firm

Summary

The beloved is like the fixed foot of the compass which remains fixed at the centre. But it leans and follows the other foot when it moves, and grows erect and unites with the moving foot when it returns to the starting point after completing the circle. Similarly, his going away would be like the moving of the foot of a compass and they would be united when he returns home.

Stanza 9

obliquely : at an angle; slanting

Summary

The beloved has the same relations with the lover as the fixed foot of the compass has with the moving foot, which moves and draws a circle. It is the firmness of the fixed foot that enables the moving foot to draw the circle correctly, and then return to the place where it began. Similarly, it is the firmness of her love that enables him to complete his journey successfully and then return home.

Answer the following questions

1. Who is the leading figure of the metaphysical school of poets?
John Donne
2. *Of the Progress of the Soul* is written by.....
John Donne
3. The term 'metaphysical' was first used by.....
John Dryden
4. The famous conceit of the compass occurs in
A Valediction Forbidding Mourning

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences:-

1. "So let us melt...sigh-tempests move," What is special about the figure of speech?
The poet tells his wife not to mourn at the time of his parting. He does not want to raise floods by their tears nor tempests by their sighs. The poet is actually making fun of the ordinary lovers through the two powerful metaphors- "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests". These two metaphors are drawn from nature.
2. "Twere profanation...laity our love." Comment on the poetic devices used in this line.
The poet says that their love is something sacred that they must not desecrate it by making a show of their sorrow at the time of his departure. It would be a vulgarisation of their love, to mourn and weep and in this way tell the world of it.
3. "Dull sublunary Lovers' love." Comment on the poetic devices used in this line.
By "Dull sublunary lovers' love", the poet means that their love is not like that of the earthly lovers, which depends on the senses, but it is something sacred. The assonance of shot 'u' sounds in each word reinforces the concept of stupidity of earthly lovers, whose amorous attachments depend on physical sensation. The alliteration of 'l' in the line adds to the beauty of the poem.
4. "Dull sublunary lovers'...of absence..." Explain the brilliant pun on the word "absence".
The word 'absence' gives two meanings. It could either mean the departure of the poet which causes his absence or the absence of sensual pleasures.
5. "Our two souls...thinness beat." Briefly explain the poetic device used. Do you agree with Dr. Johnson's observation that the resemblance is the result of "discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike"?.
The departure of the poet is not a breach but an expansion, like gold, which when beaten becomes enlarged. Her love is likened to gold. The poet makes a comparison between two apparently unlike things. So Dr. Johnson's observation is correct.
6. "So let us melt...sigh-tempests move,' Find the metre.
The metre used in these lines is iambic tetrameter with the rhyme scheme abab.
7. "As virtuous...some say, No." What is the rhyme scheme?
The rhyme scheme is abab.
8. How can you identify a metaphysical poem?
Metaphysical poetry is characterised by the use of far-fetched imagery, abstrusive arguments, scholastic philosophical terms and suitable logic.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words.

1. Write a short essay on the theme of John Donne's *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*.

The basic theme of the poem *A valediction Forbidding Mourning* is the union of true lovers even when they are physically separated. The poet piles up a number of arguments to prove the point, and thus to persuade his beloved not to grieve at the time of his departure for France. There is a spiritual love, something divine and holy, and to mourn and weep, would be a vulgarisation of it. Spiritual love is not affected by separation for it is not confined to the senses. It is only earthly love which breaks and cracks when there is separation. The poet says that their love will expand like gold beaten to thinness.

2. What features of Donne's *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning* make it a metaphysical poem?

A metaphysical poem is characterised by the use of far-fetched imagery, abstruse arguments, scholastic philosophical terms and subtle logic. This poem *A valediction Forbidding Mourning* is a typical metaphysical poem, remarkable for its ingenious comparisons, mockery of the sentiments, display of logical arguments and use of hyperbole. This poem brings out Donne's use of hyperbole, his use of compound words ("tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests"), his scholastic learning and his use of fantastic far-fetched conceits. The conceit of the compass is very significant. Donne says that if their souls are separate, they are like the feet of a compass. His wife's soul is the fixed foot in the centre and his is the foot that moves around it. It is the firmness of the fixed foot that helps the other foot to complete the circle. Similarly, it is the firmness of her love that enables him to complete his journey successfully and then return home.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of John Donne's *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*. What are your views on the metaphysical elements in the poem?

A Valediction Forbidding Mourning is one of the better known poems of Donne for its conceit of the compass. It is a typical metaphysical poem which was addressed to the poet's wife. It was written on the occasion of the poet's departure for France with Sir Robert Drury. It expresses Donne's positive attitude towards love.

The basic theme of the poem is the union of true lovers even when they are physically separated. The poet piles up a number of arguments to prove the point, and thus to persuade his beloved not to grieve at the time of his departure for France. Donne says to his wife that like the virtuous people, let them also accept their separation quietly with no tears or sighs. Not to do so, would be to profane their love. There should be no flood of tears or tempests of sighs. Donne is poking fun at the idea that tears would cause a flood, or turbulence of deep sigh is sufficient to let loose a tempest.

The poet says that their love is something spiritual and so the physical separation that they endure is not to be dreaded. It is earthly love which breaks and cracks when there is separation. Their love is so refined that it is not dependent on physical sensation.

The poet further says that love has fused their two souls into one. Therefore, even if he has to go away, their souls would not be separated. His absence would not cause any breach in their love. Rather, his going away, only means that their love would cover a larger area, just as gold, when beaten, does not break but expands wider and wider.

Towards the end of the poem Donne employs the famous metaphysical conceit of the compass to prove the nature of their love. They are like the two legs of a compass. She is like the fixed foot of the compass which remains fixed at the centre. But it leans and follows the other foot when it moves, and grows erect and unites with the moving foot when it returns to the starting point after completing the circle. Similarly it is the firmness of her love that enables him to complete his journey successfully and then return home.

The poem is a typical metaphysical poem with its brilliant use of an array of poetic techniques such as metaphor, paradox, simile, conceit, alliteration and rhyme scheme, with objects and ideas drawn from a wide spectrum of knowledge, life astronomy, metallurgy, geology and geometry.

3. THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET

:- WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

About the poet

William Wordsworth(1770-1850), one of the influential English Romantic poets, was born on 7 April 1770 at Cocker mouth, Cumberland, the third of the five children of John Wordsworth, attorney to Sir James Lowther. After the deaths of his mother in 1778 and his father in 1783, Wordsworth was sent away to be educated at Hawkshead Grammar School in the Lake District.

Wordsworth made his debut as a writer in 1787 when he published a sonnet in *The European Magazine*. The same year he began attending St. John's College, Cambridge where he developed radical political views and received his B.A. Degree in 1791. In November 1791, he visited revolutionary France and became enthralled with the Republican movement. He fell in love with a French Woman, Annette Vallon, who in 1792 gave Birth to their child, Caroline. After the outbreak of war with France in 1793, he returned alone to England. The poem *Guilt and Sorrow* reveals that he still held strong views on social justice. He also wrote *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (1793), a pamphlet that gave support to the French Revolution.

In 1796 Wordsworth set up home at Alfoxden in Somerset with his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth. There he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge and both poets entered a period of intense creativity which produced the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collection which inaugurated the Romantic epoch of English poetry. In 1799 Dorothy and William Wordsworth moved to Grasmere in the Lake district. Three years later Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson. Over the next five years several distressing experiences, including the death of two of his children, his brother being drowned at sea and Dorothy's mental breakdown occurred. During this period, Wordsworth worked on two major poems, *The Recluse*, which was never finished, and *The Prelude*, a poem that remained unpublished until his death. In 1807 he published *Poem in Two Volumes*. The poems *Ode to Duty, Resolution and Independence* and *intimations of Immortality* are all included in this collection. Although attacked by William Hazlitt, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, for renouncing his early radicalism, Wordsworth was popular with most critics. *The Excursion* (1814) was well received and this was followed by *Miscellaneous Poems* (1815) and *The Waggoner* (1819).

Wordsworth now established as a conservative and patriotic poet, succeeded Robert Southey as Poet Laureate in 1843. He died at Rydal Mount, Ambleside in 1850.

The Romantic Movement

Romanticism started in English Literature with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. The Romantic Movement is popularly known by two terms – the Romantic Revival and the Romantic Revolt. It is called Romantic Revival because it seeks to revive the poetic ideals of the Elizabethan Age. Love, beauty, emotion, imagination, romance and beauty of nature were the ideals of Elizabethan poetry. It is called the Romantic Revolt because it revolted against the eighteenth century classical tendencies of correctness, adherence to rules, appeal to reason and intellect, inane poetic diction and dominance of the heroic couplet.

The Romantic period in English Literature is divisible into two generations of poets. The first generation of poets are known as the older poets. They include William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Walter Scott and Robert Southey. The poets of the second generation are called the younger poets or the Revolutionary poets. They include Lord Byron, P.B. Shelly and John Keats.

Poem

The Affliction of Margaret

Where art thou, my beloved Son,
Where art thou, worse to me than dead?
Oh find me prosperous or undone!
Or, if the grave be now thy bed,
Why am I ignorant of the same
That I may rest; and neither blame,
Nor sorrow may attend thy name?

Seven years, alas, to have received
No tidings of an only child;
To have despair'd, and have believ'd,
And be for evermore beguil'd;
Sometimes with thoughts of very bliss!
I catch at them, and then I miss;
Was ever darkness like to this?

He was among the prime in worth,
An object beauteous to behold;
Well born, well bred; I sent him forth
Ingenuous, innocent, and bold:
If things ensued that wanted grace,
As hath been said, they were not base;
And never blush was on my face.

Ah! little doth the Young One dream,
When full of play and childish cares,
What power hath even his wildest scream,
Heard by his Mother unawares!
He knows it not, he cannot guess:
Years to a Mother bring distress;
But do not make her love the less.

Neglect me! no I suffer'd long
From that ill thought; and being blind,
Said, "Pride shall help me in my wrong;
Kind mother have I been, as kind
As ever breathed:" and that is true;
I've wet my path with tears like dew,
Weeping for him when no one knew.

My Son, if thou be humbled, poor,
Hopeless of honour and of gain,
Oh! do not dread thy mother's door;
Think not of me with grief and pain:
I now can see with better eyes;
And worldly grandeur I despise,
And fortune with her gifts and lies

Alas! the fowls of Heaven have wings,
And blasts of Heaven will aid their flight;
They mount, how short a voyage brings

The Wanderers back to their delight!
Chains tie us down by land and sea;
And wishes, vain as mine, may be
All that is left to comfort thee.

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
Maim'd, mangled by inhuman men;
Or thou upon a Desert thrown
Inheritest the Lion's Den;
Or hast been summoned to the Deep,
Thou, Thou and all thy mates, to keep
An incommunicable sleep.

I look for Ghosts; but none will force
Their way to me; 'tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Betwixt the living and the dead;
For, surely, then I should have sight
Of Him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.

My apprehensions come in crowds;
I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass:
I question things, and do not find
One that will answer to my mind;
And all the world appears unkind.

Beyond participation lie
My troubles, and beyond relief:
If any chance to heave a sigh
They pity me, and not my grief.
Then come to me, my Son, or send
Some tidings that my woes may end;
I have no other earthly friend.

Introduction to the poem

The Affliction of Margaret is written in the form of a ballad. It is about a boy who has left home, but lost contact with his mother. The poem was written between 1801 and 1804, and published in 1807. It was a time when the British Empire was rapidly expanding and striking roots in different parts of the world. Without adequate communication facilities, tens of hundreds of English mothers like Margaret would have been left wondering what had become of their sons. The poem captures the mother's concern for her son, whom she has not seen for seven years. In the depth of loneliness and pain, she requests the boy to return. She says. "Then come to me, my son...I have no other earthly friend".

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--------------------|
| prosperous | : | wealthy |
| undone | : | financially ruined |
| grave be now thy bed | : | if you are dead |

Summary

Margaret the mother describes the desperation and pain of not knowing the whereabouts of her son. Her son left home seven years ago and has not been heard from since. Seven years seem like eternity to her. Not knowing of her son is worse than the knowledge that her son is dead. She speculates about what may have happened to him, good or bad, since then. She wants him to come back whether 'prosperous' or 'undone'. If he is dead, she wonders why she is ignorant of it and therefore unable to find peace. If he is dead, his name would no longer attract either guilt or sorrow.

Stanza 2

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------------------|
| tidings | : | news |
| despaired | : | given up hope |
| bliss | : | absolute faith and joy |
| beguiled | : | fooled |

Summary

Seven years have passed since her son left home. Since then she has not received any news about her only child. She had hoped and believed that he would soon return home but she was fooled. Sometimes she is filled with the happy memories of her son but then she misses those happy moments and becomes sad. Her hopes are insubstantial and she is still in doubt.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| prime | : | most important |
| behold | : | see |
| ingenuous | : | honest |
| ensued | : | resulted |
| base | : | bad |
| blush | : | shame |

Summary

The mother feels that her son was the gem of a child. He was of good birth and well brought up. He was honest, innocent and bold. She was always proud of him and never felt ashamed of him at least once.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------------|
| scream | : | screech; shriek |
| unaware | : | not aware |
| distress | : | extreme pain |

Summary

She recollects the innocence and mirth of childhood. She says a child little realises how much power he has to worry and to terrify his mother, with his most carefree scream. As the child grows older, his mother's anxiety and fear grows too, but her love does not diminish.

Stanza 5

| | | |
|---------|---|-----------------------------|
| neglect | : | disregard; treat carelessly |
| pride | : | dignity |

Summary

This stanza begins with an exclamation as if she were answering an accusation, that her son has neglected her. She is defensive and denies it. She claims that she had been a kind mother to her son and felt proud of it. But since then she has mourned in private over her son's disappearance.

Stanza 6

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------------------|
| dread | : | great fear |
| grandeur | : | loftiness; dignity |
| despise | : | look down upon; scorn |

Summary

The son's absence has changed her views and values. The mother has learned to dismiss and think nothing of what this world has to offer. Years of suffering made her realise that wealth and worldly possessions are of little value. Now she is only concerned about her son. She wants her son to return, even if she is facing bad circumstances. He should not fear returning on this account as she cares nothing for these things.

Stanza 7

| | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------|
| fowl | : | a bird |
| blasts | : | explosion; gust of wind |
| vain | : | unsubstantial |
| comfort | : | relief |

Summary

The mother wishes her son had wings so that he could fly home like the fowls of heaven and make her happy. But she sadly admits the fact that they are bound by flesh and circumstances and only their wishes can rise up.

Stanza 8

| | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| dungeon | : | underground cell |
| groan | : | lament; bemoan |
| maimed | : | injured |
| mangled | : | mutilated; disfigured |
| summoned to the deep | : | shipwrecked |

Summary

She imagines all the worst possible things that might have happened to him. She fears that her son may be in some dungeon tortured by ruthless men or attacked by wild animals or savaged to death in the wilderness or killed in a shipwreck.

Stanza 9

| | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------|
| intercourse | : | communication |
| longing | : | an eager desire |

Summary

She says that she no longer believes in ghosts because she has sighted none. She is overwhelmed by tears and anxieties. She does not believe that there is intercourse between the living and the dead. If it is true, she is very sure that her son would have come to her for her love for her son is sincere and intense.

Stanza 10

| | | |
|---------------|---|-------|
| apprehensions | : | fears |
|---------------|---|-------|

Summary

Her fears and worries are so overwhelming that even the slightest sound like the rustling of the grass and the shadows of the clouds fill her mind with fear. She asks so many questions to herself, but finds no answer. Her son's absence has darkened her view of everything around her. She knows this is not the truth but that is how it seems to her in grief.

Stanza 11

sigh : long deep breath
woes : sorrows

Summary

She says that no one can share her grief. Her sufferings are beyond relief. She knows there are people who feel sorry for her but they do not feel with her. She once again pleads her son to come home or at least send some news about him so that her misery will end. She laments that she has no other companion on this earth except her son.

Answer the following questions

1. Romanticism in English literature started with the publication of.....
Lyrical Ballads
2. Lyrical Ballads was published in.....
1798
3. *The Affliction of Margaret* is a poem by.....
William Wordsworth
4. What is the name of the mother in the poem *The Affliction of Margaret* ?
Margaret

Discuss

Answer the following in two or three sentences

1. "Where art thou...me than dead?" What effect is produced by the repetition of questions at the opening of the poem?
Margaret describes the desperation and pain of not knowing the whereabouts of her son. Seven years have passed since he left home and it seems like eternity to her. The repeated questions at the opening brings out the intensity and depth of her affliction.
2. "Seven years, alas...an only child." Why does "seven years" seem like eternity?
He is the only son of Margaret and she says that she has no other companion on this earth except her son. She feels so depressed as there is no news about her son since he left home. That is why seven years seem like an eternity to her.
3. "I've wet my path with tears like dew". Comment on the use of figure of speech.
The figure of speech used is simile. She says that she is worrying over her son's loss and no one knows about it. Her tears are like dew and it is suggestive of the daily occurrence of her emotions or feelings for her only son.
4. "And worldly grandeur...gifts and lies". Explain the figure of speech.
The figure of speech used is personification. Fortune is personified as a woman "with her gifts and lies". It is also presented as fickle.
5. What are Margaret's fears for her son?
Margaret fears that her son may be in some dungeon tortured by ruthless men or attached by wild animals or savaged to death in the wilderness or killed in a shipwreck.

6. Why doesn't Margaret believe in ghosts?

Margaret says that she does not believe in ghosts because she has sighted none. She seems certain he is dead and if ghosts exist she is very sure that her son would have come to her. But she has not seen his ghost.

7. "I have no other earthly friend!" What is suggested by this last line of the poem?

This last line of the poem emphasizes her loneliness. It also suggests that her husband is no longer with her and her son is her only companion in this world.

8. What is the theme of the poem?

The theme of the poem is the painful experience of a rustic widow on the loss of her only son.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Write a short essay on the various poetic techniques used in the poem by Wordsworth to convey Margaret's thoughts and feelings.

[Hints: Find at least one example of each of the following: metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, repetition, inversion of word order, alliteration, assonance, choice of words, rhyme scheme, metre]

In this poem *The Affliction of Margaret*, Wordsworth has used various poetic techniques to convey Margaret's thoughts and feelings.

They are:-

1) **Metaphor**

The fowls of heaven have wings
And blasts of heaven will aid their flight

2) **Onomatopoeia**

rustling of the grass

3) **Personification**

Fortune with her gifts and lies

4) **Simile**

Wet my path with tears like dew

5) **Repetition**

Where art thou, my beloved son,
Where art thou,

6) **Inversion of Word order**

Kind mother have I been, as kind
As ever breathed

Love and longings infinite

7) **Alliteration and Assonance**

An object beauteous to behold;
Well born, well bred
love the less
do not dread thy mother's door.

Wordsworth uses simple and familiar words in this poem to express the grief and pain of a rustic widow. The rhyme scheme used in this poem is ab ab ccc. The metre is heptameter.

2. Write a short essay on Wordsworth's use of "the very language of men"; in *The affliction of Margaret*.

In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth says that the life of the rustics and common men is the fittest subject for poetry. In this poem *The Affliction of Margaret* Wordsworth portrays the painful experience of a rustic widow over the loss of her only son. Seven years have passed since he left home and she has not received any news about him since then. Wordsworth advocates a simple style because a poet is a man speaking to men and so should use a language used in everyday life. Wordsworth has given expression to the mother's grief through simple and familiar words. In this poem the mother speaks out her heart which is full of fears and worries about her only son. Wordsworth totally rejected the use of 'poetic diction'. But in this poem, he uses various figures of speech to convey Margaret's thoughts and feelings. The rhyme scheme used in this poem is ab ab ccc and the metre is heptameter.

Write an essay of 300 words.

1. Consider *The Affliction of Margaret* as a "poem founded on the affections".

The poem *The Affliction of Margaret* is written in the form of monologue in which a rustic widow expresses the desperation and pain of not knowing the whereabouts of her son. Her son left home seven years ago and has not heard about him since then. Seven years seem like eternity to her.

The mother does not even know he is alive as there is no news from her son. She says that her son was the gem of a child. He was well born and well bred. He was honest, innocent and bold and so she was always proud of him. She recollects those happy days with her son but now she misses those happy moments. She says that children are not aware of a mother's pain. As the child grows older, the mother's anxiety and fear grows too, but her love does not diminish.

Margaret gives vent to her pent up feelings of loneliness and anger. She claims that she had been a kind mother to him and she felt proud of it. But now she mourns in private over her son's disappearance. The loss of her son has changed her views and values. She has learned to dismiss and think nothing of what this world has to offer. Now all that matters to her is her son. She pleads with her son to return home even if he is in a bad situation.

The mother wishes her son had wings, so that he could fly home like the fowls of heaven. But she knows that her wishes will remain unfulfilled. She is full of apprehensions about her son that she imagines all the worst possible things that might have happened to him. She fears that her son may be in some dungeon or attacked by wild animals or killed in a shipwreck.

Margaret is almost sure that her son is dead. She does not believe in ghosts because she has never seen any ghost. If ghosts exist, she is very sure that her son would certainly come to her for her love for her son is deep and sincere. Her tears and worries are overwhelming and she trembles at every shadow or slightest sound. She asks herself so many questions but finds no answer. Her grief makes her feel that the whole world is unkind to her.

She says that no one can share her grief and her miseries are beyond relief. She laments that she has no companion in this world except his son. And so she again pleads with her son to return home or at least send some news about him so that her miseries will have an end.

4. ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

: - JOHN KEATS

About the poet

John Keats (1795-1821), one of the greatest English poets and a major figure in the Romantic movement, was born in Moor fields, London. His father died when he was eight and his mother when he was fourteen. These sad circumstances drew him particularly close to his two brothers, George and Tom, and his sister Fanny. He was educated at a school in Enfield, where he began a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Leaving school at fifteen, he spent five years as an apprentice to an apothecary-surgeon. In 1815 he left his apprenticeship and became a student at Guy's Hospital, London. But he soon gave up his medical career to devote himself to the muse.

Keat's first volume of poems was published in 1817. It attracted some good reviews, but these were followed by the first of several harsh attacks by the influential Blackwood's Magazine. *Endymion*, which he dedicated to Chatterton, was published in the spring of 1818 and it received severe criticism. After Tom's death he moved into a friend's house in Hampstead. There he met and fell deeply in love with a young neighbour, Fanny Brawne. During the following year, despite ill health and financial problems, he wrote an astonishing amount of poetry, including *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, *Ode to a Nightingale* and *To Autumn*. His second volume of poems appeared in 1820. The tuberculosis that ran in the family did not leave him alone. His health deteriorated from bad to worse in 1820. On the recommendation of his doctors, he sailed to Italy with his painter friend, Joseph Severn, to spend the winter there. He died on 23rd February, 1821 in Rome. His tomb bears the epitaph, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water", a line he wrote for himself.

Keat's poetry is at its best in his odes. The six odes, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode on Melancholy*, *Ode on Indolence*, *To Autumn* and *Ode to Psyche* touch the highest watermark of English poetry. In all these odes, he seeks to discover permanence in a world of change, and juxtaposes the permanence of art with the mutability of the real and the material.

Poem

Ode On A Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunt about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Introduction to the Poem

In *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Keats addresses the titular urn, "the bride of quietness", whose beauty and purity cannot be violated by time. Taking us to the enchanting and mysterious scenes of Greek pastoral life engraved on the urn, he exalts on how art confers permanence on beauty. Generations will pass, but the urn will remain, whispering this eternal truth, consoling and inspiring humanity.

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| urn | : | a vase for preserving the ashes of the dead (The urn which inspired Keats to compose this poem is supposed to be the marble urn which he saw at the house of Lord Holland. This urn is still preserved in the garden of Holland House) |
| Grecian | : | Greek; of Greece |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Unravished | : | not violated; pure; chaste |
| bride of quietness | : | bride of silence |
| sylvan historian | : | rustic or of the forest |
| deities | : | gods or goddesses |
| Tempe | : | a valley between Mt Olympus and Mt Ossa, in |
| Thessaly, Greece Arcady | : | Arcadia, a Greek mountainous country; seat of rustic simplicity and homely joys. |
| loath | : | resist |
| pipes and timbrels | : | musical instruments |

Summary

The poet stands before an ancient Grecian urn and addresses it. He is preoccupied with its depiction of pictures frozen in time. He expresses his sense of wonder through a string of questions. Keats calls the beautiful urn the “still unravish’ed bride of quietness”, the “foster child of silence and slow time”. He also calls it “sylvan historian” because the pictures on the urn are able to tell their stories more beautifully than any poet can. It tells the tales of gods and men in Tempe or the valleys of Arcadia in Greece. He wonders about the figures on the side of the urn and asks what legend they depict and from where they come. He looks at a picture that seems to depict a group of men pursuing a group of women and wonders what their story could be: “What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?”

Stanza 2

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------|
| sensual ear | : | physical ear |
| more endeared | : | more precious |
| ditties of no tone | : | soundless song |

Summary

The poet looks at another picture on the urn, this time of a young man playing a pipe, lying with his lover beneath a glade of trees. He feels that heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter. This means that imagination is more powerful than reality. The piper on the urn will go on playing on the pipe forever because art has immortalized him. His tunes are meant for the spiritual ear. Keats consoles the bold lover who is about to kiss his sweet heart saying that he should not grieve because her beauty will never fade and she will be young forever.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|--------|---|------------------|
| bough | : | branch of a tree |
| shed | : | cast off |
| adien | : | farewell |
| cloyed | : | surfeited |

Summary

The poet looks at the trees surrounding the lovers and feels happy that they will never shed their leaves. The trees can never bid farewell to spring because eternal spring will keep them happy forever. The piper will go on piping ever fresh melodies without feeling weariness. The lovers on the urn will keep on loving. The passions experienced by the lovers in the pictures are above real human emotions. Human passions end up in sad satiety whereas the love depicted on the urn will remain fresh and young forever.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|------------|---|--|
| sacrifice | : | immolation |
| altar | : | elevated place for offering sacrifices |
| heifer | : | young cow |
| flanks | : | sides |
| pious morn | : | holy morning |
| desolate | : | devastated |

Summary

From the happy scenes the poet now turns to a scene of a ritual, an animal sacrifice on a pagan altar. A heifer being led by a priest to the altar is lowing at the skies. He wonders where they are going and from where they have come. He imagines the empty streets of their little town. All the people have gone to the sacrifice. The streets of the town will be silent and desolate forever, for those who have left it, frozen on the urn, will never return.

Stanza 5

| | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| Attic shape | : | the urn, which is a symbol of Attic or Athenian art |
| Fair attitude | : | beautiful shape |
| brede | : | embroidery |
| overwrought | : | carved |

Summary

The poet again addresses the urn itself. The urn is Greek and looks beautiful. The marble urn is embroidered with human figures, branches and grass. He says that the urn diverts us away from rational speculation and it does not yield to thought. Like eternity it too cannot be comprehended in rational terms. He thinks that when his generation is long dead, the urn will remain, telling future generations its enigmatic lesson. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." This is the great message of the urn to mankind.

Answer the following questions

1. *Endymion* is a work by.....
John Keats
2. Who wrote *Ode on A Grecian Urn*?
John Keats
3. The lines "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" occur in.....
Ode on a Grecian Urn
4. In *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Keats addresses.....
the Grecian Urn

Discuss

Answer the following in two or three sentences.

1. Why does the poet address the urn as the "foster child of silence and slow time"?
The urn is the "foster child of silence and slow time". It is not their actual child, because they have not created it. But they have kept and preserved it and that is why it is called their foster child.
2. How has the urn become a "Sylvan historian"?
The urn is addressed as Sylvan historian because the scenes engraved on it are of Greek rustic life.

3. “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter”. Explain.
Keats feels that heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter. This means that imagination is more powerful than reality. Through these lines Keats says that the melodies of reality are sweet but those which remain in the realm of the ideal are sweeter.
4. How are the persons and nature engraved on the urn superior to their counterparts in reality?
The persons and nature engraved on the urn are superior to their counterparts in reality for art has bestowed immortality on them. The piper will go on piping ever fresh melodies, the trees will ever be green and the lovers will keep on loving and ever be young and fair. But in reality this is not possible.
5. How is the passion experienced by the lovers in the picture different from real human passion?
The passions experienced by the lovers in the pictures are far above real human emotions. Human passions, in reality, may end up either in satiety and disgust, or in intense sorrow whereas the love depicted on the urn will remain fresh and young forever.
6. Can you see the streets of the deserted town in the picture? Where do they exist?
We cannot see the streets of the deserted town in the picture. Looking at the picture of a sacrifice on the urn, the poet only imagines the empty streets of the deserted town.
7. How does the Grecian urn affect our thoughts?
The urn confuses our thought like a riddle. It perplexes our thoughts like the mystery of eternity.
8. What does the urn symbolise?
The urn symbolises immortality and eternal beauty.
9. What contradictions are merged in the urn?
The inner contents of an urn is the mortal remains of a human being. But the pictures engraved on its outer surface symbolise the immortality and permanence of art. These are the contradictions merged in the urn.
10. What message does the urn convey to humanity?
‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’- this is the great message of the urn to mankind.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Comment on the three scenes engraved on the urn. How do they appeal to the poet?
The first scene that he encounters on the urn is that a group of young men chasing women and of some musical instruments. Looking at this scene he wonders about the figures on the urn and asks what legend they depict and from where they come. Next scene is that of a young man playing a pipe, lying with his lover beneath a glade of trees. The picture of the fair youth beneath the trees and the bold lover who is about to kiss his sweet heart lead the poet to compare the ideal and the actual. He feels that heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter. This means that imagination is more powerful than reality. The bold lover who is about to kiss his sweetheart reminds Keats of the transience of human life and the permanence of art. The love depicted on the urn will remain fresh and young forever. There is another picture on the urn-that of a sacrifice and an assemblage of men and women. The poet’s imagination goes beyond the actual scene represented on the urn. He imagines how the town from which the people have come to attend the sacrifice, must be forever in desolation. All these three pictures on the urn bring out the immortality and permanence of art.

2. How does Keats bring out the contrast between art and life through the picture of the bold lover and his sweetheart?

Keats looks at the picture of the bold lover and his sweetheart engraved on the urn. The lover is about to kiss his sweetheart. Even though he cannot kiss his lover, the poet says that he should not grieve because her beauty will never fade and she will be young forever. The bold lover who is about to kiss his sweetheart reminds Keats of the transience of human life and the permanence of art. The passions experienced by the lovers in the pictures are above real human emotions. Human passions, in reality, may end up either in satiety and disgust, or in intense sorrow. Keats contrasts the transience of human joy with the permanence of art.

Write an essay of 300 words.

1. “Forever will thou love, and she be fair”. Discuss the central theme of *Ode on a Grecian Urn* with reference to this line.

Ode on a Grecian Urn is one of the most remarkable poems by the great romantic poet, John Keats. The central theme of the poem is the transience of human life and the permanence of art. The line “Forever will thou love, and she be fair” also conveys the same meaning.

Keats addresses the urn whose beauty and purity cannot be violated by time. He is preoccupied with its depiction of pictures frozen in time. It is the “still unravish’d bride of quietness”, the “foster-child of silence and slow time”. He also describes the urn as a “historian” that can tell a story. There is a series of pictures engraved on the urn. The scenes depicted are a series of mundane activities among which Keats focuses on three: one, a festival with pipers, singers and young men chasing shy maidens; two, an amorous scene of courtship with a youth in a gesture of fulfillment; and the last, a scene of sacrifice with a priest, a heifer and people in procession to an imaginary altar.

He looks at the picture which seems to depict a group of men pursuing a group of women and wonders what their story could be. The poet then looks at another picture on the urn, of a young man playing a pipe, lying with his lover beneath a glade of trees. He says that the piper’s unheard melodies are sweeter than mortal melodies because they are unaffected by time. The lover is about to kiss his beloved. The poet tells the young lover that, though he can never kiss his lover because he is frozen in time, he should not grieve, because her beauty will never fade. The lover depicted on the urn would always be loving, without feeling the satiety or anguish of love of real life.

The piper on the urn will go on playing on the pipe forever because art has immortalised him. His tunes are meant for the spiritual ear. The poet looks at the trees on the urn and says that they will never shed their leaves. The trees can never bid farewell to spring because eternal spring will keep them happy forever. All these pictures bring out the vital difference between life and art. Life has the vividness and warmth of reality, but it is subject to change and decay, whereas art is the unchanging expression of beauty.

The other picture engraved on the urn is that of a sacrifice and an assemblage of men and women. A priest is leading the heifer to the sacrifice. The poet imagines how the town from which the people have come to attend the sacrifice must be forever in desolation. The fact is that the people in the picture are bound to their place and thus made immovable by art.

Keats concludes the poem by conveying the urn’s message to mankind- “Beauty is truth, truth beauty”. Beauty and truth are not two different things; they are identical. Art immortalizes beauty, which in its turn, consoles man.

5. THE LABORATORY: ANCIEN REGIME

: - ROBERT BROWNING

About the poet

Robert Browning(1812-1889), one of the famous English poets of the Victorian age, was born in Camberwell, to protestant parents. Largely educated at home, Browning read widely among the books of his father's extensive library. At 16 he began to study at the newly established London University, but returned home after a brief period.

He began to write verse from an early age. The influence of Byron and Shelley were considerably felt in his early works like *Pauline* and *Sordello*. His first dramatic writing, *Strafford* came out in 1837, followed by *Bells and Pomegranates* which included some of his best dramas and shorter lyrics. After his marriage to Elizabeth Barrett, he moved to Italy, a country he loved passionately. Many of his noteworthy poems were written in Italy. After Elizabeth Barrett Browning's death in 1861, he resolved to leave Italy and settled in England with his son. *The Ring and the Book* was published in monthly installments from November 1868 to February 1869. The poem received complimentary reviews and Browning became popular with the public. He also wrote numerous dramatic poems dealing with contemporary themes. The foundation of the Browning society (1881) is an indication of the poet's status in old age as sage and celebrity. In 1889, while on a visit to Italy, Browning died at the Palazzo Rezzonico, his son's residence in Venice.

Poem

The Laboratory: Ancien Regime

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy--
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

He is with her; and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them! -- I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder, -- I am not in haste!
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

That in the mortar -- you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly, -- is that poison too?

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

Quick -- is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me--
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes, -- say, 'no!'
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
Let death be felt and the proof remain;
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace--
He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee--
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it -- next moment I dance at the King's!

Introduction to the Poem

'The Laboratory' first appeared in *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany* in June 1844 and was later published in 1845 in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. The setting of the poem is the Ancien Regime, i.e., France before the Revolution. Composed as a dramatic monologue, the poem is an exploration of a vengeful woman's psyche, woman betrayed by her lover/husband driven by jealousy and an extreme sense of possessiveness, she concocts a plan to get her new rival killed. She sits in the laboratory of an old chemist who has agreed to make a deadly poison, with which she intends to kill her rival. Her monologue is addressed to the chemist.

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| mask | : | protective covering for the face |
| pliest | : | works at |
| devil's smithy | : | the chemist's workshop is the devil's workshop with all its deadly poisons and chemicals |
| prithee | : | please tell me |

Summary

The speaker in this poem is a vengeful woman who wants to kill her rival in love. She secretly goes to an alchemist, who has agreed to make her a deadly poison, with which she will be able to kill her rival. She wears a mask to protect herself from the fumes that may be poisonous and eagerly asks him to show the poison that he has prepared. She calls the laboratory the devil's workshop.

Stanza 2

| | | |
|-------|---|---------------------------|
| he | : | the woman's lover/husband |
| drear | : | dreary; dark |

Summary

She knows that her lover is with her rival. She also knows where they are and what they are doing. They will be thinking she is crying while they are enjoying and they may laugh at her. They will also be thinking that she has gone to church to pray. But she says that she is in the laboratory.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|---------|---|------------------------------|
| grind | : | reduce to powder by crushing |
| moisten | : | wet slightly |
| mash up | : | mix substances |
| pound | : | beat into fine pieces |

Summary

She says that she is not in a hurry. She wants the alchemist to make the right poison taking enough time. She prefers to sit with him and watch him making the poison than going to the court where men wait for her to dance with her.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| mortar | : | a bowl for pounding substances with a pestle |
| gum | : | oozings from certain plants that harden gradually on the surface |
| brave | : | (here) splendid |
| yonder | : | over there |
| phial | : | small glass container |

Summary

She watches the chemist at work. She looks at the gum in the mortar and thinks of the tree from which the gum is oozed out in golden colour. She sees the beautiful blue liquid in the phial and says that it surely tastes sweet. She asks the chemist whether that liquid also is poison.

Stanza 5

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| thy treasures | : | the innumerable poisonous chemicals in the laboratory |
| wild | : | fantastic |
| signet | : | a kind of ring |
| fan-mount | : | the small metal frame of a fan |
| filigree basket | : | a little ornamental basket |

Summary

She wishes to have all the poison. She considers the poisonous chemicals in the laboratory as great treasures. She wonders about the invisible pleasures that the poison can bring to her. She imagines an earring, or a casket or a ring or a fan-mount or a filigree basket which could carry such a deadly poison.

Stanza 6

| | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| lozenge | : | a tablet for sore throat, a small diamond shaped substance |
| pastile | : | a stick made of aromatic paste |
| pauline and Elize | : | probably the names of her new rivals |

Summary

Soon she will be at the king's court. She says that she will give her rival Pauline a lozenge containing poison which will kill her in thirty minutes. Then she will light a pastille with poison and Elise, her other rival, would breathe the fumes and she will be dead soon.

Stanza 7

| | | |
|----------|---|--------------|
| grim | : | unattractive |
| enticing | : | tempting |
| dim | : | soft |
| ere | : | before |

Summary

The lady wonders how quickly the chemist has made the poison. However she feels disappointed at the appearance of the poison. Its grim look is quite unappealing to her. She wants the chemist to make the poison attractive in colour so that her rival would drink it without any suspicion.

Stanza 8

| | | |
|----------------|---|-------------------------|
| minion | : | a little thing |
| ensnare | : | to trap |
| masculine eyes | : | vibrant and daring eyes |

Summary

Looking at the drop of poison, which the chemist has prepared, the lady wonders whether it is enough to kill a big woman like her rival. She describes herself as a 'minion' a little thing and says that her rival has attracted her lover with her large size. The lady doubts that such a single droplet of poison could stop the beating of her rival's pulse.

Stanza 9

shrivel : contract or wither into wrinkled state

Summary

Last night she had seen her lover and her rival together. Even though the lady angrily stared at her rival, she did not wither. The lady believes that the poison will fulfill what her angry stares could not, thus putting an end to the relationship forever.

Stanza 10

spare : relieve

Summary

The lady imagines a painful death for her rival. The extremity of the woman's bitterness and vengeance is revealed here. The pain must contort her rival's seductively beautiful face and deprive her body of all its grace so that her lover should remember her dying face.

Stanza 11

morose : gloomy

Summary

The poison is now ready. She wants to take her mask off and tells the chemist not to feel sorry for what he has done. She says that she will forfeit all her fortunes for the deadly droplet, provided the chemist preserves the secrecy of the deal.

Stanza 12

ere : before

Summary

Blind with the thought of revenge she is willing to give all her jewels and tells him that he can take as much gold as he wants. She even permits the old man to kiss her on the mouth. She wants to brush the dust off her so that nobody will know about her so that nobody will know about her visit to the laboratory. Then she will be going to the king's to dance.

Answer the following questions.

1. *Pauline* and *Sordello* are the works of.....
Robert Browning
2. Who is the speaker in the poem *The Laboratory Ancien Regime*?
A vengeful woman who has been betrayed by her husband or lover
3. Who is the listener in the poem *The Laboratory Ancien Regime*?
An old chemist
4. The poem *The Laboratory: Ancien Regime* is a.....
dramatic monologue
5. Who are the two rivals referred to in the poem *The Laboratory: Ancien Regime*?
Pauline and Elise

Discuss

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences

1. Why does the speaker call the laboratory the “devil’s smithy”? What is the motive behind her visit to that place?

The speaker calls the laboratory the “devil’s smithy” because it is a laboratory where the chemist makes deadly poisons and chemicals. She has gone there to ask the chemist to make a deadly poison with which she intends to kill her rival.

2. Why does she say that the poison in the phial is sure to taste sweetly?

The exquisite blue colour of the poison in the phial makes her think that it surely tastes sweet.

3. How does the woman propose to kill Pauline and Elize?

The woman plans to kill Pauline by giving her a lozenge containing poison which will kill her in thirty minutes. Then she will light a pastille with poison and Eliza would breathe the fumes and she will be dead soon.

4. “She’s not little, no minion like me!” What makes the speaker pass such a comment on her rival?

The speaker says that her rival is not a ‘minion’ like her but a large woman. It is her large size that attracted the lover. She doubts if the single droplet of poison can kill such a large woman.

5. What intentions must have prompted the chemist to prepare the poison according to the speaker’s wish?

The chemist must have attracted by the jewels and the large amount of money offered by the woman.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words.

1. Comment on the character of the old chemist as the silent listener in *The Laboratory*.

The poem *The Laboratory. Ancien Regime* is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker is a vengeful woman who approaches an old chemist to ask him to make a deadly poison with which she intends to kill her rival. The old chemist is the silent listener who agrees to make the poison for that woman. He is an expert in his work. The chemist’s workshop is the devil’s workshop with all its deadly poisons and chemicals. He does his work very carefully and makes a drop of poison for the lady which is enough to kill her rival. The lady wonders how quickly the chemist has made the poison. He silently listens to the woman’s vengeful talk without any discomfort. Satisfied with the old chemist’s work, she offers all her jewels and tells him that he can take as much gold as he wants. She even permits the old man to kiss her on the mouth. After completing his work, the chemist seems morose for what he has done. But the lady tells him not to feel sorry but to feel proud of finishing his work successfully.

Write an essay to 300 words

1. Discuss how Browning performs a psychological dissection of the woman’s character through his dramatic monologue, *The Laboratory*.

Robert Browning’s *The Laboratory: Ancien Regime* is a dramatic monologue, which presents the desperately jealous feelings of a woman abandoned by her lover or husband. Driven by jealousy and an extreme sense of possessiveness, she concocts a plan to get her rival killed.

The lady secretly goes to an old alchemist, who has agreed to make her a deadly poison, with which she intends to kill her rival. She is very much fascinated with the work of the chemist in his laboratory as he creates the poison that she thinks will end her troubles. Clearly she has become sociopathic or psychopathic as a result of being betrayed. She really wants her revenge. She wears a mask to protect herself from the fumes that may be poisonous. She looks round eagerly at all the different chemicals and glass containers in the laboratory.

She says that her lover and her rival would be thinking that she would be crying but actually she is in the laboratory of the old chemist eagerly watching him making the poison. She tells the chemist to do his work of making the poison carefully taking enough time. She prefers to sit with the chemist watching his work than to go to the king's where men wait for her to dance with them.

Seeing the exquisite blue liquid in the phial, she says it surely tastes sweet. She is delighted at the idea that the poison could be hidden away in a ring, or in a secret little hole in a fan-mount. She says that she will give her rival Pauline a lozenge containing poison which will kill her in thirty minutes. Then she will light a pastille with poison and Elise, her other rival, will breathe the fumes and she too will be dead soon. She wants actually to witness the moment of her rivals' death, the moment when she drinks the poisonous drink and the moment when her face contorts in agony as she is dying.

The chemist prepares a drop of poison and she wonders if it is enough to kill a large woman like her rival. She imagines a painful death for her rival. The extremity of the woman's bitterness and vengeance is revealed here. The pain must contort her rival's seductively beautiful face and deprive her body of all its grace so that her lover should remember her dying face.

She is so delighted with the chemist's work that she offers all her jewels and also tells him that he can take as much gold as he wants. Even though she is paying the chemist handsomely for his illegal work, she even offers to let the old man kiss her on the mouth. Since she seems very excited by the prospect of murder and winning back her husband or lover.

The woman also takes extreme care to brush the dust off her so that nobody will know about her visit to the laboratory. The she will be going to the king's to dance.

Robert Browning has made a psychological dissection of the woman's character by bringing her vengeance and her sense of betrayal through his dramatic monologue *The Laboratory*.

6. ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

:- THOMAS GRAY

About the poet

Thomas Gray(1716-1771),one of the predecessors of Romanticism, was born in Cornhill, as the son of a Scrivener. Gray was educated at Eton and there formed a friendship with Horace Walpole, Richard West and Thomas Aston which was nicknamed the 'Quadruple Alliance'. In 1734 he was admitted to Peter House, Cambridge, and considered embarking on a legal career, but was undecided. In 1739-41 he toured France and Italy with Walpole, but they quarreled at Reggio and Gray returned to England.

Gray began seriously writing poems in 1742 mainly after the death of his close friend Richard West. He spent most of his life as a scholar in Cambridge. At his mother's house in Stock Poges he wrote the *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West*, his ode *On Adversity*, the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* and the unfinished *Hymn to Ignorance*. Graduating as bachelor of Laws in 1743, he became reconciled with Walpole the following year, and in 1747, on the death of Walpole's cat, Gray sent him the *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tube of Gold Fishes*. However, it was with the publication of the *Elegy written in a country Churchyard* (1751) that he reached the peak of his fame. His two Pindaric odes *Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* were published in 1757. Honours and titles had little charm for him, so he declined the designation of Poet Laureateship in 1757. In 1768, he became Professor of Modern History and Modern Language at Cambridge. Gray enjoyed a final expedition to the Lake District in 1769. While Grays' circumstances improved, his health declined and he died at Cambridge in 1771.

Gray's poetic career falls into three phases: he began as a classicist, passed through a conventional lyric phase and ended up as a romantic. He is the chief poet of the transition phase between Augustan age and Romanticism. *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* bears many traces of the early traces of romanticism, like the celebration of rural life, the view of nature as the back drop of human destiny, the concern with human values and a philosophical reflection on the transience of material achievements.

Poem

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me. (4)

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds; (8)

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign. (12)

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep. (16)

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. (20)

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share. (24)

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke! (28)

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor. (32)

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave. (36)

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. (40)
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death? (44)

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre. (48)

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul. (52)

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air. (56)

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. (60)

The applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes, (64)

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind, (68)

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame. (72)

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way. (76)

Yet even these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. (80)

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die. (84)

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind? (88)

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires. (92)

For thee, who mindful of the unhonoured dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, (96)

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. (100)

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by. (104)

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love. (108)

"One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he; (112)

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou can'st read) the lay,
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn." (116)

The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own. (120)

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend. (124)

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God. (128)

The thoughtless World to majesty may bow
Exalt the brave, & idolize Success
But more to Innocence their Safety owe
Than Power & Genius e'er conspired to bless (132)

And thou, who mindful of the unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these Notes thy artless Tale relate
By Night & lonely contemplation led
To linger in the gloomy Walks of Fate (136)

Hark how the sacred Calm, that broods around
Bids ev'ry fierce tumultous Passion ease
In still small Accents whisp'ring from the Ground
A grateful Earnest of eternal Peace (140)

No more with Reason & thyself at strife;
Give anxious Cares & endless Wishes room
But thro' the cool sequester'd Vale of Life
Pursue the silent Tenour of thy Doom. (144)

Introduction to the poem

In *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* Thomas Gray mourns the death of the poor and simple forefathers of the villagers. Nothing can wake them from their everlasting sleep. The central idea of the poem is that death is inevitable. The rich and the poor, the great and the low, in other words, every human being moves on the road to death- "The paths of glory lead but to the grave".

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| Curfew | : | (here) evening bell; the word is derived from the French <i>Couvrefeu</i> , meaning, 'cover the fire'; a bell rung at night to warn the households to put out their fires, a custom introduced by William the Conqueror. |
| tolls | : | rings |
| knell | : | bell announcing death |
| lowing | : | sound made by cattle |
| wind | : | (here) walk in a zigzag manner |
| lea | : | meadow; pasture |
| weary way | : | a transferred epithet (the weariness of the ploughman is transferred to the way) a neoclassical feature. |

Summary

The poet, standing alone in the country churchyard, gives a description of the evening. The ringing of the evening bell indicates that the day is coming to an end. The cattle are returning home from the meadows and they move slowly in a zigzag line. The farmer who has been hard at work during the day is walking with heavy and tired steps towards his home and as he walks, darkness falls over the surrounding country, followed by solitude. The poet feels quite lonely.

Stanza 2

| | | |
|------------|---|---------------------------|
| glimmering | : | with faint light |
| landscape | : | scenery |
| solemn | : | religiously grave; sombre |
| wheels | : | makes circles in the air |
| droning | : | humming |
| drowsy | : | inducing sleep |
| tinklings | : | the soft ringing of bells |
| lull | : | put to silence |
| fold | : | enclosures for sheep |

Summary

The landscape begins to grow dim and indistinct to view in the evening twilight. The air is silent and is filled with solemnity. The only sounds heard are the humming of the beetle, as it makes circles in the air and the sound of the bells tied to the necks of sheep. These bells are heard ringing at irregular intervals and in a dull monotonous manner away in a far-off sheep-fold.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| save | : | except |
| yonder | : | over there |
| ivy-mantled | : | covered with a creeping plant that grows on old ruins |
| moping | : | dejected |
| molest | : | annoy |

Summary

The other sound that breaks the deep silence is the hooting of the owl from the ivy-mantled tower, where the owl has her nest. The owl complains to the moon against those passers-by who, by walking near her secret bower, breaks in upon her privacy.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| rugged | : | rough |
| turf | : | grass |
| mouldering | : | crumbling |
| heap | : | mound |
| hamlet | : | a small village |

Summary

The simple forefathers of the village sleep in their narrow graves, under the shade of that cluster of rough elm trees and that huge yew tree. Their graves are marked by mounds of earth which are slowly crumbling away.

Stanza 5

| | | |
|------------|---|------------------------------|
| swallow | : | a migratory bird |
| twittering | : | singing |
| clarion | : | the shrill sound of the cock |
| lowly bed | : | humble grave |

Summary

Neither the sweet-smelling breeze of the morning, nor the twittering of the swallows from their nests, nor the shrill sound of the cock, nor the sound of the huntsman's horn, can ever awaken them from their sleep.

Stanza 6

| | | |
|--------------|---|---------------------------|
| hearth | : | fireplace |
| ply | : | perform |
| evening care | : | the duties of the evening |
| sire | : | father |

Summary

Now they can no longer enjoy the domestic happiness. The hearth will never burn for them anymore. Their wives will no longer do her duties for them in the evening. Their children will no more run forward to greet them on their return home nor will the children any more attempt to clamber jealously on their knees and receive their kiss.

Stanza 7

| | | |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| furrow | : | trench made by plough |
| stubborn glebe | : | hard soil |
| jocund | : | merry |

Summary

These village-peasants often reaped their crops in the proper season and ploughed their farm lands with great labour. They happily drove their oxen through the fields. The trees bowed down before their axes.

Stanza 8

| | | |
|------------|---|---------------------|
| mock | : | banter; make fun of |
| toil | : | hard labour |
| obscure | : | not distinct |
| disdainful | : | scornful |
| annals | : | life histories |

Summary

Let the rich and the ambitious people not despise the humble manual labour of these poor peasants nor should they scorn the simple and innocent pleasures enjoyed by them in the midst of their family. Great and high-born people should not listen to the history of these peasant's lives with contempt, merely because their life has been so uneventful and bare.

Stanza 9

| | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------|
| boast of heraldry | : | pride in nobility of birth |
| pomp | : | great show |
| inevitable | : | unavoidable |

Death puts an end to the pride of noble descent, the splendor and magnificence of power, beauty and wealth. Man must die some day, however glorious his career may have been. Death is an avoidable thing.

Stanza 10

| | | |
|--------|---|---|
| impute | : | attribute |
| aisle | : | the passage between rows of seats in a church |
| vault | : | arched roof |

Summary

The poet tells the proud people not to attribute any fault with the peasants for not having any monument in their memory along the corridor of the church because it is not their fault that they did not distinguish themselves in life so as to deserve such monuments.

Stanza 11

| | | |
|---------|---|---------------|
| bust | : | statue |
| provoke | : | excite; rouse |
| soothe | : | console |

Summary

Neither monuments with biographical inscriptions engraved on it nor life-like statues can bring the dead back to life. Neither laudatory speeches in their honour nor words of flattery can ever please them any more.

Stanza 12

| | | |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| celestial fire | : | divine inspiration |
| lyre | : | stringed musical instrument |

Summary

It is quite possible that this country churchyard, which nobody cares to visit, contains the graves of men, who, when they lived, were divinely inspired by lofty thoughts and feelings. There are others who could have been great emperors. Yet some other could have distinguished themselves as great musicians who could bring forth celestial music from their lyres.

Stanza 13

| | | |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| chill penury | : | cold poverty |
| noble rage | : | noble ambition |

Summary

These poor peasants could never achieve fame as great persons perhaps due to the reason that they never had the opportunity of exercising their talents. Their talents remained undeveloped and suppressed forever due to the lack of opportunities. They could not distinguish themselves as statesmen, as warriors or as poets. The currents of their genius were frozen up.

Stanza 14

| | | |
|--------|---|---------------|
| serene | : | placid; quiet |
| bear | : | carry |

Summary

There are many gems of perfect beauty and lustre lying in the darkest part of sea, where nobody can reach them. There are also many flowers that blossom in wilderness where no one see them and admire their beauty or enjoy their sweet fragrance. They wither unnoticed.

Stanza 15

some village Hampden : some villager, as brave as Hampden; John Hampden, the English patriot who opposed Charles I's ship money and other tyrannical reforms.

Cromwell : Oliver Cromwell, who defeated Charles I and became Lord protector; he led the people's army against the Royalists.

Summary

It is probable that in this churchyard is buried some village farmer who had the spirit to resist the tyranny of some petty landlord as boldly as Hampden or perhaps, some villager who had the poetic genius like Milton. But due to lack of opportunity, he had not written any poems. There may also be some villager who had great military genius like Cromwell, but who, unlike Cromwell, was free from the sin of having caused the death of his countrymen in a civil war.

Stanza 16

despise : scorn; look down upon

Summary

Their obscure destiny prevented them from becoming great political orators, whose speeches the national assemblies of their country listened to with admiration. Likewise, they never became heroes or martyrs who, in their devotion to duty or to truth remained uninfluenced by fear of death or torture. For the same reason they never became great administrators, who by their benevolent measures, conferred peace and prosperity on their country and made their countrymen look happy and contented.

Stanza 17

confined : limited; restrained

Summary

Their depressed lot prevented them from developing their noble qualities. But it had one redeeming feature that it prevented them from falling slaves to crimes, corruption and other vices that usually accompany affluence.

Stanza 18

pang : shooting pain
quench : put out
ingenuous : open
kindled : burnt

Summary

Their lot forbade them to hide the struggling pangs of conscious truth or honesty, as also from becoming courtly and renal poets. They never tried to suppress the blush that is caused by the natural feeling of shame and they never indulged in flattery to please the rich and the great in the hope of being rewarded by them.

Stanza 19

| | | |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------|
| ignoble | : | mean; shameful |
| strife | : | state of conflict |
| sober | : | dispassionate |
| stray | : | wander as from a direct course |
| sequestered | : | secluded |

Summary

The poet means that free from the confusing bustle of unworthy strife and struggle for wealth and power, the villagers led a humble life, never straying from the path of virtue and simplicity.

Stanza 20

| | | |
|---------|---|--------------------------|
| frail | : | easily shattered; feeble |
| uncouth | : | awkward; ugly |

Summary

Though they have no stately tombs, and though their lives were most obscure, there is nevertheless some kind of humble monument raised over their tombs in the neighbourhood of their homes. Though made of perishable material, and bearing only a rude inscription and a simple effigy, such a monument is intended to evoke a brief feeling of sympathy from the passer-by.

Stanza 21

| | | |
|--------|---|----------|
| strews | : | scatters |
|--------|---|----------|

Summary

Instead of elaborate epitaphs, such as, are engraved on the tombs of the great, the tombs of these poor peasants have only a simple inscription giving their names and their ages at the time of death, with a number of passages from the Bible rudely engraved on the monument. The inspiration is obviously composed by some uneducated versifier, for several words are incorrectly spelt, and the passages from the Bible selected for the inscription are such as serve to teach the village peasants how to die like a pious Christian.

Stanza 22

| | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------------|
| longing lingering look | : | look of eager desire |
|------------------------|---|----------------------|

Summary

The reason why there are monuments to mark the graves of even these poor people is that though all men are destined to be forgotten, every one desires to be remembered after death. No one can reconcile to total oblivion after death, no soul can leave his abode without casting a desirous glance back on life.

Stanza 23

parting soul : the dying person

Summary

When dying, a person depends, for support, on some loving friends and needs the sympathy and sorrow of their dear ones. Even after one is dead and buried, the same natural craving for loving remembrance continues. Even when the body has become dust and ashes in the grave, the passion for loving remembrance finds strong expression in inscription, on their tombs.

Stanza 24

contemplation : meditation

Summary

The poet has related the simple tale of the rustics in the village. It is just possible that some other person of similar disposition, being led to this churchyard, happens to enquire into his fate after death.

Stanza 25

haply : perhaps

Summary

Just as the poet himself has remembered the poor rustics, some white haired farmer may mourn him or relate his story to others. He may tell that he has often seen the poet in the early morning sweeping away the dewdrops from the grass as he walked swiftly to reach the high lawn before sunrise.

Stanza 26

yonder : over there
listless length : tired body

Summary

At noon he was in the habit of lying idly down and stretching his body under the beech tree which is waving in the wind and which has its roots strangely twisted together above the surface on the ground. He was also in the habit of gazing on the rivulet which flows near at hand.

Stanza 27

rove : wander
woeful wan : pale with sorrow

Summary

The poet had also the habit of wandering about in the neighbourhood of the bushes. He would sometimes speak out his random thoughts indistinctly, sometimes smile, sometimes look dejected, and pale like a man in a pitiful condition or like one made desperate by anxieties or like a lover who is afflicted with disappointed love.

Stanza 28

rill : small stream; rivulet

Summary

One morning the peasant did not find the poet on the hill on which he used to wander. He was not there nor was in the woods, nor under his favourite beech tree. The next morning too he did not find the poet there, nor on the banks of the rivulet, nor on the lawn, nor in the wood.

Stanza 29

dirges : funeral songs
in sad array : in mournful procession

Summary

Next morning the peasant saw the poet's dead body carried slowly along the path leading to the churchyard followed by the people singing funeral songs in the customary manner. Here the poet refers to his own death, and imagines how it will be remembered by the peasant. The poet wants the peasant to come and look at his grave and read the inscription on the tombstone.

The Epitaph

Stanza 30

frown : wrinkle the brow as in anger

Summary

Here lies buried a young man who was poor and obscure, though favoured by the goddess of knowledge in spite of his humble birth. He was a youth who was the very son of melancholy.

Stanza 31

bounty : liberality in giving

Summary

He was very generous and sincere. In return God gave him equally generous reward. He gave away to the wretched all he had, and all he had was sympathy. He had received from God all that he desired, i.e., a true friend.

Stanza 32

disclose : reveal
dead abode : the bosom of god

Summary

Make no further attempt to enumerate his virtues and faults, now that he is dead and buried in his grave. His virtues lie in the grave with a hope to be rewarded and his faults trembling with a hope to be forgiven by the merciful God.

Answer the following questions

1. Mention the two famous Pindaric odes by Thomas Gray.
The Bard and *The Progress of Poesy*
2. Gray's *Elegy* is a tribute to.....
the rude forefathers of the hamlet
3. 'Weary way' is an example for.....
transferred epithet
4. The line "The paths of glory lead but to the grave" occurs in.....
Gray's *Elegy*

Discuss

Answer the following in two or three sentences

1. How does the opening line of the 'Elegy...' predict the theme of the poem?
The opening line tells the death of the day which is indicated by the tolling of knell. It seems to echo the theme of the poem as it is about the poor and simple forefather's of the villager's.
2. "The ploughman homeward plods his weary way". Explain.
This is an instance of transferred epithet. It is not the way that is weary, but it is the ploughman who is walking with tired steps towards his home.
3. How does the mood of the poem shift from movement to stillness and silence? Pick out the words that suggest this shift.
The poem begins with the images of the cattle returning home and of the weary ploughman going home with heavy and tired steps. Then it becomes dark. The air is silent and full of solemnity except the humming of the beetle, hooting of the owl and the tinkling of the bells tied to the necks of sheep from the distant folds. The words suggesting this shift from movement to stillness are "leaves the world to darkness and to me" and "solemn stillness".
4. What is the speaker's warning to the ambitious and the pompous? Why?
The speaker warns the ambitious and the pompous not to despise the simple lives of the poor villagers. He also reminds them of the inevitability of death, the vanity of pride and riches and the equality of the rich and the poor brought about by death.
5. "Can storied urn or animated bust/Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath." Explain.
The poet means to say that neither monuments with biographical inscriptions on it nor life like statues can bring the dead back to life. Death is inevitable.
6. What does the speaker blame for the obscure destinies of the poor rustics?
The speaker blames their lack of education and poverty for the obscure destinies of the poor rustics.
7. What is the context of reference to Hampden, Milton and Cromwell?
The poet feels sorry that the villagers could not become great and famous person due to lack of opportunities. He says that they would have become great persons like Hampden, Milton or Cromwell, if they had got the right opportunities.
8. How did the peasant's wretched lot become a blessing in disguise for them?
The humble situation of the rustics saved them from many a wicked deed, of which they otherwise would have been guilty. It prevented them from committing bloodshed in their pursuit of ambition and also saved them from becoming merciless tyrants.
9. "This pleasing anxious being". Explain.
The poet refers to life as a mixture of joys and sorrows. He says that no one can reconcile to total oblivion after death and no soul can leave its abode without casting a desirous glance back on life.
10. What does the speaker hope for in return to singing about "the short and simple annals of the poor?"
The speaker hopes that somebody with a temperament like his own may enquire about him and tell the story of the poet to others so that people may remember him.

Answer in a Paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Comment on the use of transferred epithets and personifications in the *Elegy*...?

In his poem *Elegy*, Thomas Gray has given an instance of a transferred epithet which occurs in the first stanza itself. It occurs in the line, "The ploughman homeward plods his weary way". 'Weary way' is the transferred epithet used. The ploughman who has been hard at work during the day walks with heavy and tired steps towards his home. The cattle also return home from the meadows and they move slowly in a zigzag line. Here the poet transfers the weariness of the poet to the way. It is not the way that is weary, but it is the ploughman who laboriously walks back home. Gray has used many personifications in this poem. They are:- Ambition, Grandeur, Proud, Memory, Honour, Flattery, Death, Knowledge, Nature, Fortune, Fame, Science, Melancholy and Misery.

2. "The paths of glory lead but to the grave". Comment.

This line in Gray's *Elegy* is one of the most often quoted line in English poetry. Gray points out the inevitability of death through this line. The poet tells the rich and ambitious people not to despise the simple and innocent pleasures enjoyed by the poor villagers in the midst of their family. Their life has been so uneventful and bare and they could not become great famous persons. It is only the want of opportunity and the poverty of the poor man that stifles his genius and makes him remain obscure. As victims of death, all are equal. Death puts an end to the pride of noble descent, the splendour and magnificance of power, beauty and wealth. Everyone must die one day, however noble one's lineage may be, however splendidly one may live, however influential one may be and however glorious one's career may have been. Death awaits everybody alike and there is no escape from it. The ultimate equality of the rich and the poor, the inevitability of death and the futility of greatness and littleness of human life are all revealed through this great line.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. How does the '*Elegy*...' celebrate "the short and simple annals of the poor?"

The *Elegy* of Thomas Gray is one of the greatest and most popular of English poems. It deals with the subject of death. The poet mourns the death of the poor and simple forefathers of the villagers.

The poet reflects on the simple and unambitious lives and the equally un glorified deaths of the poor peasant ancestors of the village, who are laid to rest in their humble graves. The poet refers to the losses inflicted on them by death. They can no longer enjoy their simple domestic pleasures in the company of their wives and children and pursue their useful occupations. These village peasants often reaped their crops in the proper season and ploughed their farmlands with great labour. But now they can no longer plough the soil or join in the harvest.

The poet tells the rich and the ambitious people not to make fun of the simple and innocent lives of the villagers. They could not have become great persons like Hampden, Cromwell or Milton in their life. But that does not mean that they were mean fellows. The poet says that although the poor villagers have their disadvantages in life they have corresponding advantages in life and that they too are not wanting in talents but only in opportunities to shine in life. They could not develop their genius for want of opportunities.

Gray points out the inevitability of death and its impartiality to great and small alike. All must eventually die regardless of social position, beauty, or wealth. These village people were not famous, and no one has written elaborate elegies or funeral verses for them. Still, the very modesty of their tombstones testifies to the nobility and holy nature of their simple lives. As such, they provide an example not so much of how life should be lived, but how its end, death, should be approached.

7. THE MOSQUITO

: - D.H. LAWRENCE

About the poet

D.H. Lawrence(1885-1930) is one of the best known twentieth century English novelists. He was born at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, as the fourth child of a school teacher mother and an alcoholic, coalminer father. He was educated at Nottingham High School. His Childhood was overshadowed by poverty and parental disharmony. After leaving school in 1901 Lawrence worked as a junior clerk in a surgical appliance factory for a brief period. In the years 1902 to 1906 Lawrence served as a pupil teacher at the British School, East wood. He went on to become a full-time student and received a teaching certificate from university college, Nottingham in 1908.

His first novel *The white Peacock* (1911), launched him into a writing career. Lawrence gave up teaching after a serious illness and his second novel *The Trespasser*, followed in 1912. Early in the same year, he fell in love with Frieda von Richthofen, a professor's wife and mother of three children, eloped with her and finally married her in 1914. *The Rainbow* (1915), considered by many critics to be his best novel, was banned on grounds of obscenity. Lawrence is best known for his novels *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

In 1925, after a severe illness in Mexico, it was discovered that Lawrence was suffering from tuberculosis. He and Frieda returned to Europe, but his health continued to decline. He died at Venice, in France, on 2nd March 1930.

Poem

The Mosquito

When did you start your tricks,
Monsieur?
What do you stand on such high legs for?
Why this length of shredded shank,
You exaltation?
It is so that you shall lift your centre of gravity upwards
And weigh no more than air as you alight upon me,
Stand upon me weightless, you phantom?
I heard a woman call you the Winged Victory
In sluggish Venice.
You turn your head towards your tail, and smile.
How can you put so much devilry
Into that translucent phantom shred
Of a frail corpus?
Queer, with your thin wings and your streaming legs
How you sail like a heron, or a dull clot of air,
A nothingness.
Yet what an aura surrounds you;
Your evil little aura, prowling, and casting numbness on my mind.
That is your trick, your bit of filthy magic:

Invisibility, and the anesthetic power
To deaden my attention in your direction.
But I know your game now, streaky sorcerer.
Queer, how you stalk and prowl the air
In circles and evasions, enveloping me,
Ghoul on wings
Winged Victory.
Settle, and stand on long thin shanks
Eyeing me sideways, and cunningly conscious that I am aware,
You speck.
I hate the way you lurch off sideways into air
Having read my thoughts against you.
Come then, let us play at unawares,
And see who wins in this sly game of bluff,
Man or mosquito.
You don't know that I exist, and I don't know that you exist.
Now then!
It is your trump,
It is your hateful little trump,
You pointed fiend
Which shakes my sudden blood to hatred of you:
It is your small, high, hateful bugle in my ear.
Why do you do it?
Surely it is bad policy.
They say you can't help it.
If that is so, then I believe a little in Providence protecting the innocent.
But it sounds so amazingly like a slogan,
A yell of triumph as you snatch my scalp.
Blood, red blood
Super-magical
Forbidden liquor.
I behold you stand
For a second enspasmed in oblivion,
Obscenely estasied
Sucking live blood,
My blood,
Such silence, such suspended transport,
Such gorging,
Such obscenity of trespass.
You stagger
As well as you may.
Only your accursed hairy frailty,

Your own imponderable weightlessness
Saves you, wafts you away on the very draught my anger makes in its snatching.
Away with a pæan of derision,
You winged blood-drop.
Can I not overtake you?
Are you one too many for me,
Winged Victory?
Am I not mosquito enough to out-mosquito you?
Queer, what a big stain my sucked blood makes
Beside the infinitesimal faint smear of you!
Queer, what a dim dark smudge you have disappeared into!

Introduction to the Poem

'*The Mosquito*', which is included in the collection *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, exemplifies Lawrence's visualization of the animal world. Composed in free verse, the poem presents the mosquito as more than an equal to the poet. Like many of his poems, *The Mosquito* displays what John Ruskin termed "pathetic fallacy" which ascribes human emotions to animals and inanimate objects.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-14

| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| Monsieur | : | French title equivalent to 'Sir' / 'Mr' |
| shank | : | between knee and ankle |
| exaltation | : | great joy |
| Winged victory | : | The "Winged Victory", is a celebrated sculpture in honour of the Goddess Nike displayed at the Louvre. |
| devilry | : | cruelty |
| translucent | : | semi-transparent |
| frail corpus | : | weak body |

Summary

The poet addresses the mosquito as Monsieur. He puts a series of questions before the insect. Why does it stand on such high legs? When did it start its tricks on the poet? The mosquito lifts its centre of gravity upwards and so it weighs no more than air. The poet barely knows about the presence of mosquito as it rests weightless upon himself. He calls it phantom. The mosquito turns its head towards its tail and smile when it is pleased to hear a woman in Venice calling it winged victory. The poet wonders as to how it can assign so much of cruelty into its frail, delicate body. Being translucent, it appears phantom-like.

Lines 15-37

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| queer | : | strange |
| heron | : | a wading bird |
| aura | : | light that seems to surround a divinity |
| prowling | : | moving secretly in search of prey |
| filthy | : | dirty |
| streaky sorcerer | : | striped magician |

| | | |
|-----------|---|--------------------------------|
| ghoul | : | a fiend that preys on the dead |
| lurch off | : | move away |
| sly | : | cunning |

Summary

The poet finds it strange as the mosquito sails like a heron with its thin wings and long legs. He calls it a clot of air, a nothingness. Though it appears to be a ‘nothingness’ a certain aura appears to surround it. It paralyses the poet’s mind. It seems to be invisible because of its small size and its swift movements tease the eye with its antics. The poet calls the mosquito a streaky sorcerer. He wonders how the mosquito envelops him with its scaling flights. It is a ghoul on wings as it sucks human blood. He calls the mosquito ‘Winged Victory’. The mosquito stands on thin legs and looks at the poet sideways. It seems to have read the poet’s intentions always before it lurched off into the air. It is so tiny that the poet calls it a speck. The poet wants the mosquito to continue this game of bluff and wonders who the winner will be-“Man or mosquito”.

Lines 38-62

| | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| fiend | : | devil |
| enspasmned oblivion | : | forgetfulness induced by shudder |

Summary

The poet and the mosquito are unaware of each other’s existence. That is its trump. The poet calls the mosquito the pointed fiend. He sucks the poet’s blood and blows its high-pitched hateful bugle in the poet’s ear. He asks the mosquito why it bites him. He says that it is bad manners but the mosquito cannot help it. Probably this is why providence protects it. It bites the poet and shouts in triumph. The blood is like liquor to the mosquito, something that it is addicted to. To the rational being, this act of survival instinct is the “obscenity of trespass”.

Lines 63-77

| | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------------|
| accursed | : | cursed |
| imponderable | : | something impossible to assess |
| wafts | : | carries away on the air |
| infinitesimal | : | infinitely small |
| smudge | : | dirty mark |

Summary

The mosquito staggers as it sucks the blood. Its imponderable weightlessness saves it from the poet. It soars with a pang of derision, a triumphant song filled with scorn. The poet now calls it winged blood-drop. The poet tries to catch the mosquito. It is now beaten to death on a wall and there appears a dark smudge. The poet wonders how big a stain his blood had made. Though the speaker at the end has reduced the ‘Winged Victory’ to “an infinitesimal faint smear”, the creature remains invincible and unshakable in its spirit.

Answer the following questions.

1. The poem *The Mosquito* is written by.....
D.H. Lawrence
2. Whom does the poet call the “Winged Victory”?
The mosquito
3. The poem *The Mosquito* is taken from the collection
Birds, Beasts and Flowers

Discuss

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences

1. What feature of the mosquito qualifies him for the title, “phantom”?
The poet barely knows about the presence of mosquito as it rests weightless upon himself. It comes and goes like an apparition. Being translucent, it appears phantom-like.
2. “How you sail like a heron”. Explain the figure of speech.
The poet says that the mosquito seems to be as harmless as a heron sailing in water, or a lifeless clot of air. It is a comparison. The figure of speech is simile
3. “I behold you..., ecstasied” Explain the phrase “obscenely ecstasied.”
The mosquito is filled with joy as it sucks the poet’s blood. But to the poet it is a highly repulsive sight.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words.

1. Comment on the ‘Pathetic fallacy’ displayed in the poem.
Pathetic fallacy is a term coined by John Ruskin, in the third volume of *Modern Painters*, for the practice of attributing human emotions to the inanimate or unintelligent world. D.H. Lawrence’s poem *The Mosquito* is full of pathetic fallacy Lawrence begins the poem by addressing the mosquito as Mousieur. The mosquito is filled with joy as it sucks the poet’s blood. The mosquito turns its head towards its tail and smile when it is pleased to hear a woman in Venice calling it winged victory. The mosquito prowls and casts a numbness on the poet’s mind. The mosquito stands on thin legs and looks at the poet sideways. It seems to have read the poet’s mind always before it lurched off into the air. The poet considers the mosquito as an equal to him. The mosquito soars with a pang of derision, a triumphant song filled with scorn. The mosquito’s triumph lies in it proving its existence in spite of its diminutive size.
2. Discuss the special qualities and titles attributed to the mosquito in the poem.
The poet first addresses the mosquito as ‘Monsieur’. He calls it ‘you exaltation’ because the mosquito feels very happy as it sees its prey. It is phantom because it comes and goes without anybody knowing. He calls it a clot of air, a nothingness. It is a streaky sorcerer, a magician with a striped body. It is ghoul on wings, an evil creature which sucks human blood. He also calls it a speck because of its small size. Its body is thin and its legs are long. It is accursed hairy frailty with a weak hairy body. After it gorges on the poet’s blood it becomes a ‘winged blood-drop’.

Write an essay of 300 words.

1. The poem, *The Mosquito* demonstrates Lawrence’s uncanny ability to capture the essence of nature and its creatures Discuss.
‘The Mosquito’, which is taken from the collection *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, exemplifies Lawrence’s visualization of the animal world. This poem displays what John Ruskin termed the “pathetic fallacy” which ascribes human emotions to animals and inanimate objects.
The poet begins the poem by addressing the mosquito as Monsieur, closely observing the mosquito and its movements, he describes the way it stands on its high, thin, shredded legs. It is almost weightless and so the poet hardly knows its presence when it alights on him. It comes and goes unnoticed. Being translucent, it appears phantom-like. The poet finds it weird and wonderful that it seems to be as harmless as a heron sailing in water, or a lifeless clot of air. Though it seems to be a ‘nothingness’ a certain aura appears to surround it. The aura is an evil one and it paralyses the poet’s mind beyond thought. Its smallness causes it to be invisible and its swift movements tease the eye with its antics.
The mosquito prowls and circles and envelops the poet with its sealing flights. It is a ghoul on wings as it devours human blood. The mosquito eyes the poet sideways and realises that the poet is watching it. Having read the poet’s intentions, it suddenly flies off. This sly game of bluff continues. It sacks the poet’s blood and blows its high-pitched hateful bugle in the poet’s ear.
The sound of the mosquito is like a slogan, a yell of triumph. It sucks the poet’s blood and falls into a trance. It is an obscene ecstasy. The mosquito staggers as it sucks the blood. Its imponderable weightlessness saves it from the poet. But soon afterwards the poet beats the mosquito to death and it ends up as a dark smudge. Though the poet reduces the mosquito to ‘an infinitesimal faint smear’, it remains invincible in spirit.

MODULE III

POETRY AND PERSPECTIVES

Objectives

At the end of this module the student will be

- a) introduced to the various perspective readings in poetry like gender, race, caste, ethnicity, religion, region, environment and nation etc.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----|-------------------|
| 1. No Tears | :- | Alexander Pushkin |
| 2. The Man with a Hoe | :- | Edwin Markham |
| 3. Birches | :- | Robert Frost |
| 4. Telephone conversation | :- | Wole Soyinka |
| 5. Tonight I can write | :- | Pablo Neruda |
| 6. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings | :- | Maya Angelou |
| 7. Bosom Friend | :- | Hira Bansode |
| 8. Refugee Mother and Child | :- | Chinua Achebe |
| 9. General, Your Tank | :- | Bertolt Brecht |

1. NO TEARS

:- ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

About the poet

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799-1837) was a Russian author of the Romantic era who is considered by many to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. He was born into an aristocratic family of Moscow. At a very early age, he became acquainted with the classics and exhibited talent in creative writing. Pushkin published his first poem at the age of fifteen and was widely recognized by the literary establishment by the time of his graduation from the imperial Lyceum in Tsarskoye Selo. In 1820 he published his first long poem, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* amidst much controversy about its subject and style.

The revolutionary spirit and political sentiment of the poems caused his exile to the South of Russia in the same year. He was able to return to the capital only after the ascension of the new Czar to the throne. In 1831 he married Natalya Goncharova but their life was not a happy one. In 1837, he lost his life from the injuries from a duel, prompted by a quarrel about his wife. As the government feared a political uprising, his body was buried secretly at midnight in his mother's estate.

A romantic writer, Pushkin is famous for the brilliance of his language, compactness terseness and objectivity. His works include *Boris Godunov*, *The Queen of Spades*, *The Bronze Horseman*, *The Stone Guest*, and *Eugene Onegin*.

Poem

No Tears

Under the blue skies of her native land
She languished and began to fade...
Until surely there flew without a sound
Above me, her young shade.

But there stretches between us an uncrossable line;
In vain my feelings I tried to awaken.
The lips that brought the news were made of stone,
And I listened like a stone, unshaken.

So this is she for whom my soul once burned
In the tense and heavy fire,
Obsessed, exhausted, driven out of my mind
By tenderness and desire!

Where are the torments? Where is love? Alas!
For the un returning days'
Sweet memory and for the poor credulous
Shade, I find no lament, no tears.

Introduction to the poem

'No Tears' is a lyrical poem in which a lover speaks at the death of his beloved. This poem is not written in the expected elegiac mood and it surprises us with the honest statement, "I find no lament, no tears".

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-8

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| languished | : | grow feeble; lacked vitality |
| shade | : | ghost |
| uncrossable line | : | the line between the worlds of the living and the dead |

Summary

The lover says that far away from him, in her native land, his young beloved slowly withered away. Eventually, her soul departed from her body and flew away into the sky. Now there is a line between the worlds of the living and the dead (the lover and his beloved) which he could not cross. The lover tried to rouse his emotions for her but it was in vain. The person who brought the news of her death showed no emotion. The poet listened to the news unmoved like a stone.

Lines 9-16

| | | |
|-----------|---|-------------|
| obsessed | : | preoccupied |
| exhausted | : | tired |

Summary

The lover says that it is the same lady for whom his heart once used to burn in the scorching heat of the intensity of their love. Immersed fully in the pangs that love kindled, he was often driven out of his mind because of the desire for his beloved. The poet asks himself where all those ardent feelings have gone. Now his heart is barren, devoid of all love. He confesses that he has no tears for her. The sweet memories of their good old days or the poor helpless spirit, fail to produce any grief in him.

Answer the following questions

1. Alexander Pushkin is apoet
Russian
2. *The Stone Guest* is written by.....
Alexander Pushkin
3. *No Tears* is a poem written by.....
Alexander Pushkin

Discuss

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences

1. What is the 'uncrossable line' that the poet refers to?
The poet refers to the uncrossable line between the worlds of the living and the dead.
2. "And I listened like a stone, unshaken". Identify and define the figure of speech.
The figure of speech used is simile. Simile is an explicit comparison between two different things, actions, or feelings, using the words 'as' or 'like'.
3. Find the rhyme scheme of the poem.
The rhyme scheme of the poem is abab cdcd efef ghgh.

Answer in a Paragraph of not more than 100 words.

1. The poet mourns for the lost love rather than the death of his beloved. Do you agree? Substantiate your answer with reasons.

The poet speaks at the death of his beloved. The news of his beloved's death did not make any feelings in him. He tried to rouse his emotions for her, but it was in vain. There was a time when her very thought excited his heart. He was often driven out of his mind because of the desire for his beloved. Now that she is dead, the poet wonders where all those ardent feelings have gone. Now his heart is barren, devoid of all love. He confesses that he has no tears left for her. This change in the lover after his beloved's death shows that he mourns for the lost love rather than the death of his beloved.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. Discuss the emotional sincerity and honesty that Pushkin expresses in the poem.

Alexander Pushkin's *No Tears* is a lyrical poem where a lover speaks at the death of his beloved. Not written in the expected elegiac mood, the poem surprises us with the honest statement, "I find no lament, no tears".

The poet does not feel sad at his beloved's death. He listened to the news of her death without any feeling. He tried to awaken his feelings for her, but it was in vain. The poet reminisces about the days of courtship, when his heart used to burn in the scorching heat of the intensity of their love. Immersed fully in the pangs that love kindled, he was often driven out of his mind because of the desire for his beloved. But after her death he has lost all such sensations.

The poet wonders where all those intense and passionate feelings have gone. Now his heart is barren, devoid of all love. He openly confesses that he has not tears left for her. In this poem, Pushkin expresses the lover's feeling with emotional sincerity and honesty.

2. THE MAN WITH THE HOE

: - EDWIN MARKHAM

About the Poet

Charles Edwin Anson Markham (1852-1940) was an American poet and he was born in Oregon City. The youngest of 10 children, he attended rural schools and worked as a Cowboy and ranch hand. He studied literature at the California College in Vacaville, California, and received his teacher's certificate in 1870. In 1872 he graduated from San Jose State Normal School, and in 1873 finished his studies of classics at Christian College in Santa Rosa. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s Markham continued his teaching career and worked hard to establish himself as an important poetic voice. In the 1890s, he wrote poems under the pen name of Edwin Markham in *Century Magazine*, *Overland Monthly*, and *Scribner's Magazine* and earned a small reputation.

The publication of '*The Man with the Hoe*' in the *San Francisco Examiner* on January 15, 1899, shot him into unusual fame. His other famous works are *Lincoln and Other Poems*, *The Shoes of Happiness*, and *Gates of Paradise*.

Poem

The Man with the Hoe

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?
Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power.
To feel the passion of Eternity?
Is this the Dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this--
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed--
More filled with signs and portents for the soul--
More fraught with menace to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this Man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings--
With those who shaped him to the thing he is--
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
After the silence of the centuries?

Introduction to the Poem

The poem '*The Man with the Hoe*' draws inspiration from an oil painting under the same title in French by Jean-Francois Millet. This poem is a strong commentary on America's working class and their tribulations. It vividly describes the oppressed day laborer and sends a challenge to the larger society as well.

Notes and Explanations

Stanza 1

| | | |
|---------|---|------------------------|
| hoe | : | spade for digging |
| rapture | : | extreme delight |
| stolid | : | showing little emotion |
| stunned | : | bewildered |

Summary

The poet gives a heart-rending portrait of the miserable plight of the peasant. The old peasant stands alone in the field. He is bent with age and suffering. He leans upon his hoe and gazes on the ground. His face is empty without any emotions. He seems to carry the burden of the world on his back. The poet asks, who made the peasant insensitive to joy and sorrow? Centuries of exploitation has reduced the peasant to an inanimate object. The poet says that the peasant is without emotion, a brother to the ox. The poet asks who is responsible for reducing the peasant to this miserable condition?

Stanza 2

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------------------|
| dominion | : | lordship; sovereignty |
| caverns | : | caves |
| portents | : | omens |

Summary

The poet asks a series of rhetorical questions. Is this poor peasant the most noble creation of God? Is this the man who has lordship over sea and land? Is this the man who can trace the stars and search the heavens for power and feel the passion of eternity? There is nobody like this old man anywhere. There is nothing more terrible than this figure who protests against the age-old exploitation. This terrible figure is a warning that something calamitous is going to happen.

Stanza 3

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| seraphim | : | angels |
| Plato | : | ancient Greek Philosopher (428-347BC) |
| swing of the Pleiades | : | the movement of the Pleiades which is a cluster of stars. |
| plundered | : | robbed |

Summary

The peasant is a slave of the wheel of labour and he cares nothing about Plato or the Pleiades. He can't enjoy music, nor can he enjoy the beauty of dawn or the flowers in nature. The "dread shape" of the man with the hoe becomes a powerful symbol of the "betrayed, plundered, profaned and disinherited" humanity. The protest of the underprivileged against centuries of exploitation has just started and it transforms itself into a prophecy.

Stanza 4

| | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| monstrous | : | enormous; horrible |
| distorted | : | deformed |
| soul-quenched | : | without a soul |
| perfidious | : | treacherous |

Summary

The poet asks some questions to the rulers of the world. Is this horrible man their creation to God, this distorted and soul-quenched man? How can they give back his strength and honour? How can they rebuild the man with hopes and dreams? How can they compensate for the treacherous deeds they have done to him?

Stanza 6

| | | |
|----------------|---|------------------------------|
| reckon | : | count; enumerate |
| brute question | : | simple, inescapable question |

Summary

The poet asks some more questions to the rulers of the world. How will the future generations look upon this man? How will they answer his brute question at a time when the oppressed rise up in revolt? The poet makes a prophecy that the time is not far when this man shall rise to judge the world. It will be the dawn of a brave new world.

Answer the following questions

1. *The Man with the Hoe* is a poem written by.....
Edwin Markham
2. The Man with the Hoe is a symbol of.....
the downtrodden

Discuss

Answer the following questions in two or three sentence

1. "A thing that...brother to the ox?" Comment on these lines.
Years of exploitation has reduced the peasant to an inanimate object and also made him insensitive to joy and sorrow. He is without any emotions. He is destined to a life of hard work like an ox.
2. "Is this the dream...terrible than this-" What poetic purpose is served by the juxtaposition of references to the heaven and the hell?
By the juxtaposition of references to the heaven and the hell the poet wants to show the degradation of the poor peasant.
3. "A protest that is also prophecy". What is the prophecy?
The underprivileged people will soon start their revolt against centuries of exploitation by the oppressors. The time is not far when this oppressed people shall rise to judge the world. This is the prophecy.
4. "Is this the handiwork you give to God" Who is this question addressed to? What wrong did they commit?
The question is addressed to the "masters, lords and rulers in all lands". They kept the poor peasant under their control and exploited them through centuries.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Discuss the poetic devices used in the poem.
Edwin Markham has used several poetic devices in his poem *The Man with the Hoe*. Juxtaposition of the opposites is used to create effect as in "rapture and despair". Another poetic device used in this poem is repetition of words having similar sound or meaning as in "stolid and stunned" and "betrayed, plundered profaned and disinherited", and "signs and portents". This poetic device is used to stress that particular idea. The poet asks a series of rhetorical questions throughout the poem. These questions point out the main idea of the poem. A rhetorical question posed at a specific interval adds severity to the moral indignation expressed by the poet. The poet has also made use of some figures of speech like metaphor as in "wheel of labour" and "whirlwinds of rebellion" and personification as in "dumb Terror".

Write an essay of 300 words

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem

or

2. “The poem *The Man With the Hoe* assimilated the American farmer to the downtrodden and brutalized peasant of Europe” Discuss.

Edwin Markham’s *The Man with the Hoe* was a strong commentary on America’s working class and their tribulations. A conception of the exploited, oppressed peasant down the ages, the poem was a protest against the changing conditions of labour in rural and urban America.

The poem presents the pathetic condition of the peasant. He is bent with age and suffering. He seems to carry the burden of his miseries on his back. He has become insensitive to joy and sorrow. Centuries of exploitation has reduced the peasant to an inanimate object. He is without any emotions and a brother to the ox. He is in such a miserable plight that he becomes a terrible figure.

The poet throws a series of questions at humanity for the centuries of exploitation and insult heaped on the peasantry that has sacrificed everything in order to feed the world. The peasant is ignorant and knows nothing about Plato or the Pleiades. He cannot enjoy music, nor can he enjoy the beauty of dawn or the flowers in nature. He becomes a powerful symbol of betrayed humanity.

The poet says that the protest of the underprivileged against centuries of exploitation has just started and it transforms itself into a prophecy. The poem ends with a prophecy that the time is not far when this down trodden people shall rise to judge the world. It will be the dawn of brave new world.

3. BIRCHES

:- ROBERT FROST

About the Poet

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was an American poet who is highly regarded for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech. He was born in San Francisco, California, to journalist William Prescott Frost, Jr., and Isabella Moodie. When he was ten, following his father's death, the family returned to their home farm in New England. After his school education, Frost was enrolled in Dartmouth, but left before graduating, and started experimenting with an amusing assortment of careers like cobbler, bobbin boy, editor and school teacher. In 1895, he married his former schoolmate Elinor White, who became his ardent supporter, soul mate and inspiration. He settled down into farming the same year. In 1897, he enrolled at Harvard, but left it half way. His plans to devote himself to full time farming did not work out well due to financial constraints and soon he had to return to teaching to support his family. He held various teaching positions for the rest of his life.

In 1912, Frost sold his farm and sailed to England with his family. There, he had the rare privilege to be in the company of many eminent poets, both English and American, including Ezra Pound. His first collection of poems, *A Boy's will* was published in 1913, followed by *North of Boston* in 1914. First returned to America, richer in fame and wealth, and settled down in a New Hampshire farm. *Mountain Interval* came out in 1916 and *New Hampshire* in 1923. Other important works of frost are *A Farther Range*, *A Masque of Reason*, *A Witness Tree* and *Steeple Bush*.

Poem

BIRCHES

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.

But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Introduction to the poem

The poem 'Birches' first appeared in the collection *Mountain Interval*. In writing this poem, Frost was inspired by his childhood experience with swinging on birches, which was a popular game for children in rural areas of New England during the time. Birch swinging, an everyday country sport, becomes a metaphor of the speaker's longing to swing away from the harshness of reality into the comforts of fancy, only to come back and meet the challenges of life.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-20

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| birch | : | a tree with smooth bark and thin branches |
| avalanching | : | falling like an avalanche; a snow slide |

Summary

When the poet sees birches bending to right and left across the lines of, "darker, straighter trees", he imagines that some boy has been swinging them. But soon the truth dawns upon him, and he realises that swinging cannot bend them down permanently. It is the ice-storms which bend down the birch trees. Their branches are frozen and encrusted with ice in the morning after rain. When the wind blows, the birches swing up and down and the ice on them shines, and appear in many colours. When the sun gets warmer during the day, the ice covering the trees start to melt. When it starts to melt, the bits of ice cracks, break and fall off the trees. It seems as if the central dome of heaven has cracked and the earth is covered with heaps of broken glass. The birches are bowed so low for so long that they can't straighten themselves. The trees look like girls drying their hair in the sun. These country girls are on their hands and knees, bending their heads down so that the sun can dry their hair.

Lines 21-41

| | | |
|-----------|---|-------------------|
| subdued | : | conquered |
| stiffness | : | rigidness |
| poise | : | balance in weight |

From the truth that the birches are bent by the ice storms, the poet again returns to his fancy that the birches are bent by some boy's swinging on them. The poet says that it must be a boy going out to fetch the cows. This boy lives far from the town and devises a game for himself, a game which he can play alone, summer or winter. He takes to birch swinging as a pleasant sport. He climbs the birches over and over again, so much so that not a single tree remains unconquered and unbent. He has painstakingly acquired such skill that even when he reaches the top, he is able to maintain perfect balance, and then he comes to the ground with a swift movement. He learnt that birch swinging should be done most carefully. It has to be done with the same delicate care required to fill a cup to the brim or even above it.

Lines 42-60

| | | |
|----------------|---|---------------|
| considerations | : | worries |
| lashed across | : | beaten across |

Summary

The poet says that he was himself a swinger of birches once. He dreams of going back to it. When life is like a pathless wood and he does not know what to do, he wishes to get away from the earth for a while and then to come back to it. He does not want to die, because earth is the right place for love. What he wants is to climb a birch tree and thus to leave the earth for a while. When he reaches the top of the birch, it would bend and set him down on earth. The poet would never like to leave this earth permanently. After a momentary climb to heaven, he would like to return to earth.

Answer the following questions

1. *Birches* is a poem written by.....
Robert Frost
2. Who is nicknamed as the ‘Wordsworth of America’?
Robert Frost
3. *Birches* first appeared in the collection.....
Mountain Interval
4. “Earth’s the right place for lover /I don’t know where it’s likely to go better”. These lines occur in.....
Robert Frost’s *Birches*

Discuss

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences

1. What do ice storms do to the birches?
Ice storms bend the birches down to stay.
2. “They click upon...turn many coloured” Explain.
The ice laden birches strike together with a clicking sound. When the wind blows, the birches swing up and down and the ice on them shines, and turns many-coloured, as the rays of the sun are refracted in passing through ice.
3. What are the bent birches compared to?
The bent birches are compared to girls on their hands and knees, bending their heads down to dry their hair in the sun.
4. “Truth broke in...the ice storm” What is the “matter-of-fact” truth?
The truth is that the birches are bent by the ice storms.
5. What is the advantage of birch swinging over many other forms of sport?
The advantage of birch swinging over many other forms of sport that it is a game which one could play alone, summer or winter.
6. How does the poet picturize the joyous abandon of the birch swinger?
The boy climbs the birches over and over again, so much so that not a single tree remains unconquered and unbent. The boy does this so many times that the trees lost their stiffness and bend towards the ground.
7. “So was I once myself a swinger of birches”. What is the mood reflected in this line?
This line reflects the poet’s nostalgic yearning to be back in the carefree childhood.
8. What does the speaker wish to do when “weary of considerations”?
When weary of considerations the poet wishes to get away from earth for a while and then come back to it and begin over.
9. “One could do worse than be a swinger of birches” Explain.
The worse thing would be to get away from the earth and never return to it. But the poet only wishes to get away for a while and then return to it and begin over.

Answer in a Paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Comment on the aptness of the metaphor of birch swinging for the theme of the poem.

Robert Frost's *Birches* begins with a delightful description of the visual and auditory appeal of ice laden birches swaying left and right. This simple, delightful local scene gradually gives way to a philosophical reflection on life and its complexities and the balmy relief of short retreats into the heaven of fantasy and poetic imagination. The theme of this poem is the poet's sense of loss and his attempts to escape from the harsh realities of the world. What the poet wants is to climb a birch tree and thus to leave the earth for a while and then come back to earth because earth is the right place for love. Here birch swinging becomes a metaphor of taking short flights of fancy away from harsh realities. The poet's desire is not for a permanent retreat, but a respite to energize himself to come back and meet the challenges of reality.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. "A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom". Discuss with reference to '*Birches*'.

Birches is a delightful poem by Robert Frost which describes the birches swaying in the wind. This poem begins with a delightful description of the birches swaying in the wind and ends with a philosophical message of universal appeal. It gives a philosophical reflection on life and its complexities and the balmy relief of short retreats into the heaven of fantasy and poetic imagination.

The poet observes the birches bending to right and left in a snow storm. The poet imagines that some boy has been swinging on them. The ice storms bend the birches when loads of ice fall on them. Their branches are frozen and encrusted with ice in the morning after rain. When the wind blows, the birches swing up and down and the ice on them shines, and appear in many colours.

From the truth that the birches are bent by the ice storms, the poet again returns to his fancy that the birches are bent by some boy's swinging on them. He imagines the boy climbing a birch tree carefully and then swinging at the tree's crest to the ground. The poet used to do this himself and dreams of going back to those days.

Birch swinging becomes a metaphor of taking short flights of fancy away from harsh realities. What the poet wants is to climb a birch tree and thus to leave the earth for a while. When he reaches the top of the birch, it would bend and set him down on earth. The poet's desire is not for a permanent retreat, but a respite to energize himself to come back and meet the challenges of reality.

Robert frost believed in the power of poetry to delight and enlighten. Every poem by Frost lives up to his dictum, "A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom". Beneath the apparent deceptive simplicity of the poem, there lies concealed rare gems of wisdom and multiple layers of meaning.

4. TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

:- WOLE SOYINKA

About the poet

Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka (b. 1934) was born into a Yoruba family in Abeokuta, Nigeria. After completing his BA in English from University of Leeds in London, Soyinka worked at the Royal Court Theatre, London, as a script-reader, actor and director. He decided to write in English, unlike most of the other African Writers who regarded it as a language of colonial power, to reach out to an international audience.

On his return to Nigeria in 1960, Soyinka founded the 1960 Masks, a theatre company that produced his first major play, *A Dance of the Forests*, subsequently he wrote a number of plays, novels, poem and critical works. In his early works, Soyinka satirizes the absurdities of the society. He took an active role in Nigeria's political history and its struggle for independence from Great Britain. Soyinka served as Head of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Ibadan (1969-72) and Head of the Department of Dramatic Arts at the University of Ife (1975-85).

Soyinka's major plays include *Kongi's Harvest*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, *Opera Wonyosi*, *A Play of Giants*, *Requiem for a Futurologist* and *Beautification of the Area Boy*. They range from comedy to tragedy, and from political satire to the theatre of the absurd. He was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986.

Poem

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey—I am African."
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.
"HOW DARK?" . . . I had not misheard . . . "ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?" Button B. Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It was real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumb founded to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis—
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.
"You mean—like plain or milk chocolate?"
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wavelength adjusted,
I chose. "West African sepia"—and as an afterthought,
"Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding,
"DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."

“THAT’S DARK, ISN’T IT?” “Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused—
Foolishly, madam—by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black—One moment madam!”—sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears—“Madam,” I pleaded, “wouldn’t you rather
See for yourself?”

Introduction to the Poem

Telephone conversation satirizes the widely-spread racism in the modern western society. It is about a telephone conversation that happens in England between a dark-skinned African person seeking to rent a house and an English landlady who completely changes her attitude after learning that the caller is African. Instead of discussing price, location, amenities, and other information significant to the apartment, the entire discussion centered round the colour of the caller’s skin. The poem is noted for Soyinka’s witticism and sense of humour.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-16

| | | |
|----------------|---|----------------------|
| stench | : | foul smell |
| rancid | : | disgusting |
| squelching tar | : | emitting thick smoke |

Summary

When the poem begins a man is making a phone call to a landlady. His intention is to get an accommodation. The price and location seemed reasonable to him. He himself confessed that he was an African and that he did not want to waste a journey. When the lady heard that he was an African, there was a short period of silence. Then her voice came asking how dark he was. She again asked whether he was light or very dark. He felt humiliated. He looked at the two buttons on the telephone. There was foul smell in the booth as so many people had come and used it. The booth was red. There was a red pillar box. He could see the squelching tar from the booth. He was sure that he was not mistaken and the lady really asked it. He kept silent for some time and then he asked for simplification.

Lines 17-35

| | | |
|------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| revelation | : | act of revealing |
| rapidly | : | quickly |
| conceding | : | admitting; yielding |
| brunette | : | a white woman or girl with dark hair |

Summary

The lady again asked “ARE YOU DARK? OK VERY LIGHT?” The poet replied in a humorous way. He asked her whether she meant “like plain or milk chocolate?”. Her tone was cold and bordering on aggressiveness. Then he said that his colour was ‘West African Sepia’, as noted down in his passport. The landlady did not understand what he was saying. So he said that he was like a brunette. She tried to confirm whether it was dark. The man humorously said that facially he was a brunette. But the rest of him, palm of his hand, soles of his feet were a peroxide blonde. He said that friction, by sitting down had turned his bottom darker. He knew that the lady was about to cut the phone. Then in a hurry he requested her to see it for herself.

Answer the following questions

1. *Telephone Conversation* is a poem written by.....
Wole Soyinka
2. What is the theme of '*Telephone Conversation*'?
Racial discrimination
3. Wole Soyinka is awriter.
Nigerian

Discuss

Answer the following questions in one or two sentences

1. Why is the landlady's good breeding "pressurized"? What does the poet try to convey through the use of this expression?
The landlady did not want to rent her house to a black person. When she learnt that the man seeking accommodation was an African, she did not know what to tell him. But her good breeding presents her to tell it openly. This polite behaviour of the landlady is described as pressurized good breeding.
2. "Madam," I warned, "I hate a wasted journey- I am African". Why does the caller fear that it is going to be a wasted journey?
The caller says that he is an African. He is sure that he will not be given accommodation if the landlady knows this fact. That is why he fears that it is going to be a wasted journey.
3. How does the black African caller outwit the white landlady?
The black African Caller outwitted the white landlady by finally telling her that his bottom was raven black. He also requested her to see it for herself.

Answer in a Paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Comment on the use of the humour in the poem.
The poem *Telephone Conversation* gives a humorous account of a telephone conversation that happens in England between a dark-skinned, African seeking to rent a house and an English landlady who completely changes her attitude after learning that the caller is African. The caller confessed that he was an African because he did not want to make a wasted journey. When the landlady learnt that he was an African, she became silent. And then she asked him how dark he was. She again asked him whether he was light or very dark. To this the caller asked her whether she meant "like plain or milk chocolate?" Then he said that his colour was "West African Sepia". Finally he gave a detailed description of his face, palm, feet and that of his raven black bottom. He also requested her to see it for herself. All these descriptions add humour to the poem.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. *Telephone Conversation* is a vehement attack on racial discrimination. Explain.
Wole Soyinka's *Telephone Conversation* satirizes the widely-spread racism in the modern western society. It is about a telephone conversation that happens in England between a dark-skinned African person seeking to rent a house and an English landlady who completely changes her attitude after learning that the caller is African. Instead of discussion price, location, amenities, and other information significant to the apartment the entire discussion centered round the colour of the caller's skin.

The caller confessed that he was an African. When the landlady learnt that he was an African, she did not want to rent her house to him. But she did not tell it openly. The landlady is a typical example of any white woman, who is reluctant to give accommodation to a black man. She is described as a polite, well-bred woman, even though she is shown to be shallowly racist.

The lady asked him how dark he was. She also asked him whether he was light or very dark. He replied humorously that whether she meant “like plain or milk chocolate?” Then he said that his colour was “West African Sepia” as recorded in the passport. When the lady again asked for clarifications, the caller was forced to reveal how dark he was. And he said that facially he was a brunette but the rest of him, palm of his hand, soles of his feet were a peroxide blonde. He added that his bottom was raven black. When the lady was about to disconnect the phone, he hastily requested her to see it for herself. This witty retort shows the irony in judging people based on the colour of their skin.

In this poem, Wole Soyinka has used satire to bring the woman to humiliation for having shown racial discrimination.

5. TONIGHT I CAN WRITE THE SADDEST LINES

:- PABLO NERUDA

About the poet

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) the revolutionary poet of Chile and the most celebrated of Latin American poets, started writing poetry when he was only ten. At twelve, his meeting with Gabriela Mistral turned out to be a great inspiration in his poetic career later. Another poet who inspired and influenced him was Walt Whitman. Neruda was a lifelong communist. He held many distinguished diplomatic positions in Asia, Spain and France.

Neruda won instant name and fame with the publication of his collection, *Twenty Love Poems and a song of Despair* in 1924. The love poems in this collection looked at the various aspects of love from an unconventional angle, yet with deep feeling and sensitivity. The publication of the three volumes of *Residence On Earth* established him as a poet. The poems in this collection deal with the themes of lust, loneliness and death in a haunting and surrealist manner. *Cantos General*, written during his exile, reveals his strong ideological commitments and social passion. He was awarded the Nobel prize for Literature in 1971.

Poem

Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
Write, for example, 'The night is shattered
and the blue stars shiver in the distance.'
The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.
Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.
Through nights like this one I held her in my arms
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.
She loved me sometimes, and I loved her too.
How could one not have loved her great still eyes.
Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.
And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.
What does it matter that my love could not keep her.
The night is shattered and she is not with me.
This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.
My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.
My sight searches for her as though to go to her.
My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.
The same night whitening the same trees.
We, of that time, are no longer the same.
I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.
My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.
Another's. She will be another's. Like my kisses before.
Her voice. Her bright body. Her infinite eyes.
I no longer love her, that's certain, but maybe I love her.
Love is so short, forgetting is so long.
Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms
my soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.
Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer
and these the last verses that I write for her.

Introduction to the poem

Tonight I can write the Saddest Lines is one of the most celebrated poems of Neruda. It is a monologue written in a confessional mood, giving vent to the lament of a jilted lover. The lover contemplates the natural world, the night, the stars, the wind-everything that reminds him of his lost love. The night and darkness match his mood.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-16

| | | |
|-----------|---|--------------------|
| shattered | : | broken into pieces |
| immense | : | very large; great |

Summary

The poet seems gloomy. He says that he can write the saddest lines this night. The night sky is filled with twinkling stars. The night wind revolves in the sky singing a sad song. The poet says that he can write the saddest lines on such a night. The poet says that he loved his beloved and sometimes she loved him too. He then reminisces about being with her in “nights like this one.” In such nights he held her in his arms and kissed her again and again under the endless sky. He says that she was beautiful with her great still eyes that he couldn’t help loving her. Now he does not have his beloved with him and he can write the saddest lines. He has lost his beloved. The night seems to be immense without her. The verse falls to the soul like a dew falls in the pasture. He confesses that his love could not keep his beloved. Now she is not with him and the night seems to be shattered without her.

Lines 17-32

| | | |
|-------|---|------|
| sight | : | eyes |
|-------|---|------|

Summary

The poet hears someone singing in the distance. He expresses his longing to reunite with his beloved. His eyes and his heart try to find her though he knows that he can’t get her back. He again remembers that this night is so similar to the ones they shared together. Yet he understands that they are no longer the same. He realises that he no longer loves her. He wonders how much he loved her once. He says that his voice had tried to find the wind to touch her hearing, but failed. Now she is another man’s beloved. Her voice, her body, her eyes-everything. The poet says that he no longer loves her, but immediately contradicts himself, uncovering his efforts at self deception when he admits “but may be I love her”. Love is so short, but it takes a long time to forget her, the poet says. The poet again remembers those nights when he held her in his arms. His soul is not ready to accept the loss of his beloved. This is the last pain that she makes him suffer and these are the last lines he writes for her.

Answer the following questions

1. *Tonight I can Write the Saddest Lines* is a poem written by.....
Pablo Neruda
2. Pablo Neruda is a.....
Chilean poet
3. The line “Love is so short, forgetting is so long” occurs in.....
Pablo Neruda’s *Tonight I can write the Saddest Lines*

Discuss

Answer the following in two or three sentences

1. "I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too". Explain

The poet says that he loved his beloved deeply and sincerely. But he is not certain whether she loved him in the same way. That makes the poet say that maybe she loved him too, sometimes.

2. "Tonight I can write the saddest lines". Why is this line repeated like a refrain?

The repetition of this line shows the depth of the poet's feeling of sadness on his lost love. Though she is not with him anymore, he is still tormented by her memories.

Answer in a Paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Comment on the speaker's contemplation on the fickleness of their love.

Pablo Neruda's *Tonight I can write the saddest lines* is a confessional poem, giving vent to the lament of a jilted lover. The poet says that he loved his beloved deeply and sincerely. Now she is not with the poet but still he is constantly tormented by her memories. He says that he loved her and sometimes she loved him too. He remembers the nights when he held her in his arms and kissed her again and again. The night seems to be shattered as she is not with him. His soul finds it difficult to accept her loss. Now he says that she will be another's and he feels sad at this thought. It is her physical absence that bothers him much.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. Examine the uniqueness of *Tonight I can write the Saddest Lines* as a confessional love poem.

Tonight I can write the Saddest Lines is one of the most celebrated poems of Neruda. It is a monologue written in a confessional mood, giving vent to the lament of the jilted lover. The lover contemplates the natural world, the night, the stars, the wind—everything that reminds him of his lost love. The night and the darkness match his mood.

When the poet sees the night sky filled with twinkling stars he is reminded of his beloved and feels sad. He says that he can write the saddest lines in such a night in the memory of his beloved. He openly says that he loved his beloved and sometimes she loved him too. He then reminisces about being with her in such nights. This reinforces his sense of loneliness that implies the sensual nature of their relationship. He also remembers holding his beloved in his hands and kissing her again and again under the endless sky. He couldn't help loving her as she had great still eyes. But now he has lost his beloved and he confesses that his love could not keep his beloved with him.

The poet expresses his longing to reunite with his love. His eye and his heart try to find her but could not. She is not with him. He remembers that this night is so similar to the ones they had shared together. Yet he understands that they are no longer the same. He also realises that he no longer loves her.

The poet says that now she is another man's beloved. This thought tortures him constantly and he tries to forget his beloved. But he realises that it is hard to get rid of her memories. He is still haunted by her memories. He says that love is short but forgetting is long. His soul is not ready to accept her loss. And the poet says this is the last pain he suffers for the sake of his love for her and these are the last verses that he writes for her.

6. I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

:- MAYA ANGELOU

About the poet

Maya Angelou (b. 1928), poet, essayist, dancer, composer, producer, lecturer and civil rights activist, is among the most distinguished African American writers devoted to women's lives and identities in a male-dominated society. Angelou won international recognition with the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first in the series of six autobiographical volumes. Later books in the series are *Singin' and Swin in' and Getting' Merry Like Christmas*, *Gather Together in My Name*, *The Heart of a woman*, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes*, and *A Song Flung Up To Heaven*.

She has been awarded over 30 honorary degrees and was nominated for a Pulitzer prize for her 1971 volume of poetry, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of water, Fore I Die*. She has been honoured by several universities, literary organizations, government agencies, and special interest groups.

Poem

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

The free bird leaps
on the back of the win
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and its tune is heard
on the distant hill for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.
But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Introduction to the poem

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is one of her powerful poems expressing the African American's intense longing for freedom. Angelou uses the metaphor of a bird struggling to escape its cage as a central image throughout her autobiographical fiction. However, in this poem the caged bird sings of freedom.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-14

caged bird : (here) the black race, discriminated and segregated
free bird : (here) the privileged white race

Summary

A free bird flies on the back of the wind. The free bird symbolizes the privileged white who believe that the history of America is the history of the whites. The free bird claims to be the sole inheritor of the national tradition. It can fly anywhere as if the entire sky is its own. But a caged bird cannot fly. Its wings are clipped and its feet are tied. It hops about in the narrow cage behind bars. Here the caged bird symbolizes the oppression and suffering of black society. The caged bird opens its throat to sing.

Lines 15-30

fearful trill : trembling sound
fat worms : (here) opportunities

Summary

The caged bird sings in a trembling voice of unknown things that he longs for. His song is heard on the distant hills for he sings about freedom. The free bird thinks of another breeze and trade winds and fat worms on a lawn. But the caged bird stands on the grave of dreams. He is deprived of all freedom. His wings are clipped and his feet are tied. So he opens his throat to sing.

Lines 31-38

longed : desired eagerly

Summary

The caged bird sings with a trembling voice. He sings of unknown things that he longs for. His tune is heard on the distant hill. He sings of freedom.

Answer the following questions

1. *I Know why the Caged Bird Sings* is a poem written by.....
Maya Angelou
2. Maya Angelou is an.....
African-American poet
3. "But a bird that stalks /down his narrow cage can seldom see through/his bars of rage
"These lines occur in.....
Maya Angelou's *I know why the Caged Bird Sings*

Discuss

Answer the questions in two or three sentences

1. How does Maya Angelou portray white supremacy in the poem?
The white race is represented by the free bird which can fly freely everywhere in the sky. The privileged white believe that the history of America is the history of the whites.
2. How does she evoke sympathy for the black?
The black is represented by the caged bird. Its wings are clipped and its feet are tied. It can only hop about in the narrow cage behind bars. It is denied of its freedom.
3. Why, according to the poet, does the caged bird sing?
The bird's wings are clipped and its feet are tied. And so it opens its throat to sing.

Answer in a paragraph of not more than 100 words

1. Comment on the use of metaphors in the poem.
Maya Angelou uses the metaphor of a bird in this poem. The entire poem is an extended metaphor of the racial segregation present in society. The caged bird symbolizes the oppression and suffering of the black race. The caged bird cannot fly for its wings are clipped and its feet are tied. It is denied of any free movement. This shows how the blacks are tormented by the whites. The caged bird sings with a fearful trill to show his protest. While the free bird symbolizes the white who believe that the history of America is the history of the whites. The free bird claims to be the sole inheritor of the national tradition. The whites think that the blacks have nothing to look back with pride or look forward with hope. The poet vividly gives a picture of the suffering of the blacks through the metaphor of a bird.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. Comment on the treatment of themes, such as discrimination, racism, and perseverance in the poem.

I Know why the Caged Bird Sings is one of Maya Angelou's powerful poem expressing the African American's intense longing for freedom. Angelou uses the metaphor of a bird to point out the racial segregation present in society.

The caged bird represents the black race, discriminated and segregated by the white race while the free bird represents the privileged white who believe that the history of America is the history of the whites. The free bird can fly everywhere without any limitations or restrictions as it has the entire sky as its domain. The free bird claims to be the sole inheritor of the national tradition. The caged bird is denied of its freedom. Its wings are clipped and its feet are tied. It can't fly freely. Its movement is restricted within the narrow confines of the cage. So it opens its throat to sing. This caged bird is the symbol of the oppressed black. The black find themselves exiled in their own land. The whites think that the blacks have nothing to look back with pride or look forward with hope.

The free bird thinks of another breeze and trade winds whereas the caged bird stands on the grave of dreams. What the poet means is that the white people have every opportunity to have a good living. But the black people are denied of every opportunity and they live in misery. However the black people await release from all their miseries, with patience and determination.

Through the powerful metaphor of a bird Maya Angelou has given expression to the themes of discrimination, racism and perseverance.

7. BOSOM FRIEND

:- HIRA BANSODE

About the Poet

Hira Bansode (b.1939) is a well known Marathi Dalit Poet. Hailing from a Mahar family from a village near Pune, in Maharashtra, Bansode moved to Mumbai with her father who was a worker there. She was married when she was in the ninth standard. However, with the support and reassurance of her husband and in-laws, she completed her schooling and became a railway clerk. She took her master's degree in Marathi.

Bansode has written poems profusely in Marathi, on Dalit psyche, its conflicts in the modern age, and the resultant shocks and revelations. In poems such as 'Yasodhara' and 'Shabarees', she explores the psyche of legendary or historical women whose voices have not been recorded. She also offers a variety of concerns as a Dalit woman, thereby emphasizing the need of Dalit women to articulate their concerns equally as both Dalits and women.

Poem

Bosom Friend

Today you came over to dinner for the first time
You not only came, you forgot your caste and came
Usually women don't forget that tradition of inequality
But you came with a mind as large as the sky to my pocket
size house
I thought you had ripped out all those caste things
You came bridging the chasm that divides us
Truly, friend I was really happy
With the naive devotion of Shabari I arranged the food on
your plate
But the moment you looked at the plate your face changed
With a smirk you said: Oh my-do you serve chutney
koshimbir this way?
You still don't know how to serve food
Truly, you folk will never improve
I was ashamed, really ashamed
My hand which had just touched the sky was knocked
down
I was silent
Toward the end of the meal you asked
What's this? Don't you serve buttermilk or yoghurt with
the last course of rice?
Oh My Dear, we can't do without that...
The last bit of my courage fell away like a falling star
I was sad, then numb
But the next moment I came back to life
A stone dropped in the water stirs up things on the bottom
So my memories swam up in my mind

Dear Friend- You ask about buttermilk and yoghurt
What/How can I tell you?
You know, in my childhood we didn't even have milk for
tea much less yoghurt or buttermilk
My mother cooked on sawdust she brought from the
lumbeyard wiping away the smoke from her eyes
Every once in a while we might get garlic chutney on
coarse bread
Otherwise we just ate bread crumpled in water.
Dear Friend-Shrikhand was not even a word in our
vocabulary
My nose had never smelled the fragrance of ghee
My tongue had never tasted halva, basundi
Dear Friend- you have not discarded your tradition
Its roots go deep in your mind
And that's true, true, true
Friend-There's yoghurt on the last course of rice
Today the arrangement on your plate was not
properly ordered
Are you going to tell me what mistakes I made?
Are you going to tell me my mistakes?

Introduction to the poem

The poem *Bosom Friend* is the English translation of Bansode's Marathi poem *Sakhi* written in 1984. This poem is a critical and sarcastic remark against the hypocritical caste-ridden society. The poet here articulates the pain she has suffered at the hands of the upper class. The experience of constant subjugation, separation and marginalization are expressed in a tone which is both vehement and sarcastic.

Notes and Explanations

Lines 1-25

| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| naive | : | innocent |
| shabari | : | an elderly ascetic woman in <i>Ramayana</i> . Shabari, pained at the sacrificial killing of goats that was going to be performed before her marriage, becomes an ascetic and serves a guru Matanga, who just before <i>Samadhi</i> asks her to wait for the Rama <i>darshan</i> . Everyday Shabari collects berries for Lord Rama. She plucks fruits, tastes them first, and keeps the sweetest ones for Rama. The thought never occurs to her that she should not taste a fruit before it is offered to a deity. Rama is highly pleased with Shabari's offering and grants her moksha. |
| smirk | : | smile affectedly |
| koshimbir | : | a Maharashtrian salad |
| yoghurt | : | curd |
| numb | : | torpid, insensible |

Summary

The narrator was excited that her bosom friend came to her home forgetting the differences in caste, custom and tradition, bridging the chasm that divided them. The narrator says that women usually don't forget their caste distinctions. She thanked her friend and said that the mind of her friend was as large as the sky. The narrator was very happy. With the naive devotion of Shabari, she carefully arranged the food on the plate for her friend. But the moment she looked at the plate, her friend's face changed with an unpleasant smile she asked whether the narrator served chutney koshimbir this way. She also said that the narrator had not still learnt these manners. She added that the narrator and his folk would never improve. The narrator felt ashamed and she kept silent. Her devotion and elation were short lived. At the end of the meal the guest asked whether they didn't serve buttermilk or yoghurt with the last course of rice. The narrator now became very sad and numb. The narrator's excitement vanished "like a falling star."

Lines 26-49

| | | |
|------------|---|--|
| lumberyard | : | a place where wood is kept before it is sold |
| shrik hand | : | a popular sweet dish of northern India, made using curd, sugar, nuts and spices. |
| basundi | : | a sweet dish made of milk, sugar, lemon juice nuts and spices |

Summary

The narrator recalled her days of poverty when she had no access to milk or yoghurt. Her mother cooked on sawdust. Sometimes they had course bread with garlic chutney. On other days they ate bread crumpled in water. They never knew the taste of shrikhand, ghee, halva and basundi. Now the narrator realised that her friend was deep-rooted in tradition. The narrator confessed that she had not arranged the plate properly. She asked her friend whether she was going to tell the mistakes that the narrator has made.

Answer the following questions

1. *Bosom Friend* is a poem written by.....
Hira Bansode
2. Hire Bansode is a well known.....
Marathi Dalit Poet
3. "With the naive devotion of Shabari I arranged the food on your plate"- Who is Shabari mentioned in this line?
An elderly ascetic woman in *Ramayana*

Discuss

Answer the following questions in two or three sentences

1. "But you came with a mind as large as the sky." What makes the poet think like this? What is the irony?

The narrator's friend came to her home for dinner forgetting the caste, custom and tradition. This made the narrator very happy and hence she said that her friend's mind was as large as the sky. But the deeply ingrained caste feelings of the friend was revealed during the dinner. This is the irony in the statement.

2. “I was ashamed, really ashamed.” What made the poet feel really ashamed?
The guest didn’t like the way the food was served on the plate. She blamed the poet saying that she hadn’t still learnt how to serve food. This made the poet feel really ashamed.
3. When did the last bit of courage fall away like a falling star from the poet?
The guest asked the narrator whether they didn’t serve butter milk or yoghurt with the last course of rice. Hearing this, the last bit of courage fell away like a falling star from the poet.
4. What was the food that the poet did not have in her childhood?
The poet didn’t have shrikhand, ghee, basundi and halva in her childhood.

Answer in a paragraph of no more than 100 words.

1. Describe the contrasting emotions of elation, frustration and shock as portrayed by Hira Bansode at the start of the poem, ‘*Bosom Friend*’.

The narrator’s friend has come to her home for dinner. She feels excited and happy that her bosom friend came to her home forgetting the differences in caste, custom and tradition, bridging the chasm that divided them. The narrator says that her friend’s mind is as large as the sky. The narrator feels elated. With the naive devotion of Shabari, she arranged the food on the plate for her friend. But her friend didn’t like the way the food was arranged. The deeply ingrained caste feelings of the friend broke through the clouds at the casual sight of the Dalit’s table etiquette. She felt ashamed. Towards the end of the meal the guest asked whether they didn’t serve butter milk or yoghurt with the last course of rice. Hearing this, the narrator’s last bit of courage vanished like a falling star. She became sad and numb. Terribly pained at heart, she slipped into a spell of retrospection. She recalled her days of poverty when she had no access to milk or yoghurt. Her initial elation at the arrival of the guest gave way to a sense of fuming resentment.

Write an essay of 300 words.

1. “Hira Bansode’s *Bosom Friend* is a discomfoting portrayal of a Dalit woman’s sense of shame and her plea for understanding because poverty has never allowed her to know the varieties of food that would make a multi-course meal possible”. Discuss.

[Refer the stanza summary]

8. REFUGEE MOTHER AND CHILD

:- CHINUA ACHEBE

About the poet

Chinua Achebe (b.1930), Nigerian novelist, poet and short story writer, is considered as one of the most original literary artists currently writing in English. He received his early education in English; studied literature and medicine at the University of Ibadan. After graduating, he went to work for the Nigerian Broadcasting Company in Lagos. His first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) was a huge success. It has been translated into at least 45 languages, and has sold eight million copies worldwide. Other novels include *No Longer At Ease* (1960) *Arrow of God* (1964), and *A Man of the People* (1966). He has also published a number of short stories, children's books, and essay collections.

Achebe attempts to record, with detachment, the social and psychological disorientation that has come as a part of the imposition of western customs and values on traditional African society. Though he writes in English, he also attempts to incorporate Igbo vocabulary and narratives into his works. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition and combines straight forward narration with representations of folk stories and proverbs. He has received Nigeria's highest honour for intellectual achievement, the Nigerian National Merit Award. His novel *Anthills of the Savannah* had been shortlisted for the Booker Mc Connell prize. A writer with a strong political commitment, Achebe has been active in national politics since the 1960s. He has worked as the Professor of English at the University of Nigeria and as the Director of Publishing and broadcasting companies. He is currently the David and Marianna Fisher University Professor and Professor of Africana Studies at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, United States.

Poem

Refugee Mother and Child

No Madonna and Child could touch
that picture of a mother's tenderness
for a son she soon will have to forget.

The air was heavy with odors
of diarrhea of unwashed children
with washed-out ribs and dried-up
bottoms struggling in labored
steps behind blown empty bellies.

Most mothers there had long ceased
to care but not this one; she held
a ghost smile between her teeth
and in her eyes the ghost of a mother's
pride as she combed the rust-colored
hair left on his skull and then -
singing in her eyes - began carefully
to part it... In another life
this would have been a little daily
act of no consequence before his
breakfast and school; now she
did it like putting flowers
on a tiny grave.

Introduction to the poem

In *Refugee Mother and Child*, Achebe realistically presents a refugee camp infected with starvation, disease and death. The mother and child are nameless and so is the location. They can be any mother and child in Africa, driven to refugee camps because of a natural calamity or political instability.

Notes and Explanations

ceased : stopped

Summary

Seeing the mother and her child at the refugee camp the poet says that there is more tenderness in this mother and child than in the picture of Virgin Mary. The air in the refugee camp held nauseating odours of diarrhea and unwashed children. Their ribs stuck out and they walked laboriously with their blown empty bellies. Mothers there had long ceased to care their children, as the poignancy of the situation of the refugees had reached their saturation point. But this one still held her child with affection.

Lines 11-21

ghost smile : shadow of a smile

Summary

This mother held a ghost smile between her teeth. Her eyes also looked super-focused as it held the ghost of a mother's pride. She combed the rust-coloured hair on his skull with maternal affection. She seemed to be singing as she cared her child. If things were different this mother would be preparing her child for school. She would also comb his hair and give him breakfast with great affection and care. But now she is preparing her little child for death and it is as if she is putting flowers on his grave.

Answer the following the questions

1. The poem *Refugee Mother and child* is written by.....
Chinua Achebe
2. Chinua Achebe is apoet.
Nigerian
3. "No Madonna and child could touch/that picture of a mother's tenderness'. These lines occur in.....
Chinua Achebe's *Refugee Mother and Child*

Discuss

Answer the questions in two or three sentences.

1. Why is the picture of the refugee mother and her child more tender than Madonna and child?
The refugee mother cares her child with great affection even in the midst of poverty and miseries. This makes the poet think that their picture is more tender than Madonna and child.
2. How does the poet paint the sufferings of the people in the camp?
The air in the refugee camp held nauseating odours of diarrhea and unwashed children. Their ribs stuck out and they walked laboriously with their distended bellies. Through this picture the poet brings out the sufferings of the refugee children and the total helplessness of the situation.
3. "Most mothers had long ceased to care". Why?
Most mothers in the refugee camp ceased to care for their children, as the poignancy of the situation of the refugees had reached their saturation point. They had lost their hope of survival.

Write an essay of 300 words

1. *Refugee Mother and Child* is a celebration of motherhood. Explain.
[Refer the summary]

9. GENERAL, YOUR TANK

: - BERTOLT BRECHT

About the poet

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), German Playwright and poet, was one of the most prominent figures of the twentieth-century theatre. He was also a committed political activist. He wrote for the cause of the humiliated and the offended, always extolling the greatness of the ordinary man. During the heights of his dictatorship, Hitler banned Brecht's works, forcing him to leave Germany.

He produced the best of his works during the years of exile in Denmark and America. Accused of spreading 'red' ideas, he was summoned before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1947. Many of Brecht's famous plays- *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Mr. Puntilla and his Man Matti*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, and many others were expressions of his resistance against the Nazi and Fascist movements.

Poem

General, Your Tank

General, your tank is a powerful vehicle.
It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men.
But it has one defect:
It needs a driver.

General, your bomber is powerful.
It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant.
But it has one defect:
It needs a mechanic.

General, man is very useful.
He can fly and he can kill.
But he has one defect:
He can think.

Introduction to the poem

General Your Tank is an excerpt from Brecht's anti-war poem, *From A German War Primer* in which he expresses his strong and abiding faith in the greatness of mankind in unambiguous terms.

Note and Explanations

Lines 1-13

| | | |
|---------|---|------------|
| smashes | : | crushes |
| defect | : | deficiency |

Summary

The poet addresses the General. He tells him that his tank is powerful. It can destroy forests and it can crush a hundred men. But it has one defect. It needs a driver. The bomber is also powerful. It flies faster than a storm and it can carry a thing bigger than an elephant. But it too has a defect. It needs a mechanic to function. The poet tells the General that man is very useful. He can fly and he can kill. But he has one defect. He can think.

Answer the following questions

1. Bertolt Brecht is awriter
German
2. The poem *General, Your Tank* is written by.....
Bertolt Brecht
3. *General, Your Tank* is an.....
anti-war poem

Discuss

1. Evaluate *General, Your Tank* as an anti-war poem.

General, Your Tank is an excerpt from Brecht's anti-war poem, *From A German War Primer* in which Brecht expresses his strong and abiding faith in the greatness of mankind in unambiguous terms. Brecht's concern was always for the soldiers not the generals. It is the soldier who fights and gets killed, bringing laurels to the General in the process. The ordinary soldier is always forgotten, whereas the General is elevated to the status of a hero on winning the war. Brecht expresses his dislike towards wars and he ridicules the General in the poem. The General seems to be powerful with his tank and bomber. But his tank has a defect that needs a driver. And the bomber even though it is powerful, it needs a mechanic to function. He adds that the general has a man capable of flying and killing. But there is one defect – the man can think.
