



BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

SEMESTER-I

CORE – 1: BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA
[14TH TO 17TH CENTURY]

BLOCK: 1 - 4

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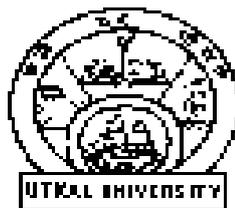
Priyanka Priyadarshini



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CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION

UTKAL UNIVERSITY



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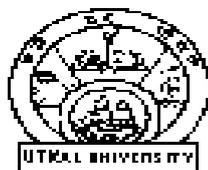
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The University started functioning on 27 November 1943, at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. It originated as an affiliating and examining body but shifted to its present campus spread over 400 acres of land at Vani Vihar in Bhubaneswar, in 1962.

A number of Postgraduate Departments and other centers were established in the University campus. There are presently more than two hundred general affiliated colleges under the University. It has eleven autonomous colleges under its jurisdiction, twenty-eight constituent postgraduate departments, 2 constituent law colleges and a Directorate of Distance & Continuing Education. It boasts of a centre for Population Studies, a School of Women's Studies, an Academic Staff College, a pre-school and a high school. The University also offers a number of self-financing courses.

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From the Director's Desk

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We wish you happy reading.

DIRECTOR

CORE- 1: BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA [14TH TO 17TH CENTURY]

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		3.	Spirit of Renaissance
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Block No.	Block Name	Unit No.	Unit
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		20.	The Legacy of William Shakespeare in Global Literature and Culture

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION, UTKAL UNIVERSITY,
BHUBANESWAR

Program Name: Bachelor of Arts in ENGLISH **Program Code: 010106**

Course Name: British Poetry and Drama [14th to 17th Century]

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CORE- 1: BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA [14TH TO 17TH CENTURY]

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BLOCK-1: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

UNIT 1: Anglo-Saxon Period: The Beginning

UNIT 2: Middle Ages and 14th Century

UNIT 3: Spirit of Renaissance

UNIT 4: England and Reformation

UNIT 5: Metaphysical Poetry and the Jacobean Period (Early 17th Century)

UNIT 1: ANGLO–SAXON PERIOD: THE BEGINNING

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- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
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- 1.4 The Anglo-Saxon Period
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1.1 Objectives

The learners shall know the following:

- About the beginning of English literature.
- Anglo–Saxon period is the oldest period.
- Major Works produced in the age.
- Socio-Political changes.

1.2 Introduction

The Anglo-Saxon Period in English literature spanned from 410 CE to 1066 CE. Despite coinciding with the Dark Ages of England, it is the foundational period of English identity and language as we know it today. Understanding England before and after the arrival of the Germanic Saxons, Angles, and Jutes is indispensable for an understanding of Anglo-Saxon literature.

1.3 England Before the Anglo-Saxons

The Celts

To understand Anglo Saxon period in English literature, we must know about the Celts and the Romans. The Gaelic and Celtic tribes or the Celts lived in England as early as 1000 BC. While the Gaeles spoke Gaelic, the Celts spoke Common Brittonic language and practiced ancient Celtic religion supervised by the druids. It was in the year 43 CE that the Romans invaded and conquered most of England under the leadership of King Claudius. This Roman Empire lasted till the year 410 CE.

The Celtic tribes imbibed and practiced the Roman culture despite the obvious political resistance. Romans too were devoted to England. After all, England was an extremely rich and arable land. Additionally, it also had rich metal reservoirs such as abundance of gold in Wales, iron in the Forest of Dean, lead in the North of Wales, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire. On top of everything, the geographical location of England made any attacks and invasions difficult, making it relatively easier for the Romans to maintain their empire.

Arrival and Fall of the Roman Empire in England (43 CE- 410 CE)

The Romans arrived in England with King Claudius in 43 CE and ruled the country for about 400 years. During this time, England was named Britannia after the Celtic-speaking Britons. Under the Roman empire, England developed roads, towns, and striking forts and walls. Romans also introduced England to foods and fruits such as pear, peas, apples, etc.

The fall of the Roman Empire (410 CE)

The Anglo Saxon began after the Romans retreated from England in 410 CE. The Roman Empire was one of the largest empires in the ancient world that included Spain, France, Germany, Britain, parts of North Africa and Western Asia as well. Undoubtedly, it also became extremely difficult to protect, defend, and rule. In the year 285 CE, the Roman Emperor Diocletian split the vast Roman Empire into two manageable regions:

- **The Eastern Roman Empire** that included regions such as Egypt, Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, etc. Constantinople (present day Istanbul) was the capital of Eastern Roman Empire.
- **The Western Roman Empire** included France, Britain, Germany, Italy, etc. Rome was its capital.

In around 407 CE, the Western Roman Empire began to fall apart due to the constant attacks and invasions by the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Visigoths. In order to safeguard and mitigate the attacks, Roman soldiers had to retreat from Britain and move towards the attacked regions. By 410 CE, every last Roman soldier had retreated from Britain. Another key factor that resulted in the downfall of the Roman Empire was the Huns invasion under King Attila.

The Dark Age in England (410 CE - 1066 CE)

The years after the Romans left England are also known as the Dark Ages. This is majorly due to the absence of any substantial historical record for this time. Nevertheless, it was a crucial period where a new English identity and language emerged. As soon as the Romans retreated from Britain, all the tribes they had repressed and controlled began to raid and attack the island. These invaders were Irish from the West, Picts from the North, and the Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) from the East. By the year 500 CE, the Anglo Saxons had invaded most parts of Britain. Therefore, the time period from 410 CE to 1066 CE is known as the Anglo Saxon period.

1.4 The Anglo-Saxon Period

This section gives a brief overview of the Anglo Saxons The Anglo Saxons were a group of Germanic

tribes that ruled England from 410 CE to 1066. They included the Angles who originated from modern Jutland and ruled east, north, and midlands, Saxons who were originally from south of Denmark and east of modern Holstein ruled the south and southwestern regions, and the Jutes who ruled Kent in the southeast. The Celtic tribes who inhabited England before the Roman invasion were now termed as 'Welsh' which meant 'foreigners' in Germanic language. The 'Welsh' continued to preserve their language and culture in Wales and their language and culture is alive to this day.

Society and Religion in the Anglo Saxon period

The Anglo Saxons practiced paganism and worshipped multiple deities such as Norse, Woden, Thunor, etc. The Anglo Saxon society was a rich society where loyalty was the single most important virtue. Marriages used to be political and practical affairs. Women in Anglo Saxon period held an integral position and were considered the weavers of both cloth and the society. They enjoyed hereditary rights to property and even owned kingdoms.

The Anglo Saxons were great poets and were extremely fond of riddles. However, we must note that they did not record or write any of their works. Most of the poetry was meant to be sung and was orally transmitted from generation to generation. Most works were written later by the Roman monks who came to convert England to Christianity in the 6th century.

Christianization of Anglo Saxon England (597 CE approximately)

Christianization of the pagan Anglo Saxon society began during the 6th century. It was in 597 CE that Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory to lead the mission of christianization in the south of England and became the first archbishop of Canterbury. On the other hand, the Celtic monks christianized northern England and Scotland. Christianization of England during the Anglo Saxon period had the following consequences:

- There had been no books before Christianity. Books were written because the written word was significant to the Church and the services relied upon the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the written word was introduced to the otherwise oral tradition of the Anglo Saxons.
- The Runic alphabets of the Germanic tribes gradually replaced the Roman alphabets.
- Majority of the written literature was in Latin as it was the language of the Roman Church.
- The Anglo Saxon England gained presence and visibility in the mainstream Western European culture due to Latin.

Latin was exclusive to people at high religious posts. However oral literacy remained prevalent among the general population that communicated in Old English. This was the reason why religious instructions for common masses were conducted in English instead of Latin.

Invasion by the Vikings and King Alfred (793 CE)

The Vikings raided and attacked England in the year 793 CE of the Anglo Saxon period. Interestingly, they only raided and attacked monasteries as they were guarded by unarmed monks and were vulnerable but rich targets, During this time all the monasteries and libraries housing rich Anglo Saxon literature got destroyed.

King Alfred (848 CE - 899 CE)

All the damage incurred during the raids and attacks of the Vikings began to get restored during the reign of King Alfred from 848 CE to 899 CE. During this time of the Anglo Saxon period, monasteries were revived and English learning was encouraged. All the four volumes of Old English verses belong to this period. These four volumes are:

- The Junius Manuscript
- The Beowulf Manuscript
- The Vercelli Book
- The Exeter Book

These volumes of Anglo Saxon literature contain poetry composed by diverse unknown poets belonging to diverse backgrounds. They display wide-ranging, layered and complex poetry that was popular during the Anglo Saxon period.

1.5 The Anglo-Saxon Period in English Literature

Anglo-Saxon literature is dominated by either heroic or epic poetry written in alliterative verses, or religious poetry with heroic elements in it. While prose did not exist until the reign of King Alfred, Anglo-Saxon heroic and religious poetry were prevalent in the period.

Anglo-Saxon Heroic poetry

Heroic Poetry is “a long narrative poem celebrating the great deeds of one or more legendary heroes, in a grand ceremonious style. The hero, usually protected by or even descended from gods, performs superhuman exploits in battle or in marvellous voyages, often saving or founding a nation...” [The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, 2001, p 82]. The Anglo Saxon heroic poetry gives the readers an insight to the pagan world and culture of the Germanic tribes.

As mentioned above, England was Christianized by the 7th century. In that process, a lot of Anglo Saxon poetry was preserved and written by the monks and many of the pagan elements in the poem were modified or censored. Moreover, most of the Anglo Saxon Heroic poetry is estimated to have survived by sheer chance. The epic or heroic poetry of the Anglo Saxon period emphasizes on the values of tribal communities, and considers loyalty between lord and liegeman as one of the most important virtues. It glorifies individual heroism and highlights the significance of fate in a human's life. It is mostly composed in alliterative verses and is a product of an oral tradition. All Anglo Saxon poetry was meant to be orally recited by a scop or an itinerant minstrel who visited the courts of Kings or often served one master.

Best examples of Anglo Saxon heroic poetry are Widsith, Beowulf, Deor, Battle of Maldon, The Battle of Brunanburh, and Waldhere.

The poem Widsith, is an account of a well travelled scop who gives a detailed account of all the heroes from the Germanic world spanning 200 years. It is a combination of heroic traditions and historical accounts and provides to us an overview of Germanic history and geography.

The most important heroic poetry belonging to the Anglo Saxon period is Beowulf. It is the only complete epic poem in an ancient Germanic language and the only narrative poem that so effectively narrates the Heroic Age of the Germanic tribes. It combines the heroic idealism seamlessly with

somber fatalism. The first section of the poem deals with Beowulf assisting King Hrothgar of Denmark against the monster called Grendel and its mother. After successfully slaying the monster and its mother, Beowulf is celebrated and awarded with laurels. In the second section of the poem, Beowulf, who now has been the King of the Geats, encounters a fire breathing dragon. He valiantly and successfully kills the dragon but unfortunately succumbs to his wounds. Even though Beowulf is an Anglo Saxon poem that was composed in England, it transports the readers back to a time before the Anglo Saxon invasion. The heroes of the Geats, Swedes, and Danes are the focus of the poem. Beowulf the most important Anglo Saxon poetry because it perfectly reflects the values of the Heroic Age and even resembles Odyssey in this case. It shares with Odyssey the grand gestures with which men of ranks are received, the generosity of Kings, the loyalty of men, the ambition for fame through courage and performance in wars, and pride in noble lineage. Beowulf exhibits all characteristics of an ideal hero- he is valiant, fierce, stoic, generous and while dying, wishes nothing but the people to remember him. All these factors make this seminal poem an ideal and perhaps the only example of a heroic epic belonging to the Anglo Saxon period.

Deor is another example of heroic Anglo Saxon poetry. It lists various Germanic heroes and how they endured and overcame various hardships. The poem interestingly combines heroic elements with elegiac and personal elements.

Waldhere is another Anglo Saxon heroic poem that was accidentally discovered after 1860. The poem is based on the Waltharius story, well-known to the common people and offers popular stories of Germanic heroes.

The two most important heroic poems written close to the end of the Anglo Saxon period are The Battle of Brunanburh and Battle of Maldon. The Battle of Brunanburh is included in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle and was composed around 937 CE. It is based on the victory of Athelstan and his brother Eadmund against the Olaf the Norseman, Britons of Strathclyde, and Constantine, the king of Scots. This poem is different than the previous Anglo Saxon heroic poetry like Beowulf, Widsith, Deor, etc. This poem is infused with the patriotism. Older heroic poems did not focus much on the nationality of the hero. The hero represented all the Germanian tribes and was equally admired and celebrated by all the Germanic people. This changes in The Battle of Brunanburh. The poem specifically celebrates the victory of the English forces against the Norse, Welsh and Scottish enemies. Athelstan and Eadmund are no longer just individual heroes but are portrayed as the champions of England.

The Battle of Maldon too appears in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle and was composed around 991 CE. It is based on one of many clashes between the English and the Danes that led to the eventual conquest by King Cnut (Canute). The poem is strikingly similar to the older heroic poetry and contains speeches of encouragement for the losing English army. The poem lists many English warriors by their names, and portrays undying loyalty of men towards their chief effectively. With the Battle of Maldon, the Anglo Saxon heroic poetry came to an end.

Anglo Saxon Religious or Christian Poetry

We know that most Anglo Saxon literature was written during the Christianization of England. The monks who attempted to preserve Anglo Saxon poetry were most likely only focused on preserving religious verses. Hence, a significant amount of poetry that survives today is religious.

By the eighth century, the elements of Anglo Saxon heroic poetry were applied to religious verses. There was a significant transition where the Anglo Saxons left behind the pagan elements and embraced Christianity. The subject of their verses shifted from pagan heroes and heroic themes to Latin Christianity. Most of the religious poetry in the Anglo Saxon period was composed in Northumbria (northern England). Religious poetry in Old English literature is inspired from Latin and gives an English treatment to themes that were common throughout Christian Europe.

According to Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People, the very first religious poetry of the Anglo Saxon period belongs to Caedmon. The poem comprises of only 9 lines. It is worthwhile to notice how there is a fundamental shift. Initially, the scop performed and sang for the King or his lord, but this changes and now the focus shifts to God. The heroic style and elements are now being applied to biblical subjects. Verses such as Exodus, Genesis, Christ and Satan, and Daniel, are religious poems that belong to the Caedmonian school, and are included in the Junius Manuscript.

Another important poet of religious Anglo Saxon poetry is Cynewulf. Four of his poems - Christ, Elene, The Fates of the Apostles, and Juliana exist today. In the poems composed by Cynewulf, heroic elements are replaced by contemplative and meditative tones. Cynewulf did not just compose biblical paraphrases, but infused in his works didactic, mystical, and devotional elements and influenced religious poetry to a significant extent. Poems such as Dream of the Rood, Andreas, Guthlac A and B, and the Phoenix, all belong to school of Cynewulf. Another significant religious poem of Anglo Saxon period is Judith.

Lyrical Elegies in Old English literature

Although not as prevalent and popular as the religious and heroic Anglo Saxon poetry, there also exists lyrical elegies in Old English literature. The Wanderer and The Seafarer are the two poems where moods of lament, retrospection and melancholy dominate. Nevertheless, both the poems end with conventional moralising.

1.6 MS Cotton Vitellius

This section includes an exhaustive list of important works of Anglo Saxon literature. Anglo Saxon period in English literature includes heroic and religious alliterative verses and prose. Most of the Old English poetry is in West Saxon dialect. This section includes an exhaustive list of Anglo Saxon poetry and prose. During the invasions of England by the Vikings, a massive amount of Anglo Saxon literature was destroyed by fire. Unfortunately, almost all the poetry belonging to the Anglo Saxon literature is included in four manuscripts-

- **The MS Cotton Vitellius**: This manuscript contains poems such as Beowulf, Judith, and three works in prose- The Life of Saint Christopher, Wonders of the East, and Letters of Alexander to Aristotle.
- **The Junius Manuscript**: It contains four poems- Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, and Christ and Satan.
- **The Exeter Book**: Includes Christ, Juliana, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, Widsith, Deor, and many other shorter poems.
- **The Vercelli Book**: this manuscript includes Andreas, The Fates of the Apostles, Address of the Soul to the Body, The Dream of the Rood, and Elene.

Anglo Saxon poetry included in the MS Cotton Vitellius

I. BEOWULF

One of the most important literary works of the Anglo Saxon literature is Beowulf. The poem is a heroic epic with alliterative verse. It is one of the most important and the only existing epic poem of the Anglo Saxon period. The composer of the Beowulf is unknown and it can be divided into 43 sections, also known as fitts.

II. JUDITH

The Anglo Saxon poem Judith is based on the Latin text of the Book of Judith included in the Bible. This religious and heroic poem is included in the Nowell Codex manuscript of the The MS Cotton Vitellius and its date and poet are unknown. We only have the concluding sections of the poem.

Historical context: The Assyrians had been attacking and looting the city of Bethulia and were ruthlessly killing Israelites who are the descendants of the Biblical patriarchs and matriarchs.

The extant poem begins with Judith of Bethulia praying to God for strength and courage to execute her plan of defeating the Assyrians. The poem includes details about the feast hosted by the Assyrian general Holofernes for his army. He orders his men to bring Judith for his sexual gratification. Judith is brought to Holofernes but due to God's will, is unable to exploit her and falls in a drunken sleep. Getting her courage from God, Judith takes a sword and beheads Holofernes. She takes his head, puts it in a bag and sets off for Bethulia with her servant. There, she displays Holofernes' severed head, tells the general masses how God had helped her, and motivates the people to fight off the Assyrians. Encouraged by Judith's speech, the men of Bethulia prepare to battle the Assyrians.

The Assyrians are still in their drunken stupor when the Hebrew army approaches and are attacked. When the Assyrian men reach Holofernes to tell him about the attack, they find his dead body, putting an end to all their hope.

Assyrians are defeated by the Israelite soldiers. Upon their victory, the Hebrew soldiers reward Judith with the bloody armor of Holofernes. However, Judith only seeks for a reward in heaven by her Almighty.

1.7 The Junius Manuscript

The Junius manuscript was formerly known as the 'Caedmon manuscript' as it was formerly believed that these poems were composed by Caedmon. First three poems- Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel are based on Old Testament story. The Junius manuscript includes religious poetry of the Anglo Saxon literature.

I. GENESIS

The Genesis is the longest of the four poems in the manuscript and consists of nearly 3000 lines with various missing sections. The poem narrates the first twenty-two chapters of Genesis. It is based on

Vulgate, Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible and also includes some Christian legend. The poem could have been written by a clerk or a churchman in the early eighth century. Interestingly, the poem also has an interpolation of around 600 lines completely different in style and language. This subsection is called Genesis B, while the rest of the poem is called Genesis A.

Genesis A

Genesis A begins with the creation of Heaven and angel. It includes a brief account of Satan's rebellion, God's rage and His expulsion of Satan from Heaven. The poem ends with the creation of Adam and a description of the Garden of Eden.

Genesis B

Genesis B is like a subtext of 600 lines added to Genesis A. This section deals with temptation and fall of Adam and Eve and a detailed account of Satan's rebellion which was also briefly mentioned in the introduction of Genesis A. Genesis B is strikingly similar and comparable with John Milton's Paradise Lost. The story of Satan's fall has always been a part of Christian tradition despite it not being a part of biblical Genesis. Genesis B has significant poetic imagination and provides a new life to a traditional character. Genesis B is a translation of an Old Anglo Saxon poem written not in English but in Old Saxon.

II. EXODUS

Exodus is one of those Anglo Saxon poetry that demonstrates perfect adaptation of the style and conventions of heroic poetry to religious verses. The alliterative verses narrate the story of the flight of Israelites from Egyptian captivity by the help of God and Moses. It is the oldest poem in the Junius manuscript and is estimated to have been written during the early eighth century.

The Israelites had been thriving in Egypt. Unfortunately, a new Pharaoh comes to power and enslaves the Israelites due to his fear that they will outnumber the Egyptians and will turn against them . Out of this fear, the Pharaoh enslaves all the people of Israel living in Egypt. He also declares that all the boys born to Israelites will be drowned in the river Nile.

A Hebrew women hides her son and he is eventually adopted by the daughter of the Pharaoh. The child is named Moses. Israelites were miserable in Egypt and often prayed to God for mercy. God hears their pleads and assigns Moses to confront Pharaoh. He also asks Moses' brother Aaron to be his spokesperson. Unfortunately, Pharaoh refuses Moses' request to free the Israelites.

In a terrible plague, God causes all the Egyptian first born males to die. Pharaoh frees the Israelites and they leave Egypt through the Red Sea. God drowns all the Egyptians in the Red Sea when Pharaoh changes his mind and decides to pursue them.

The rest of the poem narrates how God delivers food, safety and protection to the people of Israel and how He gives Moses 10 Commandments for the people to follow.

III. DANIEL

This Anglo Saxon poem is based the first five chapters of the Book of Daniel in Vulgate and contains 769 lines. Many scholars have divided the poem into two parts: Daniel A that includes the retelling of the beginning of Book of Daniel, and Daniel B which is an interpolation. The primary focus of the poem is on the Three Youths- Ananias, Misael, and Azarias, Daniel, and their encounter with Nebuchadnezzar II, the king of Babylon. The opening of the poem narrates how Israelites had become arrogant of their glory. They are conquered as a punishment for worshiping idols and man instead of the God. Daniel is enslaved and is renamed Baltassar. Similarly, Anania, Misael, and Azarias are also enslaved and renamed Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago respectively. The three youths and Daniel become extremely well trained and are placed highly in the court by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel interprets the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and tries to tell him about his unchecked pride but all his attempts are futile.

Eventually, God causes Nebuchadnezzar to lose his throne to Cyrus the Mede due to his incorrigible arrogance.

IV. CHRIST AND SATAN

Christ and Satan is another religious poem that is based on various Christian traditions rather than the biblical sources. It was initially believed that the poem is composed by Caedmon but this notion is debatable today. The poem links the Old and the New Testament and is divided into three sections:

- **The Fall of Satan (lines 1-365):** In this section, Satan and other fallen angels complain to Christ. This is a deviation as Satan usually directs his complains towards God the father, rather than Christ the son.
- **The Harrowing of Hell (366-662):** This section includes accounts of Resurrection, Ascension, and Last Judgement. It also focuses on Christ's Harrowing of Hell.
- **The Temptation of Christ (663-729):** This section recalls the temptation of Christ by Satan in the desert.

1.8 The Exeter Book

The Exeter book is the largest and the oldest known manuscript of Old English literature and is recognized by UNESCO as a foundational value of English literature.

I. JULIANA

Juliana is one of the four poems attributed to the poet Cynewulf, the other three being Christ, Elene, and the Fates of the Apostles. It is also Cynewulf's longest poem, containing 731 lines. The poem begins with the Christians enduring a tough, repressive and violent life under Galerius Maximian.

Juliana is the daughter of Africanus of Nicomedia and her father had promised her hand to a wealthy senator and friend of Maximian, Eleusias. Being a converted Christian, Juliana is reluctant to marry the pagan Eleusias and publically expresses it. Her father is outraged and allows Eleusias to punish her daughter as he likes.

Juliana is tortured and thrown in a prison where she is visited by a demon in disguise of an angel of God and asks her to commit blasphemy. All these attempts fail as Juliana is steadfast and a faithful Christian. She prays to God for guidance. A voice asks her to seize the demon and Juliana complies.

This is followed by the core of the story: a lengthy verbal battle between Juliana and the demon, where she dominates and wins.

Eleusias returns and offers another chance to Juliana but she resolutely refuses him. This enrages Eleusias and he decides to burn her alive. Miraculously, Juliana remains unscathed from fire. Infuriated, Eleusias beheads Juliana and she becomes a Christian martyr.

II. CHRIST (CRIST)

This poem in Anglo Saxon literature is based on the Homilies of Gregory the Great. It is a lengthy 1700 poem and has three parts:

- Crist I (Crist A or Advent lyrics): This section of the poem has 12 sections and its poet is unknown.
- Crist II (Crist B or The Ascension): This section is based on the ascension of Christ and is composed by Cynewulf.
- Crist III (Crist C): This poem is about the Last Judgement and is composed by an unknown author

III. THE WANDERER

In this alliterative Anglo Saxon or Old English poem, the Wanderer is in exile at sea and prays to God for understanding and kindness. He recalls the hardships he had endured in his life and constantly thinks about them in his solitude. The Wanderer has no one to share his grief with.

His lord had passed due to old age and had caused the Wanderer to be exiled from the country without a friend or companion. He emphasizes how ruthless loneliness can be.

Towards the end of the poem, the Wanderer says that our lives are entirely dependant on fate . He asks everyone to look up to the Almighty for comfort as he controls the fate of all mankind.

The Wanderer is an apt example of the elegiac mood that was extremely prevalent during the Anglo Saxon period. This poem uses the 'ubi sunt?' motif which was extremely popular in Old English literature. It is about a lonely man who had once been in the service of a lord, and lived a happy and content life. As he ages and after his lord passes away, he is isolated and reflects back on happier times. After the loss of his lord, his country, home, companions, the Wanderer is miserable. The melancholic tones of the poem remind the readers of similar tones in Beowulf. The structure and language of the poem are complex and has several existing interpretations.

IV. THE SEAFARER

Strikingly similar to the Wanderer, Anglo Saxon poem the Seafarer is a monologue of an old sailor who contemplates his life. He reminisces his hardships on the cold rough seas and describes lonely sea voyages. He also draws a contrast between a hard, lonely, and unpredictable life at the sea and the

secure, comfortable, and social life on land. As the climate on land gets colder, the seafarer begins to yearn for the sea.

The Seafarer then shifts in tone and topic and now emphasizes that we must steer clear of sins and the devil, and that earthly pleasures will not provide any benefit to a man's soul.

Towards the end, just like the Wanderer, the verses become religious and the poem talks about God, self-restraint, and eternity, and ends with "Amen"

V. WIDSITH

Widsith is one of the earliest surviving Anglo Saxon or Old English poetry. It is an autobiographical account of a scop named Widsith and emphasizes the significance of his function in the court. As Widsith travels far and wide, the poem gives a fascinating account of the Germanic world as it was perceived by the Anglo Saxons. The poem includes many Germanic tribes and mentions characters present in Beowulf (such as Finn and Waldhere). Interestingly, Widsith's account of the Germanic world spans more than 200 years which makes it a fictional autobiography. The poem is in West Saxon dialect and must have been composed in 7th or early 8th century. Another striking feature of Widsith is its catholicity and how heroes in Germanic heroic poetry were not regional but were common to all Germania. Widsith is the perfect amalgamation of historic memories and heroic traditions. It provides us with an overview of a world that was eventually destroyed and partially absorbed by the Roman Empire.

VI. DEOR

Comprising of 42 alliterative lines, Deor is about a scop who served Heodeningas but is replaced by a rival. The poet complains about this injustice and as an attempt to console himself, recalls the troubles of Germanic heroes such as Weyland, Beadohild, Geat, Theodric, and Ermanaric.

He narrates how Weyland the smith had been captured and bound by an undeserving man called Nithhad but eventually overcomes his hardships.

Then, Deor recalls how Beadohild had mourned the death of her brothers and to make her situation worse, she had also found out that she was pregnant. However, her conditions eventually improved.

Next, Deor narrates how Geat had been deeply in love with Maethild, so much so that he was unable to sleep

Similarly, Theodoric the Ostrogoth, king of Maering too had to overcome hardships and struggles during his 30-year reign of the kingdom.

Eormanric the Goth also overcame the problems in his reign despite everyone wishing for him to get overthrown.

Deor then consoles himself that just as these Germanic heroes overcame hardships and hurdles, his situation will improve too.

Deor is one of the only two Anglo Saxon poems that has a refrain.

VII. GUTHLAC A and B

Guthlac A and B celebrate the works and death of Saint Guthlac of Croyland who was a famous saint from Mercia. Both the alliterative poems are consecutively placed in the Exeter Book.

VIII. THE PHOENIX and PHYSIOLOGUS (or BESTIARY)

Composed of 677 lines, the first part of the Phoenix is an adapted translation of *De Ave Phoenice* by Lactantius. It is a religious poem about the worldly paradise in the East. The first part of the religious poem narrates the beauty of the Phoenix and how it flew to Syria, built a nest, and lived for a thousand years before dying and being reborn.

In the second part of the poem, the phoenix becomes an allegory for the life of virtuous people in their present and future worlds, and for the symbol of Christ.

The poem is followed by another poem titled *Physiologus* or *Bestiary*. The poem is a beast allegory where imaginary and real qualities of animals are given moral applications. Beast allegory used to be popular medieval literary form. The poem includes the panther, the whale (named *Fastitocalon*), and the partridge.

IX. THE RUIN

The *Ruin* is a 49 lines long elegiac poem that describes a ruined city, speculated to be the city of Bath. The sad images of desolation and decay are contrasted with the extravagant prosperity of an earlier time. The poem invokes a feeling similar to that of *Beowulf* which also had a strong element of fate.
Love poetry of Anglo Saxon Literature

The *Wife's Lament*, *The Husband's Message*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer* included in the Exeter Book are the only love poems belonging to the Old English literature or Anglo Saxon period.

X. THE WIFE'S LAMENT or THE WIFE'S COMPLAINT

The *Wife's Lament* or the *Wife's Complaint* is an Anglo Saxon poem of 53 lines that laments the loss of a lover or a husband. This Anglo Saxon poetry is a *frauenlied* or a woman's song. It is an elegiac monologue where a wife is mourning the separation from her husband. Since the separation, the woman is forced to live in a forest cave by her husband's kinsmen. The poem effectively expresses a woman's yearning, love, and passion for her husband.

XI. THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

Strikingly similar to the *Wife's Lament*, *The Husband's Message* is another Anglo Saxon love lyric consisting of 53 lines. It is also similar to the riddles in the Exeter Book because just like in the Anglo Saxon riddles, the readers are expected to guess the speaker of the poem.

In the poem, a piece of wood with a carved message for the wife, narrates its life story and imparts her the message. The husband then recalls how he had been driven away from his wife due to a feud, and also reminds his wife about her vows. He asks her join him across the sea.

XII. WULF and EADWACER

Another love lyric, Wulf and Eadwacer is a dramatic monologue of 19 lines most likely narrated by a female. The speaker laments her separation from her lover called Wulf. The poem expresses an intense passion which is rare in poetry belonging to the Anglo Saxon period.

Other poems and 'Gnomic Verses' included in the Exeter Book are:

- Azarias
- The Gifts of Men
- Precepts
- Vainglory
- The Fortunes of Men
- Maxims I
- The Order of the World
- Riddles
- The Judgement Day I
- Resignation
- The Descent into Hell
- Alms Giving
- The Lord's Prayer
- Homiletic Fragment II

Anglo Saxon Riddles

Besides a collection of poetry, the Exeter Book also includes over a 100 riddles and most of them have been translated from the Latin originals. These riddles were a form of literary amusement but also exhibit excellent literary skills and provide us a detailed account of the world of the Anglo Saxon period.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the importance of Anglo-Saxon Riddles.

1.9 The Vercelli Book

I. ANDREAS

The first in the Vercelli Book, the anonymously written Andreas is an Anglo Saxon poem with 1722 lines. It is one of the poems from the school of Cynewulf and narrates the story of St. Andrew when he saves St. Matthew from Mermedonians, a cannibalistic race. The poem closely resembles Beowulf

in its style and tone. It is based on the Latin translation of a Greek work called 'The Acts of Andrew and Matthew in the City of Anthropophagi'.

The first 500 lines of the poem narrate St. Andrew's struggle at the sea in order to rescue St. Matthew. This rescue mission was commanded by God and St. Andrew is accompanied by Jesus and two angels in the disguise of sailors and helmsman. Throughout his journey, St. Andrews endures and loyally relies on God to calm the turbulent seas.

In the second half of the poem, God makes St. Andrew invisible and he releases the imprisoned St. Matthew. After saving St. Matthew, St. Andrew reveals himself to the Mermedonians and is tortured by them for three days. St. Andrew prays to God for forgiveness and is eventually healed by Him, while all the Mermedonians are punished until they repent and convert to Christianity. St. Andrew establishes a Christian church and sails away after appointing a bishop to look after the Church. Just like most poems belonging to the Anglo Saxon period of English literature, St. Andrews too is a religious poetry with heroic elements.

II. THE FATES OF THE APOSTLES

Composed by Cynewulf, The Fates of the Apostles is a short alliterative poem of 122 lines. It narrates significant events in the lives of Twelve Apostles that occurred after the Ascension of Jesus. The poem is also considered as a concluding part of Andreas. If so, it is also composed by Cynewulf.

The poem opens with Cynewulf disclosing that he found this poem that had tales of the twelve Apostles displaying extraordinary courage in their journey of spreading the Gospel. The poem mentions Peter and Paul who gave up their lives in a treacherous battle with Nero; Andrew who was crucified in Achaea by Aegeates; John a law abiding man who had worked in Ephesus; James, brother of John, who was martyred in front of Herod; Philip who was crucified in Hierapolis; Bartholomew who refused to worship other Gods and was decapitated by Astrages in Albanum; Thomas who had preached in India, brought Gad, the King's brother back to life and was later killed; Matthew who preached in Ethiopia and was killed by King Irtacus; James who was clubbed to death in Jerusalem, and Simon and Thaddaeus who died in Persia. The poem mutates the heroic elements into a more personal elegiac strain.

III. ADDRESS OF THE SOUL TO THE BODY

Address of the Soul to the Body is an Anglo Saxon poem that has two parts, Soul and Body I that exists in the Vercelli Book , and Soul and Body II that exists in the Exeter Book. Both the poems ask Christian readers to be mindful of their mortal and bodily actions with respect to their impact to the soul's afterlife. Both the poems ask the readers to not be slaves to the desires of the flesh.

IV. DREAM OF THE ROOD

Dream of the Rood is one of the most complex and profound Christian poems of English literature in the Anglo Saxon period. It is also the oldest existing English poem in the form of a vision or dream. The first section of the poem (lines 1-27) opens with a dreamer's vision of a bejeweled cross on which Jesus was crucified, and is worshipped by angels. Looking at the Cross, the dreamer is overwhelmed by a sense of sin and inferiority of his earthly existence. The dreamer also noticed that even though the Cross is adorned with jewels, it also is stained with blood. In the second section of the poem (lines

28-121), the Cross begins to speak and narrates the death of Jesus. The story of Crucifixion is narrated from the perspective of the bejeweled Cross. In the third section of the poem, the dreamer reflects upon his dream and expresses gratitude to God for giving him the privilege of this dream and filling him with hope for eternal life.

The poem is clearly influenced by Cynewulf and exhibits didactic, devotional, and mystical elements.

V. ELENE

Elene is the longest poem composed by Cynewulf (1321 lines) and is based on the story of the discovery of the true cross by mother of Constantine, St. Helena. Elene is also called Saint Helena Finds the True Cross. The poem was composed in West Saxon dialect around 750 CE.

The Battle of Maldon

The Battle of Maldon is a poem of 325 lines included in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle and was composed around 991 CE. The poem deals with the various clashes between the English and the Danes. The Danes had attacked England and Danish King Cnut (also Canute) had won the throne in 1016 CE. The Battle of Maldon is strikingly similar to older heroic poetry and it narrates a catastrophic defeat of the English. It contains nine speeches that aim to encourage the English army and many of the warriors are mentioned by their names. The poem displays fierce loyalty and desperate courage against grim odds. The poem abruptly ends with the words of Byrhtnoth. The Battle of Maldon can be perceived as the last of the Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry.

1.10 Summary

The Anglo Saxon period in English literature spans from 410 CE to 1066 CE. This was the time of the fall of the Roman Empire and the arrival of the Germanic tribes - the Angles, Jutes and the Saxons. The most important works of Anglo Saxon period are included in four manuscripts – The MS Cotton Vitellius, The Junius, The Exeter, and the Vercelli Book. The most popular works of this period are heroic and religious poems. Among the heroic poems are Beowulf, Widsith, Battle of Maldon, Waldhere, etc. Among the religious poems of the Anglo Saxon period are Judith, The Dream of the Rood, Christ and Satan, Daniel, etc. Most of the Anglo Saxon literature was written around the heroic themes of honour and loyalty.

1.11 Key Terms

THE RUIN: The Ruin is a 49 lines long elegiac poem that describes a ruined city, speculated to be the city of Bath.

THE WIFE'S LAMENT: The Wife's Lament or the Wife's Complaint is an Anglo Saxon poem of 53 lines that laments the loss of a lover or a husband. This Anglo Saxon poetry is a *frauenlied* or a woman's song.

THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE: Strikingly similar to the Wife's Lament, The Husband's Message is another Anglo Saxon love lyric consisting of 53 lines.

WULF and EADWACER: Another love lyric, Wulf and Eadwacer is a dramatic monologue of 19 lines most likely narrated by a female. The speaker laments her separation from her lover called Wulf. The poem expresses an intense passion which is rare in poetry belonging to the Anglo Saxon period.

1.12 Review Questions

1. What is Anglo-Saxon Period in English Literature?
2. What are the characteristics of Anglo Saxon period in English literature?
3. What are the most important works of Anglo Anglo-Saxon period?
4. What is the theme of Anglo-Saxon literature?
5. Discuss the poetry of the Anglo-Saxon Period.

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UNIT 2: MIDDLE AGES AND 14TH CENTURY

STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Role of Religion
- 2.4 Literary Genres
- 2.5 Secular Literature
- 2.6 Women in the literature
- 2.7 Summary
- 2.8 Key Terms
- 2.9 Review Questions
- 2.10 References

2.1 Objectives

The learners shall know the following:

- Shall know about the middle age in English literature.
- About important literary works.
- About the socio-political changes.
- About the necessary articles and style of writing.

2.2 Introduction

Although there is no official consensus regarding the exact beginning and end of the Medieval Period, it is most commonly associated with the collapse of the Roman Empire, around the 5th century, and leading up all the way to the 15th century, which is widely considered (though the exact beginning is disputed) the beginning of the Renaissance Period. This time period is commonly known as The Middle Ages was commonly regarded by Renaissance thinkers as “The Dark Ages.”

On the continent, the development of Medieval literature—stemming from the preservation of culture and heroic adventures within epic poems—is a direct result of Charlemagne’s desire to educate his people in 800, which was only made possible through an emphasis on the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church created schools with an intensive curriculum founded upon the education of grammar, rhetoric, Latin, astronomy, philosophy and math. Christianity was legalized by the Roman Empire during the Fourth Century, and as a result, education as well as laws were overseen by the Church. The Church often wielded more power than the often-weak feudal monarchies that characterized medieval society.

In the Twelfth Century, there arose a strong presence of chivalry in Medieval society which quickly inhabited the literature of the time; the chivalric code was a moral code, or rather, a code of conduct

bound to duty, honor, and justice. Reflected within the texts of the time—the ways in which characters are affected by loyalty, duty, and honor—the chivalric code was both a necessary platform for knighthood and good moral standing. The presence of chivalry in Medieval Culture is exemplified in the representation of a just and moral knight facing temptation and conflict in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. As a result of the presence of chivalry, courtly love gave rise to an increased production and contemplation of romantic prose. While the printing press was invented in the Fifteenth Century, its impact was not fully achieved until the Renaissance.

The Middle Ages can be split up into three periods: the Early Middle Ages, the High Middle Ages, and the Late Middle Ages.

The Early Middle Ages typically signify the beginning of the Medieval Era with the fall of Rome and continue until sometime in the 11th century. Anglo-Saxon tribes invaded England around 450 and they had a vast effect on literature. The language of these invaders is classified as Old English and is widely represented in Anglo-Saxon poetry (UMASS). Old English poetry was passed down orally before it was written. The earliest written example is found in the writing of Bede and his poem *Caedmon's Hymn*. The Anglo-Saxons helped further spread Christianity by adapting to it; however, Anglo-Saxon poetry contains a thematic “heroic code” which blends with and sometimes contradicts Christian ideals. The “heroic code” places value on kinship, and emphasizes duty and vengeance for one's lord (Norton). One of the most popular Old English epic poems is *Beowulf*, which follows suit of its relative Germanic literature with its heroic and Christian themes.

The High Middle Ages are thought to have begun around The Norman Invasion. Linguistically, this era brought about the transition from Old English to Middle English, feudalism, and the Medieval “romance” which came from the French speaking Anglo-Normans. Romances characteristically revolve around similar themes of members of the lower nobility trying to rise in status, the young entering adulthood and their fears, and individuals being cast out of society and returning as part of a stronger unit. The most popular romantic figure of this time is the character of King Arthur who arose in the 13th century. The Arthurian romance contains the chivalric code, involving knights, adventure, and honor (LordsandLadies.org). Other popular romances of this time include *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

The Late Middle Ages mark the end of the Medieval era, which is estimated to have ended around 1485, the year Henry VII ascended to the throne, and the Tudor dynasty began. This era contained the Hundred Years War, which ended in 1453, and the Black Death, which eliminated nearly one-third of Europe's population. In 1485, William Caxton introduced England to the art of printing books, when he published *Sir Thomas Malory's Morte D'Arthur* (Norton).

2.3 Role of Religion

According to the History Learning Site, the Church was absolutely the most important part of medieval society. "The Church dominated everybody's lives." The only religion that existed was Christianity. All medieval people, regardless of their social rank, believed in God, Heaven, and Hell, however it was strongly believed that the only way they could get to Heaven is if the Roman Catholic Church allowed them. Similar to today, Hell was depicted as every person's worst nightmare, and Heaven was eternal paradise.

There are many reasons that the Church was so dominant during medieval times, but a main reason is its extreme wealthiness. The Church made money any way they could, but they made majority of their money through tithes. A tithe is a tax that is one tenth of a person's yearly earnings or goods that had to be given to the Church. Peasants obviously found it very difficult to pay tithes because they have trouble making even enough money for themselves, so they had to pay with seeds or grain. It was not an option to not pay a tithe because it was told that the punishment of not paying a tithe would result in eternal damnation. Other ways the Church became so wealthy was their constant charges for receiving sacraments. If one wanted to be baptized, married, or buried there was a charge, and someone becoming baptized and being buried on Holy Ground was another way to get to Heaven. Marriage was very different in the medieval ages. Married couples were not allowed to live together because it was viewed as a sin. With all of this income from basically every person in society the Church was extremely well-off, and to keep the Church as wealthy as possible they did not have to pay any taxes. It is said that The Church was wealthier than any king in the world during this time period, and they saved most of their money. However, the money that they did spend was on their structures such as churches or cathedrals.

The actual structure of the Church was the center of all community activities. People would perform plays and there were always markets held outside of the Church. The Church was viewed as having the answers to everything and anything that would happen, especially when something bad happened. If there was a bad storm or an outbreak of disease, the church was supposed to know why. The language of the Church, Latin, was the only common language spoken in all of Europe. Anyone who did not know Latin would not be able to communicate. This just proves how important the Church truly was. They determined the language of an entire continent. The Church held entirely all of the power in medieval times, and was very well-respected.

2.4 Literary Genres

Germanic Heroic Poetry: It started out being performed orally in alliterative verse but was later written down by scholars or clergymen. Oftentimes it was used to describe current events, and touched on themes, which invoke the ancient code of honor that obliges a warrior to avenge his slain lord or die beside him. They show the aristocratic heroic and kinship values of Germanic society that continued to inspire both clergy and laity. The effect of language in Germanic Heroic Poetry and Old English Poetry was to formalize and elevate speech.

Anglo

Saxon

Literature:

Elegy: It is typically mournful or sad. It can be in the form of a funeral song or a lament for the dead. For example: "The Wanderer"

Middle English Literature:

Romance, Courtly Romance: This was the most popular genre in the Middle English period; it had a particular story structure that depicted the integration, disintegration, and reintegration of a central hero. Usually the hero underwent a test or challenge that alienated them from society. It is outside the world of every day experience or unnatural/magical. It was the principal narrative genre for late medieval readers and centrally concerned with love but it developed ways of representing psychological interiority with great subtlety. Though they began in France, their transition into English literature came about from simplified and translated versions of the original French works. Often, Romances, whether written for aristocratic audiences or lower class audiences, had to do with a knight attempting to win the love of a woman of much higher class, by showing the depth of his character through acts of morality, nobility, and bravery.

- A sub-genre of the romance was the **Arthurian Legend:** Stories that told about the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.
- For example: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Allegory: An extended metaphor—where something is standing for something else. It is a depiction of a common theme. An allegory tells a story that has characters, setting, and other symbols that serve both a literal and figurative purpose and point out a theme about human life. For Example, Piers Plowman or Everyman

Estates Satire: Represents the 3 estates, the clergy, the nobility, and everyone else. It satirizes society with the purpose of presenting the flaws of something in an exaggerated way with the intent of drawing attention to create a solution for it. It examines society by groups based on class, occupation, function, status and other designations. For Example: The Canterbury Tales

Middle English lyrics: A type of secular poetry. They were generally love poems although some were about social satire or the celebration of earth and humanity; they were very passionate and not about God. The lyrics do not tell a long story (not an epic, odyssey, ballad) but rather about a single thought or image. They have a very contemporary rhyme scheme and subject matter.

Autobiography: Just as autobiographies today tell the story of a person's life through their point of view, early autobiographies did the same thing. They generally depicted the trials and triumphs of a person's life and their internal thoughts about the matter. The first autobiography was The Book of Margery Kempe.

Drama: For the most part, drama rose to popularity in the later medieval period (1000-1500). Early dramas were typically very religious in theme, staging and tradition. Performance of plays outside of the church became popular around the 12th century when they became more widely accessible to the general population. Plays were usually performed by a professional acting company that traveled from town to town on wagons and moving stages. Most theater companies were exclusively male. The Second Shepherds' Play

Morality Play: A type of drama that emerged around 1400 and became increasingly popular throughout the century. They taught lessons about morality and human nature and used allegorical characters to portray the struggle that a person goes through to achieve salvation and the forces of good and evil. A morality tale could have had either a serious or a comic plot.
– The Cock and the Fox, Everyman

Religious Prose: Sought to explain the great truths of god, humanity, and the universe through an analysis of Christian beliefs, focuses on sin, penance, and love.
– For Example: Margery Kempe

2.5 Secular Literature

There are few examples of secular work during the Medieval period as a result of the influence of religion within society. Secular Poetry was one of the main works of literature at this time. It was full of satire and irony concerning everyday life. The decline of popularity of these secular works led into the Renaissance. An important example of this type of poetry is *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. Secular Medieval literature helped create a pathway for future authors in the Renaissance.

The Canterbury Tales is one of the most well known secular works from the Medieval period. Rather than focus on the Church and religion, *The Canterbury Tales* looks instead at other common ideas of the time, such as courtliness and company. This courtliness, or courtly love, could be found in many poems and other pieces of literature during this time period. Courtly love is when a woman is treated with utmost respect, care, and love from a knight. He will do anything to make her happy, and her happiness and love in turn makes the knight stronger and more respected. In *The Canterbury Tales*, courtly love can be found in the Knight's Tale, a story about two knights who fall in love with the same woman and must choose to honor either the code of courtly love or the code of chivalry. The theme of company is also present throughout the entire poem. It is clear in that the pilgrims are traveling together and sharing each other's company by learning about one another and sharing stories. Below is a link to an animated version of *The Knight's Tale*. Other themes common in Medieval secular poetry are spring, love, and politics. Many other satirized the community.

As the Renaissance began to rise throughout Europe, secularism and humanism became increasingly popular. This time brought on "the appreciation of worldly pleasures, and above all the intensified assertion of personal independence and individual expression" (cite). Instead of focusing on the afterlife, people began focus on their current place in life. They looked towards themselves and who they were as individual people instead of solely people of God. This time in history can be seen as the beginning of the turn to reason and the loss of faith. Similar to secular literature of the Medieval period, secular literature of the Renaissance focused on worldly things, such as spring and love. The reason part of this literary period inspired essays on human characteristics and politics, with Francis Bacon being one of the most writers of these types of essays.

2.6 Women in the literature

Throughout the Medieval period, women were viewed as second class citizens, and their needs always

were an afterthought. They were either held to be completely deceitful, sexual, innocent or incompetent. Therefore, women were mostly withheld from positions of power or speaking their voice; males made decisions for them and their lives were dictated by the men that ran the society. Despite their lack of validation and suppression, however, women in Medieval literature were certainly present in many works and in various forms. Some tropes feed into the idea that women are subservient and inferior to men such as the Virgin, which portrays females as passive and weak, or the mother whose very life circles around making a better life for her family and especially for her husband, or even the whore who has no power in her sexuality and must give it away for the well being of her family or the men in society. However, there are some archetypes that break this cycle like the Trickster or Witch who break the social norms and stand out, displaying qualities of cunning intelligence, intimidation, and power. The sections below will dive deeper into the disparity between how women were viewed in Medieval society and how they were portrayed in the literature of the time.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the role of women in Medieval Literature.

2.7 Summary

Upon the many character tropes to be associated with, when discussing Medieval literature, “The Whore” is probably the most negative. In the Middle Ages, Women were widely considered lower than men, thus not worthy of performing the same task or activities that men typically did.

Most of the medieval social structure made it very hard for women to find their place in society. Women did not have the same rights as men, or same privileges as men, so many of them just did whatever society told them they were supposed to do. Overtime, as women were constantly told their place in society, many women started fulfilling their taught role of the Medieval Prostitute, otherwise known as “The Whore” of Medieval society. As time progressed into the 16th and 17th century, Female prostitution became a huge issue for Europe’s nation, where women commonly solicited their bodies for money on the streets of Europe’s countries. The “Medieval Prostitute” became a popular topic for profound writers of the century to explore and incorporate into their works of literature.

2.8 Key Terms

Autobiography: They generally depicted the trials and triumphs of a person’s life and their internal thoughts about the matter.

Drama: For the most part, drama rose to popularity in the later medieval period (1000-1500). Early

dramas were typically very religious in theme, staging and tradition. Performance of plays outside of the church became popular around the 12th century when they became more widely accessible to the general population.

Morality Play: A type of drama that emerged around 1400 and became increasingly popular throughout the century.

2.9 Review Questions

1. Are there medieval texts that contain themes, concerns, characters, and so on that just don't seem to fit in with the major characteristics of the period?
 2. Why are lineage and kinship such central themes in so many medieval works?
 3. From the Abbess Hild in Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People to Queen Guinevere to the Real Housewife of Bath, Medieval Literature gives us a range of female figures to consider. How do these characters represent some of the period's anxieties surrounding women?
 4. How do the diverse literary tastes of Middle Ages readers and writers reflect the ethos of that time?
 5. How do medieval texts distinguish between "good" and "evil"? What sorts of Biblical authorities are cited by medieval authors on these matters?
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UNIT 3: SPIRIT OF RENAISSANCE

STRUCTURE

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Secular Works
- 3.4 Women's Role During the Renaissance
- 3.5 Role of Religion
- 3.6 Social and Political Circumstances of the Renaissance
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Key Terms
- 3.9 Review Questions
- 3.10 References

3.1 Objectives

The learners know the following:

- The emergence of Renaissance
 - The spirit of Renaissance
 - Major works of Renaissance
 - Authors of Renaissance period
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3.2 Introduction

As a whole, the Renaissance encompasses an incredibly large rebirth of knowledge and learning that began in Italy in the fourteenth century. By the Sixteenth Century, Renaissance thinking spread from Italy, reaching north towards England. The advances in knowledge which identify the shift from Medieval Literature to Renaissance Literature were dependent upon a return to classical thought within the literature and philosophies of antiquity. This return to classical ideas and worldview gave rise to Humanism, which asserted the value of man, his dignity, and his lack of limitations. As a result, there was a shift in emphasis from the contemplative life of the Medieval man to the involved life of the Renaissance man: well-rounded, active, and involved with the world around him. Most notably, Humanists provided society with a pervasive and overarching sense of humanity.

Renaissance Literature also mimicked changes in culture; turning away from primarily religious thinking and placing importance on classical thought, Renaissance thinkers conjured new philosophies from the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. Sexual love was seen as the presence of spiritual bonds in literature, arising from new found knowledge of Platonic love. Some Neoplatonists believed there to be a link between attaining knowledge (as knowledge of science was seen as factual representations or understanding of the world) and relationship with God or the Divine.

This shift in governing thought process led to a new world view which negated the cosmic worldview present in Medieval Literature. While Renaissance thinkers would avoid drawing comparisons

between themselves and the thinkers of the Middle Ages—”According to them, the Middle Ages were set in the “middle” of two much more valuable historical periods, antiquity and their own.”—similarities between the two are ever-present, specifically in regards to the remnants of Medieval worldview which extend its belief of The Great Chain of Being deep into Renaissance culture and literature. Citation The exaltation of man’s ability propagated by Humanism, created discomfort and confusion in light of The Great Chain of Being. Since man’s agency was believed to be limitless, his place within The Great Chain of Being was complicated. This struggle of human aspiration within a world still governed by The Great Chain of Being is depicted within Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus.

In the Sixteenth Century, as a result of systemic corruption within the Church (e.g., simony and the selling of indulgences), protestants desired reformation of the Church. The Protestant Reformation, which the movement came to be, left Europe no longer united; the religious criticisms of Martin Luther fragmented the Church before long—after gaining him excommunication from the Church—and gave rise to Henry VIII’s political separation of the Church of England from Rome. Through the rejection of the Church, the Reformation placed importance on the role of the individual, in that authority of religious teaching was reliant upon the text rather than the institution. With that being said, the renewed interest in the Bible a piece of literature led to its unforeseeable influence in modern literature, where Biblical allusions and symbols were experimented with; this influence is visible in the works of John Donne (Holy Sonnets), John Milton (Paradise Lost), and Andrew Marvell (“The Garden”).

The spread of literacy and knowledge throughout this period was greatly influenced by the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press, which slowly made the majority of literature more widely accessible.

3.3 Secular Works

The Renaissance saw the end of feudal rule, and made efforts to establish a central government. This new prominence of politics—the rise and fall of kings—framed the narrative for many of Shakespeare’s plays, as well as Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, a treatise on proper governing practices—all of which tend to hinge upon ruthless rule.

3.4 Women’s Role During the Renaissance

For the most part, women remained still remained somewhat suppressed in this time period. The fact that the new ruler was in fact, Queen Elizabeth, was upsetting to many.

“Many men seem to have regarded the capacity for rational thought as exclusively male; women, they assumed, were led only by their passions. While gentlemen mastered the arts of rhetoric and warfare, gentlewomen were expected to display the virtues of silence and good housekeeping. Among upper-class males, the will to dominate others was acceptable and indeed admired; the same will in women was condemned as a grotesque and dangerous aberration.” (The Norton Anthology: English Literature: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century, Volume B)

Women also lacked the ability to attend schools and universities too. Although because of the importance of reading scripture in the Protestant religion, women’s literacy did somewhat improve,

yet the ability to write was incredibly rare. Therefore, any works produced by women at this time are very scarce.

3.5 Role of Religion

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Catholicism still reigned as the primary religion in England. It still dictated nearly every important decision in a person's life, and because most religious literature, most notably the Bible, was printed in Latin, the clergy members held a great deal of power because of their literacy to interpret these works. However, Martin Luther, a key figure in the massive shift in religious culture known as "The Reformation", began to question the ideas of the Roman Catholic Church. This idea quickly caught on, partly due to the ability to widely distribute material through the printing press, and spread like wildfire throughout Europe. Although the violent shift between Catholicism and Protestantism continued for several years, Queen Elizabeth eventually led in a new era for England with her acceptance of the Protestant religion. The effect on literature at this time period was profound, because when Catholicism was dominant, Protestant works remained underground, and vice versa for periods of Protestantism as well.

Some of the most notable authors and poets of the time include Edmund Spenser, the Earl of Surrey, Sir Philip Sydney, Ben Jonson, Aemilia Lanyer, Robert Greene, and, of course, William Shakespeare.

3.6 Social and Political Circumstances of the Renaissance

We have already noted how the permeation of the currents of the renaissance into English culture was both mediated and tempered by the forces of thereformation that had already found root in England. Both forces - of the renaissance and of the reformation - served to substantially reorganize English society. In the 15th century, England had had primarily an agrarian and feudal socio-economic structure, with much of the population living in the rural countryside, many as tenants to country squires and noble lords. However, repeated epidemics of the plague had substantially affected the population, which as a consequence hardly grew in this period. The shortage of labor proved a blessing to many peasants, who managed to sell their labor at a premium, and eventually to rise above their class and form a new class of landed folk called 'yeomen' or small farmers. Many large landholders converted their land into sheep pasture because of the lack of labor, leading to land enclosures and the abandonment of many villages. This in turn led to the dramatic development of the wool industry. The popularity of the pastoral as a genre and of the figure of the shepherd in renaissance English poetry then, is not entirely because of either classical influences or of Biblical ones, but derived from the English social landscape itself. But the period also saw the growth of London as a commercial and political city, with the new classes and the re-distributed populations seeking employment, commercial gains and political power gradually settling in the city. A part of the new social constituents were guilds of artisans and craftspeople whose services were becoming increasingly important in catering to the needs of the growing populace. The emergence of these mixed social sectors was an early part of the larger process of the dismantling of the feudal economy that was to culminate with the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century. As yet though, they were still constrained by the social and economic parameters of that economy. The migrants to London in this century were thus mainly seeking social and economic uplift as well as acceptability in a feudal socio-economic system that barely recognized them. They became a ready constituency for proselytizing

protestant groups who not only converted their beliefs, but through promoting literacy, gave them access to educational possibilities that had remained outside their reach till now. But in doing so, it also spread the sense of tension that we noted above, between the humanist education they had access to and the conservative reformist morality of the new religious movements.

3.7 Summary

We have examined some of the main characteristics of the Renaissance as it flowered in England, and of the impact of the Reformation on it. We identified some of the consequences of this in terms of distinguishing the

English renaissance from its continental counterparts. This was seen to be as much a matter of the social bases of the English renaissance as of the political upheavals of the age. We noted how the combination of a humanist education and a protestant Christian vocation could turn advantageous to people like Spenser, who sought to use these as means of social and political advancement. We identified some of the processes by which this historical change came about in England, and how some of those processes in turn affected the shape and quality of the renaissance in England.

3.8 Key Terms

Middle English lyrics: A type of secular poetry. They were generally love poems although some were about social satire or the celebration of earth and humanity; they were very passionate and not about God.

Estates Satire: Represents the 3 estates, the clergy, the nobility, and everyone else.

Allegory: An extended metaphor—where something is standing for something else.

Romance, Courtly Romance: This was the most popular genre in the Middle English period; it had a particular story structure that depicted the integration, disintegration, and reintegration of a central hero.

3.9 Review Questions

1. What does the term Renaissance mean? Identify some of the key factors responsible for the spread of the renaissance in Europe.
2. What was the Reformation? What relations you identify and trace between the Renaissance and the Reformation?
3. Identify some of the socio-cultural factors that shaped the English Renaissance.
4. What was the role of the court in the shaping of English Renaissance Literature?
5. Nationalism and the nationalist spirit played an important role in the shaping of the Renaissance imagination. Do you agree?

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UNIT 4: ENGLAND AND REFORMATION

STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Henry VIII & the Break
- 4.4 Solving the ‘Great Matter’
- 4.5 Thomas Cromwell Begins the Reformation
- 4.6 Edward VI & Further Reforms
- 4.7 Mary I & the Reformation’s Reversal
- 4.8 Elizabeth I & Further Reforms
- 4.9 The Elizabethan Settlement
- 4.10 A Fragmented Church
- 4.11 Summary
- 4.12 Key Terms
- 4.13 Review Questions
- 4.14 References

4.1 Objectives

This unit is intended to equip the student with a basic knowledge of the Renaissance and its broader ramifications. To this end, the unit will:

- Help the student distinguish between the different strands of the Renaissance.
- Acquaint the student with the main features and figures of this phenomenon.
- Acquaint the student with some of the significant social and cultural movements that shaped the Renaissance in England.
- To this end, it will identify the role of the Reformation movement in the Church and of English nationalism, in the shaping of the English Renaissance.
- Indicate the role of changes in the English court in the production and shaping of Renaissance English literature.

4.2 Introduction

The **English Reformation** began with **Henry VIII of England** (r. 1509-1547 CE) and continued in stages over the rest of the 16th century CE. The process witnessed the break away from the Catholic Church headed by the Pope in **Rome**. The Protestant Church of **England** was thus established and the English monarch became its supreme head. Other consequences included the **dissolution of the monasteries**, the abolition of the Mass, the use of the English language in services and in the **Bible** used, the replacement of altars with communion tables, and a general doing away of the more decorative and showy elements of Catholicism both within services and the churches themselves. The majority of people went along with the change, the rich because of the wealth they gained from the stripped-down Church, and the commoners because they deferred to the authorities and imposition of fines for not toeing the line and attending the new Anglican Church, as it became known. There

were, too, objections from both Catholics and more radical Protestants such as the several **Puritan** groups who would go their own way and establish their own churches which adhered more closely to the thoughts expounded by such reformers as **John Calvin** (1509-1564 CE).

4.3 Henry VIII & the Break

The origins of the English Reformation were political and they went back to the reign of **Henry VII of England** (r. 1485-1509 CE). Henry arranged for his eldest son Arthur (b. 1486 CE) to marry the Spanish princess **Catherine of Aragon** (1485-1536 CE), daughter of King Ferdinand II of Aragon (r. 1479-1516 CE), a union which took place in 1501 CE. It was a useful diplomatic tie and Catherine brought with her a large dowry. Unfortunately, Arthur died the next year aged just 15 but Henry VII was keen to maintain friendly relations with Spain and so his second son, Prince Henry (b. 1491 CE), after special permission was gained from the Pope, was betrothed to Catherine. When Henry VII died of in April 1509 CE, Prince Henry became king. As arranged, he married Catherine on 11 June and was crowned Henry VIII in Westminster Abbey on 24 June 1509 CE.

The marriage was initially a happy one and produced six children but all except one died in infancy. The sole survivor was Mary, born on 18 February 1516 CE. Now over 40, it seemed Catherine's chances of bearing a healthy son were slim. Henry began to look for a second, younger and more exciting wife. Henry did have an illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond (b. 1519 CE), with a mistress, one Elizabeth Blount, but that was not much use to a king who craved a recognised heir. The king's affections turned to **Anne Boleyn** (c. 1501-1536 CE), a lady-in-waiting at court. Anne insisted, though, on marrying the king before any thoughts could be entertained of raising a family. Henry's problem, then, was how to relieve himself of Catherine, an issue known as the king's 'great matter'. Thus, the Reformation began.

Check Your Progress

1. Who took over the land and wealth of the Roman Catholic Church in England?

4.4 Solving the 'Great Matter'

Divorce was not permitted by the Catholic Church and so Henry VIII had to think up a reason why his marriage should be annulled on the grounds that it was invalid in the first place. Accordingly, a letter was sent to the Pope suggesting that the lack of a male heir was **God's** punishment for Henry marrying the wife of his late brother, a point supported by the Old Testament. Consequently, the king wished for the Pope to annul the marriage. Unfortunately for Henry, Pope Clement VII (r. 1523-1534 CE) was keen to keep good favour with the most powerful ruler in **Europe** at the time, Emperor of the **Holy Roman Empire**, Charles V of Spain (r. 1519-1556 CE), who was, significantly, the nephew of Catherine. In short, the Pope did not need either political or financial support from England and could not be pressured. Further, it was unlikely that Catherine and Arthur, being so young at the time, had ever slept together and so the 'Prohibition of Leviticus' did not in this case apply.

The Pope did at least send Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio to England to investigate the matter and preside over a special court in June 1529 CE, but no decision was reached. Realising he would have to proceed independently, Henry first permanently separated Catherine from her daughter Mary, shifting the queen around the country to various dilapidated residences. Meanwhile, Henry and Anne Boleyn lived together (but did not sleep together). Sometime in December 1532 CE, Anne, perhaps seeing a baby as the best way to rid herself of her rival Catherine, did sleep with the king and became pregnant.

The king now desperately needed his first marriage annulled and he charged his first minister with the task, **Thomas Wolsey**, Cardinal Archbishop of York (l. c. 1473-1530 CE). Wolsey could not please his king and so he was replaced first by **Sir Thomas More** (1478-1535 CE) who famously stood against the king's plans, and then **Thomas Cromwell** (l. c. 1485-1540 CE). Wolsey and Henry had devised the radical plan of separating the Church in England from Catholic Rome and establishing the king as the head of the Church of England. Then, Henry could grant his own marriage annulment. The king, a student of theology, was not at this stage interested in reforming the Church, only controlling it. Henry remained committed to traditional Catholic practices such as mass, confession and clerical celibacy, as evidenced in the 1539 CE Act of Six Articles. The break, though, was turning into an ever-wider divide. The 1532 CE Act in Restraint of Annates limited funds the Church paid to the Papacy. Then the 1533 CE Act in Restraint of Appeals declared that the English monarch was now the highest authority on all legal matters (lay and ecclesiastical) and not the Pope.

Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1533-55 CE) formally annulled Henry's first marriage in May 1533 CE. This annulment and Parliament's passing of the Act of Succession (30 April 1534 CE) meant that Catherine's daughter Mary was declared illegitimate. Henry was excommunicated by the Pope for his actions but by now the whole affair had taken on a significance far beyond royal marriages. The Act of Supremacy was passed on 28 November 1534 CE which meant that Henry, and all subsequent English monarchs, only had one higher authority: God himself. The Treason Act of 1534 CE, pushed through Parliament by then first-minister, Thomas Cromwell, even forbade people to speak out and criticise their king or his policies.

4.5 Thomas Cromwell Begins the Reformation

Cromwell acquired, along with many other titles and positions, the role of vicar-general, that is the king's viceroy in Church affairs. Awarded the position in January 1535 CE, in order to carry out his reform of the church, Cromwell made full use of his powers and took the opportunity to interfere on a daily basis in Church affairs (e.g. recruiting radical priests, printing radical books of devotion and creating a network of informants). Cromwell next issued The Injunctions in August 1536 CE which was a set of recommendations on what exactly the clergy should be teaching their congregations such as explaining better the **Ten Commandments** and the Seven Deadly Sins. The English Reformation progressed apace with Cromwell's Ten Articles of 1536 CE which, inspired by the writings of **Martin Luther** (1483-1546 CE), rejected the Seven Sacraments of Catholicism and left but three (baptism, penance, and the Eucharist). There was, too, the statement of the new doctrine made in The Bishop's Book, published in July 1537 CE.

The Reformation now really got into full swing with the bill of 1536 CE which saw the closure and abolishment of Catholic monasteries, known as the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The official excuse was that monasteries were no longer relevant, they were full of corrupt and immoral monks and nuns,

and they did not help the poor as much as their wealth indicated they should. Beginning with the smaller monasteries, Cromwell ensured the whole operation went smoothly by paying off senior monks, priors, and abbots with generous pensions. The estates of these smaller monasteries were redistributed to the Crown and Henry's supporters, probably the prime motive for the bill. The process proved unstoppable even if there were some protests, notably the **Pilgrimage of Grace** uprising in 1536 CE. The uprising involved some 40,000 protestors who notably took control of York but who also expressed common concerns regarding government and the **economy**, not only religious changes. The rebellion was peacefully disbanded but 200 ringleaders were later ruthlessly brought to justice. Cromwell produced an even stronger-worded version of The Injunctions, issued in 1538 CE. It was recommended that relics of saints were removed from churches, pilgrimages should be avoided and, in a move which has proved invaluable for local historians ever since, records be kept in every parish of all births, marriages, and deaths.

A good many of Henry's subjects were either indifferent to these changes or keen to see reform in the Church and so continue the **Protestant Reformation** movement that was sweeping across Europe. Many regarded the Church as too rich and too full of priests abusing their position. Others simply deferred to the views of their social superiors and cared little for what was actually said and done in church as long as some sort of service were available. There was too, division amongst the church hierarchy over reforms. Thomas Cranmer led the more radical faction while the Catholic conservatives were led by Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester.

Another move towards independence was the king's approval for a translation of the Bible in English in 1539 CE. Then the 1539 CE Act of Parliament resulted in the closure of all remaining monasteries regardless of size or income. Those who resisted were executed. The abbots of Glastonbury, Colchester, Reading, and Woburn all resisted and all were hanged. The last monastery to close was Waltham Abbey in Essex in March 1540 CE. Henry had increased the state coffers by a whopping 1.3 million pounds (over 500 million today) as a result of the Dissolution. This was the real beginning of the English Reformation for the general population as the approximately 800 monasteries had been an integral part of community life for centuries, helping the poor, dispensing **medicine**, offering employment and giving spiritual guidance amongst many other services. However, even more momentous changes were afoot.

4.6 Edward VI & Further Reforms

Henry was succeeded by his son with his third wife Jane Seymour (c. 1509-1537 CE), **Edward VI of England** (r. 1547-1553 CE). Edward, Thomas Cranmer and the two regents Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset (l. c. 1500-1552 CE) and John Dudley, the Earl of Northumberland (l. 1504-1553 CE) continued the Reformation with gusto, introducing even more radical changes than seen previously. In 1547 CE Cranmer issued his Book of Homilies, a collection of set sermons to be used in church services. Cranmer then introduced his new Book of Common Prayer, issued in English in 1549 CE and made compulsory under the Act of Uniformity of the same year. The prayer book was updated with an even more radical departure from Catholicism in 1552 CE when the Catholic idea of transubstantiation was rejected (that the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine become the body and blood of **Jesus Christ**).

By now the term 'Protestantism' came into widespread use for the first time. Iconography, murals, and pictorial stained glass windows were all removed from churches, and services were now conducted in English, not Latin. Catholic altars were replaced by communion tables. The worship of saints was

discouraged. Priests were now permitted to marry. Religious guilds were suppressed, endowments (chantries) were abolished for priests to sing mass for the souls of the dead, and church lands were confiscated. The riches gained often went straight into the pockets of the nobility. There were protests, just like there had been over the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Again, the mix of a poor economic situation for many and resentment at changes in traditional parish life led to a rebellion, this time in Cornwall and then Norfolk in 1549 CE. The latter, known as the Kett Rebellion after its leader Robert Kett, was the more serious but was quashed without pity by a massacre of rebels at Dussindale in August. The Reformation was pursued relentlessly with more 'Popish' practices being banned such as eliminating the more garish elements of clergy's vestments and the abolition of prayers for the dead.

4.7 Mary I & the Reformation's Reversal

In 1553 CE Edward VI died tuberculosis aged just 15 and he was succeeded by his half-sister **Mary I of England** (r. 1553-1558 CE). A brief attempt to put Edward's Protestant cousin **Lady Jane Grey** (1537-1554 CE) on the throne was a disaster for everyone involved. Mary was a strict Catholic and she set about reversing the Reformation. The First Act of Repeal in October 1553 CE reversed all the religious-aimed legislation of Edward VI. Then the Second Act of Repeal of January 1555 CE abolished all post-1529 CE legislation concerning religious matters. This legislation had included the Act of Supremacy and so finally the Pope was back officially as head of the Church in England.

The queen's name 'Bloody Mary' derives from the 287 Protestant martyrs who were burned at the stake during her reign, including Thomas Cranmer in March 1556 CE. Again, ordinary folks were none too bothered about these ecclesiastical changes but her nobles certainly were as they had gained enormous wealth from such policies as the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Another problem was Mary's proposed and then actual marriage to the Catholic Prince Philip of Spain (l. 1527-1598 CE). Many feared England would become absorbed into the immensely rich and powerful Spanish **Empire** and this feeling found expression in the **Wyatt Rebellion** in Kent in January 1554 CE. The Reformation and feelings of English nationalism were becoming intertwined. The protestors wanted to stop the 'Spanish Marriage' but perhaps secretly they intended to replace Mary with her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth. As it turned out, Mary was struck down with cancer and the Reformation was only halted. Mary's successor would ensure it was rebooted, and this time taken to its full conclusion.

4.8 Elizabeth I & Further Reforms

In 1558 CE Mary was succeeded by her half-sister **Elizabeth I of England** (r. 1558-1603 CE). Protestant Elizabeth set about returning the Church of England to its reformed state as it had been under Edward VI. Hard-line Protestants and Catholics, though, were both dissatisfied with Elizabeth's pragmatic stance as she went for a more middle-of-the-road approach which appealed to the largely indifferent majority of her subjects. Extremists were largely permitted to pursue their beliefs without interference, even if the Pope excommunicated the queen for heresy in February 1570 CE. Elizabeth was also active abroad. She attempted to impose Protestantism in Catholic **Ireland**, but this only resulted in frequent rebellions (1569-73, 1579-83, and 1595-8 CE) which were often materially supported by Spain. The queen also sent money and arms to the Huguenots in France and financial aid to Protestants in the Netherlands.

Two external threats to Elizabeth and Protestantism were Mary, Queen Scots (r. 1542-1567 CE) and **Philip II** of Spain. Catholic Mary had fled **Scotland** and had a claim to the English throne as she was the granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII. Philip II was the most powerful Catholic ruler in Europe and seemed intent on expanding the Spanish Empire. Both of these monarchs became the figureheads for Catholics in England eager to topple Elizabeth and Protestantism. For many Catholics, Elizabeth was illegitimate as they did not recognise her father's divorce from his first wife Catherine of Aragon. For this reason, Mary was kept under house arrest and, when found definitely guilty of plotting against Elizabeth, was executed on 8 February 1587 CE. Philip was then dealt a serious blow to his imperial ambitions by the defeat of the **Spanish Armada** that attempted to invade England in 1588 CE.

4.9 The Elizabethan Settlement

The next jump forward for the Reformation was the Elizabethan Settlement, a collection of laws and decisions introduced between 1558-63 CE. The Act of Supremacy (April 1559 CE) put the English monarch back as the head of the Church. The queen had compromised a little on the wording, calling herself the 'Supreme Governor' of the Church instead of the 'Supreme Head', thus making her more acceptable to Protestants who disliked the idea of a woman in that position. Unlike in other Protestant states, the old Catholic structure of the Church below the sovereign was maintained with the bishops organised in a hierarchy and appointed by the monarch.

The May 1559 CE Act of Uniformity set out the appearance of churches and services. Church attendance was made compulsory and failure to do so resulted in a small fine (which was then given to the poor). Anyone refusing to attend Anglican services was known as a recusant. Secondly, attendance of a Catholic mass was forbidden and those found guilty of this offence received a large fine. A priest found guilty of performing a mass could face the **death** penalty.

The Royal Injunctions was a set of 57 regulations on Church matters, for example, preachers now required a license, every Church had to have an English language Bible, and pilgrimages were banned. Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer was reinstated (a compromise blend of the '49 and '52 versions). Crucially, the Prayer Book dealt with the bread and wine of the communion service. Instead of treating these objects as being transformed into the body and blood of **Jesus** Christ when blessed by a Catholic priest, the Protestant preacher merely encouraged the believer to take them as a reminder of Christ's sacrifice. Finally, the 1563 CE Thirty-Nine Articles (enacted in **law** in 1571 CE) attempted to definitively define English Protestantism, now otherwise known as Anglicanism.

4.10 A Fragmented Church

There was opposition to the moderate features of the Settlement from both radical Catholics and radical Protestants, especially the more literal adherents of Calvinism as expounded by the French reformer John Calvin. This latter group of radicals were known as the **Puritans** and, believing in the importance of faith over living a 'good' life in order to reach spiritual salvation, they were prevalent from the mid-1560s CE. Some Puritans - notably the Presbyterians and Separatists - wanted to abolish the Church hierarchy and focus on a more literal interpretation of the Bible; they would eventually

create their own separatist churches which they considered independent of any royal authority or the Anglican Church.

While many people were either pro-Catholic or pro-Protestant, and some held varying degrees of radical views at either end of the spectrum, it is likely that many more people were content enough in the moderate middle ground which Anglicanism represented. Many worshippers, for example, were attracted to elements from both sides such as admiring the beautiful ornamentation of a **gold** crucifix yet favouring the use of English in services. There was then a degree of toleration and, as the queen herself stated, private thoughts remained private, for she would "open windows into no man's soul" (Woodward, 171). There was a turnover of officials as Elizabeth removed remaining pro-Catholic bishops and, under the 1559 CE Act of Exchange, confiscated their estates (or threatened to if they did not toe the line).

4.11 Summary

Some 400 priests did resign as a consequence of the Elizabethan Settlement. It is also true that many preachers simply carried on as before, either in secret or hoping not to be noticed by the authorities - who in some cases were sympathetic at a local level. Now, though, the Reformation was irreversible. Despite the stronger reactions, and considering the changes made and the violence witnessed in some other European countries that experienced their own Reformations, England had overcome a difficult and potentially dangerous hurdle and successfully established its own unique and lasting brand of Protestantism.

4.12 Key Terms

- **Humanism**

A key trait of the Renaissance that encouraged questioning of established norms and a more humanist and realistic perspective. Humanism also led to a renewed interest in classical texts, which influenced Protestant reformers to re-examine the Bible.

- **The Medici family**

A powerful and influential group that created the High Renaissance through their political strategy and patronage of artists like Michelangelo. They also innovated new banking systems and helped make Florence a cultural center.

- **Niccolò Machiavelli**

A key figure in the Renaissance who was a skilled diplomat, bureaucrat, and military leader in Florence. He wrote *The Prince*, a political treatise, in an attempt to return to Florence from exile.

4.13 Review Questions

1. What caused the English Reformation?

2. How was the English Reformation unique?
 3. What was the outcome of the English Reformation?
 4. Who made himself the head of the national church in England?
 5. What are the big differences between Protestants and Catholics?
-

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UNIT 5: METAPHYSICAL POETRY AND THE JACOBEAN PERIOD (EARLY 17TH CENTURY)

STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Objectives
 - 5.2 Introduction
 - 5.3 Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry
 - 5.4 Major Metaphysical Poets
 - 5.5 The Cultural Context of the Jacobean Period
 - 5.6 Influence and Legacy
 - 5.7 Summary
 - 5.8 Key Terms
 - 5.9 Review Questions
 - 5.10 References
-

5.1 Objectives

This unit is intended to equip the student with a basic knowledge of the Renaissance and its broader ramifications. To this end, the unit will:

- To explore the characteristics of metaphysical poetry and its key poets.
 - To examine the cultural and historical context of the Jacobean period.
 - To analyze the themes, styles, and techniques used in metaphysical poetry.
 - To understand the influence of metaphysical poets on later literary movements.
 - To investigate the relationship between metaphysical poetry and religious, philosophical, and social ideas of the time.
-

5.2 Introduction

The early 17th century in England, during the reign of James I (the Jacobean period), witnessed significant cultural and intellectual developments that were reflected in its literature. One of the most distinctive literary movements of this time was metaphysical poetry, a style marked by its intellectual depth, elaborate metaphors, and complex philosophical themes. Metaphysical poets sought to explore the vastness of human experience, often focusing on subjects like love, faith, death, and the afterlife. They used innovative language and imagery, departing from the more ornamental and formalized verse of the Elizabethan period.

John Donne, often hailed as the leader of the metaphysical poets, along with contemporaries like George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, and Richard Crashaw, infused their work with intense personal emotion, paradoxical ideas, and startling conceits. These poets blended reason with passion, questioning traditional beliefs and employing scientific and philosophical references, reflecting the broader intellectual spirit of the age. The Jacobean period, thus, became a fertile ground for experimentation and transformation in poetry, where metaphysical poets left a profound and lasting influence.

5.3 Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry is distinguished by its intellectual rigor and use of extended metaphors, or “conceits,” which often juxtapose dissimilar ideas. A famous example is John Donne’s comparison of lovers to the two legs of a compass in his poem “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning.” These conceits are not mere decorative devices; they serve to draw out complex connections between spiritual and material worlds. Metaphysical poetry also features paradoxes, puns, and a conversational tone that brings the abstract closer to the reader’s reality.

The poets of this era often employed wit to engage readers, challenging them to explore deep questions. Unlike the more flowing, melodic verse of earlier times, metaphysical poetry is marked by its abrupt rhythms and dramatic shifts in tone. This structure mirrors the inner conflicts and intellectual struggles at the heart of much of the poetry. The themes often include love, both sacred and profane, religion, and the transient nature of life.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the major characteristics of metaphysical poetry.

5.4 Major Metaphysical Poets

John Donne: Donne is the central figure of metaphysical poetry. His works reflect both his secular and religious life. Early in his career, his poetry revolved around sensual love, as seen in poems like "The Flea." Later, after a religious conversion, his writing took on a more devotional tone, culminating in works like "Holy Sonnets" and "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions." Donne’s poetry is characterized by its daring imagery, intellectual playfulness, and exploration of mortality and faith.

George Herbert: Herbert’s work is deeply spiritual, marked by a sincere Christian devotion. In his collection *The Temple*, Herbert wrote about his personal relationship with God, using metaphysical conceits to express the complexities of faith. Poems like "The Collar" and "Easter Wings" reveal his struggle to reconcile human frailty with divine grace.

Andrew Marvell: Marvell is known for blending metaphysical wit with political commentary. His poem "To His Coy Mistress" exemplifies the *carpe diem* theme, urging readers to seize the moment before life’s inevitable end. Marvell’s versatility in blending metaphysical themes with political and social concerns set him apart from his contemporaries.

5.5 The Cultural Context of the Jacobean Period

The Jacobean period (1603–1625) was an era of political and religious tension, intellectual curiosity, and scientific discovery. James I, who succeeded Elizabeth I, encouraged scholarship and theological debate. However, the period was also marked by instability, including conflicts between the monarchy and Parliament and the continuing religious division between Catholics and Protestants.

This tumultuous backdrop is evident in the literature of the time, particularly in the works of the metaphysical poets, who grappled with profound questions about the human condition. Advances in science, such as the works of Galileo and Kepler, were influencing thought, and this intellectual spirit found its way into metaphysical poetry. The poets often used scientific language and concepts to explore metaphysical questions about the soul, love, and the afterlife, blending reason and imagination in their work.

5.6 Influence and Legacy

The metaphysical poets were initially not widely appreciated, with their work often considered obscure and overly intellectual. However, in the 20th century, critics such as T.S. Eliot re-evaluated their contributions, recognizing their innovative use of language and metaphor. Eliot's essay "The Metaphysical Poets" praised their ability to combine intellect with emotion, something he found lacking in later Romantic poets.

The metaphysical poets had a lasting influence on modern poetry, particularly in their use of free verse and unconventional imagery. Poets such as Eliot and W.H. Auden drew inspiration from their approach to form and subject matter, blending philosophical inquiry with personal reflection.

5.7 Summary

The metaphysical poets of the Jacobean period created a unique and enduring body of work that reflects the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional currents of early 17th-century England. Through their use of extended metaphors, paradoxes, and intellectual rigor, poets like John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell explored the nature of love, faith, death, and the human experience. The political and religious upheavals of the Jacobean period provided a fertile ground for these explorations, and the legacy of metaphysical poetry continues to resonate in modern literature.

5.8 Key Terms

- **Metaphysical Conceit:** An extended metaphor that makes a surprising or unexpected comparison between two seemingly unrelated things.
- **Jacobean Period:** The period of James I's reign, marked by political and religious tension, and significant cultural developments.
- **Paradox:** A statement or concept that seems contradictory but reveals a deeper truth.
- **Carpe Diem:** A theme urging the reader to "seize the day," often associated with metaphysical poetry.
- **Wit:** The intellectual playfulness and cleverness found in metaphysical poetry.

5.9 Review Questions

1. What are the main characteristics of metaphysical poetry?

2. How did John Donne's poetry evolve over his career?
3. In what ways did the cultural and political climate of the Jacobean period influence metaphysical poetry?
4. Discuss the use of metaphysical conceits in one of George Herbert's poems.
5. How did T.S. Eliot's critique change the perception of metaphysical poets in the 20th century?

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BLOCK-2: GEOFFREY CHAUCER

UNIT 6: 14th Century and England

UNIT 7: Chaucer and The Beginning

UNIT 8: Chaucer's: Pardoner's Tale

UNIT 9: Chaucer and The End of Age

UNIT 10: Women in Chaucer's Works: A Feminist Perspective

UNIT 6: 14th CENTURY AND ENGLAND

STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Introduction
- 6.3 The Society
- 6.4 The Economy
- 6.5 The Law of England
- 6.6 The Black Death
- 6.7 Political History
- 6.8 Summary
- 6.9 Key Terms
- 6.10 Review Questions
- 6.11 References

6.1 Objectives

The learners shall know the following:

- The beginning of the 100 years' war with France.
- The peasant's revolt and the decline of the feudal system.
- The Black Death
- The rise in national consciousness.
- The founding of the Lollard Movement

6.2 Introduction

The 14th Century saw the rise of the peasant classes in England and the implementation once again of the English language (which had been in major disuse since the Norman Conquest). In this century English becomes the official language of the courts, parliaments and schools. And interestingly, these social changes were introduced because of the Black Death or Black Plague which devastated England financially and socially around 1350. England lost half of its population and the Black Death respected no social classes. It ravaged the land and claimed people of all social classes.

The population was so decimated that the nobility found it difficult to find laborers. Deaths among the peasants left a lot of land available and no labourers to tend it. The nobility still had so much surplus land that it gave rise to a "middle class" or the "gentry" These were non-aristocrats who would lease or buy the land from the nobility to use it for a profit. All the labourers that were left were able to charge higher wages for a day's work. As the labourers and the middle class began to grow, literacy began to spread. They had to know the language to administer their business. In 1362, English became the official language of the courts for the first time since the Norman Conquest. As English became widespread, it began to be used in creative writing as well. Chaucer was one of the first writers to use English vernacular in his works.

During the 1340's and the 1380's the purchasing power of labourers increased by about 40 percent. Some of this was due to many of them training in specialized crafts which put them in higher demand. However, in 1362, King Edward introduced a poll tax to pay for his Hundred Years War and also enacted sumptuary laws to prevent the peasant class from consuming expensive items that were formerly only available to the upper classes. These laws were not effective. All of these taxes and laws, especially on the peasant class led eventually to the Peasants Revolt of 1381. While it was not entirely successful, it planted the thought in the lower classes that they were indeed, a powerful force when united and that they needed to continue to demand equity and fair laws.

The other characteristic of this time, was that the people began to question the authority of the Roman Church. They became more aware of the widespread corruption that was occurring within the ranks of the clergy. John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor and a Roman Catholic, began to contend that the Bible was the "supreme authority" and not the clergy. He stated that there was no such thing as "transubstantiation" which was considered a heresy at the time. Wycliffe translated the Bible into Middle English and it was the first such translation to be available for all people to read. His questioning of the church and its teachings led to the formation of the "Lollard Movement" which came to eventually mean "heretic". But the word itself had vague origins and possibly meant "a mumblor" or someone who was perhaps dull or simple. Some of the "Lollard Knights" as followers of Wycliffe's philosophy came to be known, were reported to be friends of Chaucer. One example of social protest against the church was the work of Piers Plowman, the allegorical work of William Langland.

Yet, this century of scepticism with the Church led to some of the most astonishing spiritual writing. It was as if Christians were yearning for a personal relationship with God without the trappings of the Church itself. Julian(a) of Norwich's writings were filled with accounts of her mystical visions and they were written with elegance and power. Richard Rolle (1300-1349) was a student at Oxford and Paris and his Latin spiritual works were widely read as well during this time. The Cloud of Unknowing (14th century) was a deeply profound work in which God is met not as a personality, or as a human but as an emergent Source with no earthly definition. Its author is unknown. In some way, the visions and works of the spiritual writers of the 14th century were perhaps a harbinger of the Reformation which was to follow in the next century.

6.3 The Society

For decades historians have disagreed about the impact of the Black Death of 1348-9. Some have dismissed it as an inconsequential blip in England's long term historical development, others have regarded it as a turning point in the pathway to modernity. For years the debate was fuelled by uncertainty over the most basic matters of fact: what was the death rate, was it plague or some other disease, and was it primarily responsible for the protracted demographic decline and dramatic social changes of the later Middle Ages.

6.4 The Economy

Since the early 2000s a remarkable surge in inter- and multi-disciplinary research has resolved some areas of this debate and sharpened others. The mortality rate in 1348-9 is now widely accepted at around 50%, and <10% in the second epidemic of 1361-2. In 2010 DNA technology identified the Black Death as plague, although medieval plague behaved very differently to modern plague, and also

confirmed that not only has the offending pathogen been around for 1,500 years, but also continues to pose a major threat across the globe. Finally, the start of the two major pandemics (in the 530s AD and 1340s) coincided with sharp deterioration in the global climate.

The epidemics of 1348-9 and 1361-2 stand unchallenged as the greatest health crises in the second millennium. The recent surge of research has been stimulated in part by the growth of ‘catastrophe’ studies. Disasters like plague epidemics create stresses that reveal much to about a society’s institutions, habits of mind and behaviour. Similarly, econometricians are now exploring the likelihood that divergent societal responses to the challenge of the Black Death explain the rise of the North Sea economies during the early modern period and their ‘divergence’ from the rest of Europe. Either way, it is now scarcely credible that no significant changes ensued, and a fascination with the Black Death has once again gripped the popular and scholarly imagination.

6.5 The law of England

The Ford Lectures in the Hilary term attempted to reassess the main social, economic, legal and cultural responses to the great mortality during the second half of the fourteenth century and to explore how they were shaped by the prevailing institutional structure—the rules, laws and belief systems—regulating social and economic behaviour in England. This approach provides a more helpful framework for explaining how the same demographic shock resulted in different socio-economic outcomes across Europe than traditional approaches based upon classical economics and class conflict.

6.6 The Black Death

On the eve of the Black Death England was a laggard in European terms, when its economic development was choked by deficient demand and extreme rural poverty. Yet it already possessed some distinctive institutional features. A secure market in land existed, together with a sizeable market in hired labour and rudimentary credit facilities: while none of these were dominant influences, and while they were still subject to some non-market and seigniorial interference, they had developed to a greater degree than traditionally assumed, diluting the nature of serfdom and the arbitrary powers of lords in the process. In particular, the growth of the common law had spawned a loosely-connected framework of private courts throughout England deploying broadly standardised procedures. This provided accessible and cheap remedies for dispute resolution and contract enforcement, and also promoted a pervasive legal culture throughout society based upon respect for the authority of written documents, a commitment to due process, and consistency in the treatment of similar wrongs.

This institutional framework helps to explain the responses to the Black Death in England. In the early 1350s escalating prices and the sudden shortage of labour posed an urgent threat to the ordained social order, spurring novel attempts to tighten control over serfdom and a raft of ambitious new government legislation. But the pre-existing weakness of serfdom, the influence of factor markets and the tendency of lords to exhibit restraint meant that this seigniorial reaction was short-lived and ineffective, and commercial forces and open competition for tenants and workers soon prevailed. Conversions of arcane land tenures to contractual leaseholds and falling rent levels encouraged freefolk and incomers to pour into the servile land market, breaking the old link between personal and tenurial status and fatally undermining serfdom.

Despite the collapse in population, prices of foodstuffs soared then remain high during the third quarter of the fourteenth century, causing the real wages of the mass of the populace to fall below their pre-plague level. Such contradictory signals have long puzzled historians, but they were caused by a

complex and extraordinary combination of events. The sudden collapse in population sent an enormous shock through factor and commodity markets, but the challenges of readjustment were complicated by a mix of other unanticipated events. A succession of further environmental and epidemiological crises in the 1360s created unprecedented disruption, volatility and uncertainty: the weather was extreme, livestock epidemics struck repeatedly and the plague of people returned in 1369. Monetary factors and sluggish supply-side responses to shifting consumption patterns fuelled inflation further.

The argument that coercion and mounting class conflict was not a prominent feature of English society after the 1350s demands a reassessment of the traditional view that the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 was a revolt against serfdom. Instead, it was principally a protest against the growth of state power, epitomized by the expansion of novel forms of taxation and the creation of gentry justices of the peace to implement the new labour and price-setting legislation. Yet the nature of the legislation, and its loose drafting, meant that it was impossible for elected local officials to implement equitably. The inherent arbitrariness created deep divisions within local communities and generated widespread anger at the poor quality of royal justice among disparate groups which exploded in 1381.

By the mid-1390s a post-plague equilibrium had finally been established. Gains in GDP per capita flattened, prices sagged and lost their volatility, real wages and earnings levelled, and all sectors of the economy exhibited a tendency towards over-supply. Government labour and economic policies were now weakly enforced. In 1400 England was still not at the forefront of European economic development, but responses to the Black Death has changed its institutional framework in important ways. Land had become more mobile and accessible, and on more commercial tenures; employment levels outside agriculture were very high, even in the countryside; government had established itself as a standing authority in social policy; the country's legal framework and culture was unique and accessible; and serfdom had all but disappeared. England now possessed an institutional framework to capitalise when population and the economy picked up once again in the sixteenth century.

6.7 Political History

At the start of the Middle Ages, England was a part of Britannia, a former province of the Roman Empire. The local economy had once been dominated by imperial Roman spending on a large military establishment, which in turn helped to support a complex network of towns, roads, and villas. By the 7th century, some rulers, including those of Wessex, East Anglia, Essex, and Kent, had begun to term themselves kings, living in villae regales, royal centres, and collecting tribute from the surrounding regions; these kingdoms are often referred to as the Heptarchy. In the 7th century, the Kingdom of Mercia rose to prominence under the leadership of King Penda. However, in the same year Alfred won a decisive victory against the Danes at the Battle of Edington, and he exploited the fear of the Viking threat to raise large numbers of men and using a network of defended towns called burhs to defend his territory and mobilise royal resources.

6.8 Summary

It was in this melee of social changes, in the questioning of the Church as ultimate authority and the rise of the peasant classes that fostered these beautiful high lofty spiritual works alongside some very English vernacular works such as those of Chaucer and his contemporaries. The 14th century managed to reach to the highest heavens with its feet firmly planted on terra firms.

6.9 Key Terms

Social stratification: The categorization of people by social stratum occurs most clearly in complex state-based, polycentric, or feudal societies, the latter being based upon socio-economic relations among classes of nobility and classes of peasants.

Churl: A Churl (Old High German karal), in its earliest Old English (Anglo-Saxon) meaning, was simply "a man" or more particularly a "free man", but the word soon came to mean "a non-servile peasant", still spelled ceorl(e), and denoting the lowest rank of freemen.

6.10 Review Questions

1. What does all this recognition and misrecognition tell us about medieval concepts of personhood?
 2. How do medieval texts distinguish between "good" and "evil"? What sorts of Biblical authorities are cited by medieval authors on these matters?
 3. How did the Black Death affect English literature?
 4. What was the Black Death's impact on English society?
 5. The plague originally spread from where?
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UNIT 7: CHAUCER AND THE BEGINNING

STRUCTURE

- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 Early Life and Influences
- 7.4 Chaucer's Life at Court
- 7.5 The Italian Influence
- 7.6 Life of works
- 7.7 The Canterbury Tales
- 7.8 Summary
- 7.9 Key Points
- 7.10 Review Questions
- 7.11 References

7.1 Objectives

Our aim in this unit is to provide an overview of the age in which Geoffrey Chaucer lived and wrote. He was the outstanding English poet of the late Middle Ages. Since literature and society are closely related, this background will help you understand Chaucer's poetry. Background or context is particularly important here since the medieval world was very different from our own.

7.2 Introduction

The 14th-century English literature is popularly known as the Age of Chaucer. This is because Geoffrey Chaucer was the greatest and most resourceful poet of his time, so much so that he was regarded as the founder of English verse by John Dryden (1631-1700).

Popularly known as the **founder of modern English** and the **Father of English literature**, it was because of Chaucer that the middle English became a respectable medium for literature. Besides coining various words such as bribe, femininity, plumage, etc, he also **invented Rime Royal, a seven-line iambic pentameter stanza**.

7.3 Early Life and Influences

Chaucer (1340s - 1400) was a worldly man exposed to diverse people from different walks of life. He was born to a wealthy **family of vintners** - his grandfather (Robert Chaucer), step-grandfather (Richard), and father (John Chaucer) were all wine merchants. In fact, his father, John Chaucer was a customs officer responsible for collecting duty on wines at various southern ports, and had a significant place in London's social life. As the son of an influential vintner, Chaucer was often exposed to men from overseas and their strange foreign stories since childhood. This early exposure is a crucial factor

that makes Chaucer a distinctly better poet than his contemporaries Langland or Lydgate who were constrained by their limited education and opportunities. Langland's passionate and violent attitude is in sharp contrast to Chaucer's worldly and patient outlook that was shaped during his childhood.

During his early years, London was Chaucer's school. The bustling city was full of shipmen and pilgrims, and a highly cultured and cosmopolitan French society.

Chaucer also worked as a page in the service of Elizabeth of Ulster, the wife of Edward III's son Lionel. During his service, he was exposed to the courtly life. In 1359, he was a part of Edward's invading army in France and was taken as a prisoner. The king ransomed Chaucer and he returned to England in 1360. In the autumn of the same year, he was again in France. These events further enriched Chaucer's experiences and contributed to a cosmopolitan mindset.

In 1367, Chaucer received a pension as the groom or yeoman in the royal household and was described as "**dilectus vallectus noster**" or 'our beloved yeoman'. Around this time he also married Philippa, sister to Katherine Swynford, who was once the wife of John of Gaunt and was in the Queen's service.

7.4 Chaucer's Life at Court

The years 1370-1380 were the most important in Chaucer's life. During this time, he became the **Esquire of the Royal Household**. This was a particularly interesting position as it enabled Chaucer to meet and observe various influential men in culture. Being in the service of the King, he frequently came in contact with London's men of importance, continental diplomats, and even rulers. Thus, Chaucer enjoyed a rich and diverse social circle. From this society and contacts, Chaucer inculcated a distinct knowledge of humanity that became a characteristic feature of his writing.

Employed as a royal esquire, Chaucer had to demonstrate proficiency in almost everything, or at least maintain such an impression. He was expected to be able to dance, sing, recite poetry, entertain, as well as conduct dignified and serious activities with equal efficiency. Most importantly, he was frequently at the service of ladies. His exposure to the royal female society helped him create numerous detailed and remarkable lifelike feminine portraits that were, unfortunately, lacking in most romantic heroines. He was not restricted to partial access to high society through just reading books or distant observations, instead, he was right in the middle of it. This experience reflects in his *Book of the Duchess*. His in-depth portrait of the lady Blanche is the most outstanding feature of his work. In his later works too, he continued to uniquely blend the conventional literary models with his personal knowledge and experience which had never been done before in romance.

7.5 The Italian Influence

Frequent travelling shaped Chaucer's knowledge to a great extent. Between the years **1370 to 1378**, Chaucer visited France, Flanders, and Italy. While France was already familiar and important to him through previous trips and literature, Italy too made a lasting impact on Chaucer and his art. Even though the natural landscape was only a background in the Age of Chaucer, it was still an impactful factor in a poet's life. In Italy, Chaucer enjoyed the breathtaking Italian landscape and cities that blended their Roman past with the present. Italy was a historically, architecturally, and culturally

invigorating country that must have immensely excited and interested Chaucer as an artist. During Chaucer's stay, Italy was politically unstable and frequently broke into violent disputes. The poet also met the most powerful Italian tyrant Bernabó Visconti who had married his niece Violanta to Lionel, son of Edward III.

Besides the trips to Italy, the literary works of **Dante**, **Boccaccio**, and **Petrarch** immensely influenced Chaucer who was proficient in Italian.

During the years **1374-1386**, Chaucer was the Controller of the Customs and Subsidies on wool, hides, and sheep-skins in London's port. This job rewarded him with a pension from John of Gaunt, a pitcher of wine, and a rent-free house above Aldgate. He spent his tenure in frequent diplomatic and business travels. During this time, he also came in contact with the most powerful and influential men in London and came to know about the world through them. This knowledge was not just limited to England or the continent, but beyond it.

Chaucer was a well-read and well-travelled man who frequently met a variety of people who told him a variety of stories. All of these factors shaped his works. For instance, his conversations with the knights and their followers informed him about the ongoing affairs in Europe.

While staying at Aldgate, Chaucer spent the rest of the time honing his craft. He read the works by French and Italian poets and attempted to adapt them into English verse. This resulted in some of his finest works - **House of Fame**, **the Parliament of Fowls**, and **Troilus and Criseyde**.

7.6 Life of works

Major works by Geoffrey Chaucer include

- Translated Roman de la Rose as the Romaunt of the Rose
- ABC
- The Book of the Duchess
- The Complaint unto Pity (lost)
- The Complaint to His Lady (lost)
- The Complaint of Mars
- The Complaint of Venus
- The House of Fame
- Anelida and Arcite
- Saint Cecelia
- The Parliament of Fowls
- Boece (Chaucer's translation of Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius)
- Troilus and Criseyde
- Palamoun and Arcite (later used as the Knight's Tale)
- The Legend of Good Women
- The Canterbury Tales
- Treatise of the Astrolabe
- The Envoy to Bukton (The reader is urged to read the Wife of Bath)
- Complaint to His Purse

7.7 The Canterbury Tales

Chaucer was a significant man in his society. He frequently received wardships and gifts from the royal household. In 1386, he left Aldgate, moved to Kent, and became a member of parliament. In 1389, he received the most powerful and responsible position of his life when he became the Clerkship of the King's Works. It must be during this time that Chaucer thought about the Canterbury pilgrimage and began writing the Canterbury Tales.

The idea of a pilgrimage was perfect as it provided the best setting to let Chaucer bring together diverse characters for a shared purpose. The pilgrim also allowed these people to lower their guards and strict conventional etiquette that they had to abide by in everyday social life. The Canterbury Tales gives us the privilege of access to 14th-century men and women. This access is not limited to a formal and frigid tapestry but becomes a lively portal to their individual personalities as they laugh and talk.

Chaucer's general plan for the Canterbury Tales was that each of the thirty pilgrims would tell two stories during their journey to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury, and two more stories during their homeward journey. The pilgrim with the best story would win supper at the Tabard Inn near London and the host, Harry Bailey was the master who would decide the winner. Thus, the initial plan included at least 120 stories. Nevertheless, Chaucer was unable to carry out his original plan.

The sequence of the stories in the Canterbury Tales is natural and chaotic just like life itself. As the Knight completes his story, it must be ideally the Monk's turn to narrate his tale. However, the drunk Miller interrupts and begins with his story instead. This natural human interruption makes Chaucer's work stand out from conventional mediaeval poetry of his age. Throughout the Canterbury Tales, the pilgrims are not limited to just stories but frequently erupt in banter and character-revealing commentaries.

The Canterbury Tales include almost all facets of English life and society. However, some sides, such as the peasant life, do not occupy any significant space in the poem. Peasant life in the fields was a significant part of mediaeval English society and is depicted in *Piers Plowman* and many other mediaeval poems. However, Chaucer skips this popular mediaeval element. Villagers who appear in the Canterbury Tales are aristocrats.

Throughout the poem, varied worlds collide - the grave and gay, supernatural and worldly, all amalgamate and create an outstanding world. Throughout the tales, Chaucer is continuously excellent at his craft. His genius lies in the combination of his remarkable poetic sensibilities and his acute understanding of men and women. While Chaucer exhibits a remarkable understanding of human character, he also demonstrates remarkable tolerance and distance. While his contemporaries like Gower, Langland, and Wyclif are driven to frequent emotional and violent outbursts at the mention of corrupt monks, friars, and idle beggars, Chaucer remains detached. He almost possesses a Shakespearean ability to accept life as glorious and as ugly as it was without any prejudice or resistance.

All of the poet's phases and experiences as a vintner's son, page, esquire, ambassador, controller of customs, clerk of works, and sub-forester culminate into the creation of his masterpiece, the work he is known the most for- the Canterbury Tales. There had been no side of the English society that

Chaucer was unfamiliar with. Moreover, the exposure to French and English poetry honed his poetic artistry and enabled him to experiment with metres and poetic forms. Combining his personal diverse social experiences and a deep insight into human nature with a rich poetic knowledge, Chaucer became the poet who is rightfully the representative of the 14th century - the age of Chaucer.

7.8 Summary

All of the poet's phases and experiences as a vintner's son, page, esquire, ambassador, controller of customs, clerk of works, and sub-forester culminate into the creation of his masterpiece, the work he is known the most for- the Canterbury Tales. There had been no side of the English society that Chaucer was unfamiliar with. Moreover, the exposure to French and English poetry honed his poetic artistry and enabled him to experiment with metres and poetic forms. Combining his personal diverse social experiences and a deep insight into human nature with a rich poetic knowledge, Chaucer became the poet who is rightfully the representative of the 14th century - the age of Chaucer.

7.9 Key Points

- 1) Chaucer had at least nine other major works besides the Canterbury Tales, and wrote a number of short poems as well.
 - 2) There's a crater on the far side of the moon named for Chaucer.
 - 3) Chaucer had a part-time government job collecting scrap metal for reuse and also worked as a diplomat.
 - 4) He was a POW during the Hundred Years' War, captured by France and later released after ransom was paid.
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7.10 Review Questions

1. Describe the effect on fourteenth-century life and literature.
 2. Write short notes on:
Courtly love, chivalry, women and marriage.
 3. What is the relationship between astrology and medicine in Chaucer's time?
 4. Write short notes on:
The courtly romances, the Norman Conquest, allegory, the alliterative revival.
 5. Describe the role of Chaucer in shaping the medieval literature.
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UNIT 8: CHAUCER'S: PARDONER'S TALE

STRUCTURE

- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 The Prologue
- 8.4 The Tale
- 8.5 The Epilogue
- 8.6 Characters in "The Pardoner's Tale"
- 8.7 Characters in the Frame Narrative of "The Pardoner's Tale"
- 8.8 Summary
- 8.9 Key Points
- 8.10 Review Questions
- 8.11 References

8.1 Objectives

To understand the nominal work of Chaucer through this unit. The students shall learn in details about the narrative technique, the genre and writing style of Chaucer in his Pardoner's tale. There has been a moral to this story which shall be beneficial to the students knowing about it to implement the same virtues in their lives.

8.2 Introduction

Still reeling from the Physician's story of Virginia, a maiden whose parents murdered her rather than see her lose her virginity, the Host of pilgrims asks the Pardoner for something more lighthearted as a distraction, while others in the company insist that he tell a clean moral tale. The Pardoner agrees, but insists that he be given some time to drink beer and eat bread first.

8.3 The Prologue

In the prologue, the Pardoner boasts of his abilities to trick unsophisticated villagers out of their money. First, he displays all of his official licenses from the Pope and Bishops. Then he presents his rags and bones as holy relics with magical powers to heal diseases and cause crops to grow, but notes a caveat: no one guilty of sin can benefit from these powers until they pay the Pardoner.

The Pardoner also repeats a sermon on the vice of greed, whose theme he repeats as *radix malorum est cupiditas*, or "greed is the root of all evil." He acknowledges the irony of preaching this sermon in the name of his own greed, remarking that he doesn't actually care whether he prevents anyone from sinning as long as he himself earns money. He travels from town to town repeating this act, unashamedly telling the other pilgrims that he refuses to do manual labor and would not mind seeing women and children starve so he can live in comfort.

8.4 The Tale

The Pardoner begins to describe a group of hard-partying young revelers in “Flandres”, but then launches into a long digression against drunkenness and gambling that makes extensive use of Biblical and classical references and lasts for over 300 lines, taking up nearly half the space allocated to this tale.

Eventually returning to his story, the Pardoner tells how early one morning, three young partiers are drinking at a bar when they hear a bell ringing and see a funeral procession go by. Asking a young servant boy who the dead person is, they learn that it was one of their acquaintances who died unexpectedly the night before. As a response to who killed the man, the boy explains that a “thief men clepeth Deeth”, or in modern English, “a thief called Death,” struck him down (line 675). Seeming to take this personification of death literally, the three of them vow to find Death, who they denounce as a “false traitour”, and kill him (lines 699-700).

The three drunken gamblers make their way towards a town where a number of people have died recently on the assumption that Death is likely nearby. They cross paths with an old man on the way, and one of them mocks him for being old, asking, “Why livestou so longe in so gree age?” or, “Why have you been alive for so long?” (line 719). The old man has a good sense of humor and replies that he hasn’t been able to find any young person willing to trade his old age for youth, so here he is, and laments that Death has not come for him yet.

On hearing the word “Death”, the three men go on high alert. They accuse the old man of being in cahoots with death and demand to know where he is hiding. The old man directs them up a “crooked way” towards a “grove” with an oak tree, where he swears he saw Death last (760-762).

Upon reaching the grove that the old man directed them to, they find a pile of gold coins. They immediately forget about their plan to kill Death and start scheming of ways to get this treasure home. Worried that if they’re caught carrying the treasure they will be accused of theft and hanged, they decide to guard it until nightfall and carry it home under cover of darkness. They need provisions to last the day—bread and wine—and draw straws to decide who will go to town while the other two guard the coins. The youngest of them draws the shortest straw and heads off to buy the food and drink.

No sooner is he gone than one of the remaining revelers relates a plan to the other. Since they would be better off splitting the coins between two people rather than three, they decide to ambush and stab the youngest when he comes back with their food.

Meanwhile, the young man on his way into town has also been thinking of a way that he could get the whole treasure to himself. He decides to poison his two colleagues with the food he brings back to them. He stops at a pharmacy to ask for a way to get rid of the rats and a polecat that he claims has been killing his chickens. The pharmacist gives him the strongest poison he has. The man proceeds to place it into two bottles, leaving a clean one for himself, and fills them all with wine.

When he returns, his two comrades ambush and kill him, as they had planned. They then decide to rest and drink the wine before burying his corpse. They both unknowingly choose a poisoned bottle, drink from it, and die.

8.5 The Epilogue

The Pardoner once again reminds his audience that he possesses relics and is licensed by the Pope to excuse their sins, remarking how lucky they are to have a pardoner on the pilgrimage with them. He suggests they make use of his services as soon as possible in case they should have any kind of unfortunate accident **on the road**. He then requests the Host come and kiss his relics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Harry refuses. Having been told by the Pardoner himself that the relics are fake, he suggests that he would actually just be kissing the Pardoner's "olde breech", or pants, that are "with thy fundament depeint", meaning stained with his fecal matter (lines 948-950).

The Host continues insulting the Pardoner, threatening to castrate him and throw his testicles "in an hogges tord", or in pig dung (952-955). The other pilgrims laugh, and the Pardoner is so angry that he doesn't respond, riding along silently. Another pilgrim, the Knight, bids them to literally kiss and make up. They do so and then change the subject without further comment as the next tale begins.

8.6 Characters in "The Pardoner's Tale"

The Canterbury Tales is a series of stories within **a story**. Chaucer's tale of a group of pilgrims who decide to travel to Canterbury is what can be called the frame narrative. This is because it acts as a kind of enclosure or container for the other stories told by the various pilgrims as they travel. There are different sets of characters in the frame narrative and the tale itself.

8.7 Characters in the Frame Narrative of "The Pardoner's Tale"

The Pardoner

Pardoners were religious functionaries in the Catholic Church. They were granted a license by the Pope to offer contingent forgiveness of a limited number of sins in exchange for money. This money was, in turn, supposed to be donated to a charity such as a hospital, church, or monastery. In practice, however, pardoners sometimes offered total forgiveness of all sins to anyone who could pay, keeping much of the money for themselves (this abuse would be an important factor leading to the Protestant Reformation in the centuries after Chaucer's death).²

The Pardoner in The Canterbury Tales is one such corrupt official. He carries around a box of old pillowcases and pig's bones, which he passes off as holy relics with supernatural healing and generative powers. These powers are denied, of course, to anyone who refuses to pay him. He also delivers emotional sermons against greed, which he then uses to manipulate his audience into buying pardons.

The Pardoner is totally shameless about the way he exploits the religious sentiments of naïve and gullible people for his own gain, noting that he wouldn't care if they starved so long as he could maintain his own relatively high standard of living.

First described in the "General Prologue" of the book, the pardoner, we are told, has long, stringy blond hair, a high-pitched voice like a goat, and is incapable of growing facial hair. The speaker swears that he is "a geldyng or a mare", that is, either a eunuch, a woman disguised as a man, or a man who engages in homosexual activity (line 691).

The Host

The keeper of an inn called the Tabard, Harry Bailey is described in the “General Prologue” as bold, merry, and an excellent host and businessman. Supportive of the pilgrim’s decision to walk to Canterbury, he is the one who proposes that they tell stories along the way and offers to be the judge in the story-telling contest if they all agree to it (lines 751-783).

8.8 Summary

The practice of selling pardons (also known as indulgences) would be a source of anger and resentment in medieval Europe that would ultimately lead to the Reformation. The Pardoner, a corrupt, shamelessly greedy figure who lies to the other pilgrims’ faces in the hope of making a little money, represents the extreme form of exploitation that the sale of pardons could result in. His greed and hypocrisy reach comical heights until he is cut down to size by the host.

8.9 Key Points

- "The Pardoner's Tale" is part of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, a fictional collection of stories told by pilgrims on a journey from London to Canterbury in the late 15th century.
 - The Pardoner is a corrupt religious official who tricks people into paying him money by lying about the magical powers of fake relics that he carries with him, then by making them feel guilty about being greedy with an impassioned sermon.
 - The Pardoner's Tale is the story of three "rioters", drunken gamblers and partiers, who all kill each other while trying to get a greater share of a treasure they stumbled across.
 - After telling this story, the Pardoner tries to sell his pardons to the other pilgrims. Having been let in on the scam, they are not interested and mock him instead.
 - There are several examples of irony throughout the story, which is used to satirize the increasing greed and spiritual emptiness of the church.
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8.10 Review Questions

1. What is ironic about the Pardoner’s decision to focus on greed?
 2. What does the youngest reveler decide to do while he is in town?
 3. What is Pardoner’s motto?
 4. What do the two older revelers plan to do while the younger is in town?
 5. Describe the character of Pardoner.
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UNIT 9: CHAUCER AND THE END OF AGE

STRUCTURE

- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Introduction
- 9.3 Religious and Philosophical Shifts
- 9.4 Social and Economic Changes
- 9.5 Literary Innovation and Cultural Renaissance
- 9.6 Chaucer's Views on The End of Age
- 9.7 Summary
- 9.8 Key Points
- 9.9 Review Questions
- 9.10 References

9.1 Objectives

This unit shall be all about Geoffrey Chaucer as the father of English literature, lived during the late Middle Ages in England. His works, particularly "The Canterbury Tales," provide valuable insights into the social, political, and cultural dynamics of his time. While Chaucer did not explicitly write about the "end of age" in the apocalyptic sense, his works do reflect some of the broader changes and anxieties of the late medieval period.

9.2 Introduction

Chaucer's works often explore themes of mortality, sin, and redemption, which were common concerns in an era deeply influenced by Christian teachings and eschatological fears (concerns about the end times). While his writing does not explicitly predict or address the apocalyptic end of the world, it does reflect a broader awareness of the impermanence of life and the transitory nature of human endeavors.

9.3 Religious and Philosophical Shifts

The late Middle Ages saw increasing challenges to the dominance of the Catholic Church, including movements like Lollardy, which criticized church corruption and called for reform. Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" features characters from various social classes and professions, highlighting the diversity of beliefs and moral perspectives in medieval society.

1. Challenges to Church Authority:

- The late medieval period saw increasing criticism of the Catholic Church's wealth, corruption, and moral laxity. Movements like Lollardy, inspired by John Wycliffe, challenged the authority of the Pope and the clergy, advocating for a simpler and more devout form of Christianity.

2. Emergence of Vernacular Literature:

- Chaucer himself contributed to the shift towards vernacular literature, writing in Middle English instead of Latin or French. This helped make literature more accessible to the common people and contributed to the spread of new ideas and critiques.
3. **Mysticism and Piety:**
- Alongside criticisms of institutionalized religion, there was a rise in mysticism and personal piety. Writers and thinkers explored spirituality through direct experience of God, often bypassing traditional church structures.

Philosophical Shifts:

1. **Scholasticism and Humanism:**
- The late Middle Ages also saw the continuation of scholastic philosophy, which sought to reconcile Christian theology with classical philosophy, particularly the works of Aristotle.
 - Humanism, with its emphasis on human reason and potential, began to emerge as a counterbalance to purely theological perspectives.
2. **Ethics and Morality:**
- Philosophers and writers, including Chaucer in "The Canterbury Tales," explored ethical dilemmas and moral lessons through storytelling. Characters often represented different moral viewpoints, reflecting the diversity of philosophical thought in medieval society.
3. **Social Critique:**
- Chaucer's works are known for their social critique, highlighting issues such as hypocrisy, greed, and social inequality. His portrayal of various characters from different social classes provides a nuanced commentary on the complexities of medieval society.

9.4 Social and Economic Changes

The period was marked by significant social upheaval, including the aftermath of the Black Death (1347-1351), which devastated populations across Europe and disrupted traditional feudal structures. Chaucer's depiction of pilgrims on a journey reflects the mobility and changing social dynamics of the time.

1. **Feudal System and Social Mobility:**
- The feudal system, which had been the dominant social structure in the early Middle Ages, began to evolve. Urbanization and trade created opportunities for social mobility, allowing some individuals to rise in status through commerce and skilled professions.
2. **Emergence of the Middle Class:**
- The growth of towns and cities led to the rise of a prosperous middle class, including merchants, craftsmen, and professionals (such as lawyers and doctors). This new class had economic influence and sought recognition in society.
3. **Role of Women:**
- Women's roles in society varied widely depending on their social class. Noblewomen had access to education and could wield political influence, while women in lower classes often worked alongside men in agricultural or domestic roles.
4. **Changing Family Structures:**

- Family structures evolved with economic changes. Wealthy families might arrange advantageous marriages to consolidate power or wealth, while commoners focused on practical considerations such as land inheritance and economic stability.

Economic Changes:

1. Trade and Urbanization:

- Trade flourished during Chaucer's time, facilitated by the growth of towns and cities. The wool trade, in particular, was a significant contributor to England's economy, leading to the prosperity of wool merchants and the expansion of markets.

2. Monetary Economy:

- The medieval economy was transitioning from a barter system to a more monetized economy. Coinage became increasingly important for trade, allowing for more complex financial transactions and accumulation of wealth.

3. Guild System:

- Guilds played a crucial role in regulating trade and maintaining standards of craftsmanship. They provided training, ensured fair wages, and protected the interests of their members, contributing to economic stability and social cohesion.

4. Impact of Plague and Famine:

- The Black Death (1347-1351) had a profound impact on the population and economy of England. It resulted in labor shortages, which improved the bargaining power of peasants and led to higher wages and better living conditions in the long term.

Cultural Impact:

1. Literary and Artistic Flourishing:

- The growing urban middle class patronized literature, art, and architecture, leading to a flourishing of cultural production. Chaucer's works, including "The Canterbury Tales," reflect the diversity and vibrancy of medieval English society.

2. Religious and Intellectual Movements:

- Intellectual movements such as scholasticism and the rise of humanism influenced cultural and educational institutions. The translation of classical works into vernacular languages expanded access to knowledge beyond Latin-educated elites.

In summary, Geoffrey Chaucer's age was a period of dynamic social and economic change in England. These transformations contributed to the development of a more complex and stratified society, laying the groundwork for the Renaissance and the early modern period that followed. Chaucer's works provide valuable insights into the cultural, social, and economic landscape of medieval England.

9.5 Literary Innovation and Cultural Renaissance

Geoffrey Chaucer lived during a time of significant literary innovation and cultural renaissance in England, which laid the groundwork for the flourishing of English literature and culture in subsequent centuries. Here are some key aspects of literary innovation and cultural renaissance during Chaucer's age:

Literary Innovation:

1. Vernacular Literature:

- Chaucer played a pivotal role in popularizing the use of English vernacular (Middle English) for literary expression. Prior to Chaucer, much of English literature was written in Latin or French. His decision to write "The Canterbury Tales" in English helped elevate the language and make literature more accessible to a wider audience.

2. Narrative Complexity:

- Chaucer's narrative style in "The Canterbury Tales" introduced new complexities to storytelling. He employed frame narratives (stories within stories) to connect diverse tales told by pilgrims from various social classes, showcasing the richness and diversity of human experience.

3. Characterization and Realism:

- Chaucer's characters are vividly portrayed with distinct personalities, flaws, and virtues. He depicted a wide range of social types, from noblemen to commoners, offering a realistic and nuanced portrayal of medieval society.

Cultural Renaissance:

1. Intellectual Exchange:

- Chaucer's age was marked by a flourishing of intellectual exchange and learning. The translation of classical texts into vernacular languages, including English, broadened access to knowledge and influenced cultural and philosophical thought.

2. Courtly Culture:

- The English court under King Richard II fostered a rich cultural milieu where poetry, music, and literature thrived. Chaucer himself held positions at court and was exposed to courtly traditions and patronage, which influenced his literary output.

3. Social Mobility and Patronage:

- The rise of a wealthy urban middle class provided new patrons for literature and the arts. Writers like Chaucer often relied on patronage from nobles and wealthy merchants to support their creative endeavors, contributing to the cultural renaissance.

4. Influence of Italian Literature:

- Chaucer was influenced by Italian literature, particularly the works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. His travels to Italy and exposure to Italian literary forms, such as the decameron and sonnet, influenced his own poetic style and narrative techniques.

9.6 Chaucer's Views on The End of Age

Chaucer's works often explore themes of mortality, sin, and redemption, which were common concerns in an era deeply influenced by Christian teachings and eschatological fears (concerns about the end times). While his writing does not explicitly predict or address the apocalyptic end of the world, it does reflect a broader awareness of the impermanence of life and the transitory nature of human endeavors.

9.7 Summary

In conclusion, while Chaucer's writings do not directly engage with the apocalyptic notion of the "end

of age," they provide a rich tapestry of late medieval life, offering insights into the spiritual, social, and cultural concerns of his time. His works continue to be studied not only for their literary merit but also for their historical and philosophical significance in understanding the transition from the medieval to the early modern period in England.

9.8 Key Points

Relics objects esteemed and venerated because of association with a saint or martyr; here, the Pardoner's relics are false.

Lot Lot's daughters got their father drunk and then seduced him (from the Book of Genesis in the Bible); the Pardoner's point is that Lot never would have committed incest if he had not been drunk.

Samson the biblical "strong man." He revealed the secret of his strength to Solome, who then betrayed him to his enemies.

Lepe a town in Spain noted for its strong wines.

Cheapside and Fish Streets streets in London that were known for the sale of strong spirits.

Lemuel See Proverbs 31:4-7.

King Demetrius The book that relates this and the previous incident is the Policraticus of twelfth-century writer John of Salisbury.

Avicenna an Arabian physician (980-1037) who wrote a work on medicines that includes a chapter on poisons.

St. Helen the mother of Constantine the Great, believed to have found the True Cross.

9.9 Review Questions

1. Describe Geoffrey Chaucer's early life and career before he became known as a writer.
2. Discuss the themes and narrative techniques in "The Canterbury Tales."
3. Compare the style and structure of "The Canterbury Tales" with Chaucer's other major works, such as "Troilus and Criseyde" or "The Parliament of Fowls."
4. What were the major social and cultural movements during Chaucer's lifetime, and how did they impact his literary output?
5. Evaluate Chaucer's influence on English literature in the centuries following his death. How did his works shape the development of literary genres and language itself?

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UNIT 10: WOMEN IN CHAUCER'S WORKS: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

STRUCTURE

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Representation of Women in *The Canterbury Tales*

10.4 Emelye and Passive Femininity in *The Knight's Tale*

10.5 Gender and Power in *The Clerk's Tale* and *The Merchant's Tale*

10.6 Summary

10.7 Key Points

10.8 Review Questions

10.9 References

10.1 Objectives

- To explore the depiction of women in Geoffrey Chaucer's works.
 - To analyze key female characters from a feminist perspective.
 - To examine Chaucer's views on gender roles and the social status of women in the 14th century.
 - To investigate the subversion or reinforcement of patriarchal norms in Chaucer's writing.
 - To assess the influence of Chaucer's female characters on later literature.
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10.2 Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer, often referred to as the "Father of English Literature," wrote during the late 14th century, a time when women's roles were primarily confined to domestic spheres and rigid societal expectations. Despite the historical context, Chaucer's works offer complex and varied portrayals of women, which invite both traditional and feminist readings. In particular, *The Canterbury Tales* presents a diverse array of female characters, from the assertive and independent Wife of Bath to the virtuous and patient Griselda in *The Clerk's Tale*. Through these characters, Chaucer engages with medieval notions of womanhood, providing a lens through which modern readers can explore gender dynamics and the position of women in medieval society.

From a feminist perspective, Chaucer's works can be seen as both subverting and reinforcing the patriarchal norms of his time. While some of his female characters, like the Wife of Bath, challenge traditional gender roles, others, like the Prioress, seem to uphold them. This complexity in Chaucer's depiction of women makes his work an important subject for feminist literary criticism, which seeks to understand how literature reflects, perpetuates, or challenges societal gender norms.

10.3 Representation of Women in The Canterbury Tales

From a feminist perspective, Chaucer's female characters can be viewed as early representations of women striving for autonomy, voicing their desires, and negotiating their roles within a male-dominated society. Through various tales, Chaucer gives his female characters agency, allowing them to articulate their perspectives on love, marriage, and power. However, these representations are often ambiguous, raising questions about Chaucer's own attitudes toward women. Did Chaucer intend to critique the societal constraints placed on women, or do his works simply reflect the prevailing attitudes of his era? This topic delves into these questions, analyzing the portrayal of women in Chaucer's works from a feminist perspective.

The Wife of Bath: A Feminist Icon or a Product of Misogyny?

One of the most well-known female characters in *The Canterbury Tales* is the Wife of Bath, who is often viewed as an early feminist figure. She is assertive, sexually liberated, and unapologetically vocal about her desires and opinions. In her prologue, she challenges the patriarchal norms of her time, particularly the Church's teachings on marriage and female submission. She defends her multiple marriages and openly discusses her use of sexual power to gain control over her husbands.

From a feminist standpoint, the Wife of Bath can be seen as a figure of empowerment, as she defies the submissive role expected of women. Her character highlights issues of female autonomy, sexual freedom, and the power dynamics within marriage. However, her portrayal is not without its complexities. Critics argue that Chaucer's depiction of the Wife of Bath is exaggerated to the point of caricature, potentially reinforcing negative stereotypes of women as manipulative and lascivious. Her prologue, filled with bawdy humor and self-justification, can be interpreted as Chaucer's subtle critique of women who challenge societal norms. Thus, while the Wife of Bath embodies feminist ideals of independence and agency, her portrayal remains ambivalent.

The Prioress: Piety and Stereotypes of Female Virtue

In contrast to the Wife of Bath, the Prioress represents a different model of femininity. She is depicted as delicate, modest, and devout, embodying the traditional ideals of female virtue in medieval society. As a nun, her outward appearance and behavior reflect the expected purity and chastity of a woman dedicated to God. However, Chaucer's portrayal of the Prioress is layered with irony. Despite her religious position, her concern with courtly manners, fine dress, and her affection for small animals suggest a superficial understanding of her spiritual role.

From a feminist perspective, the Prioress can be seen as an example of how medieval women were confined by rigid ideals of piety and purity. Her character represents the constraints placed on women's identities, particularly those who were expected to embody religious virtue. Chaucer's subtle critique of her superficiality and her anti-Semitic tale suggest that the societal expectations of women in religious roles may limit their capacity for genuine moral authority. Thus, the Prioress offers a critical lens on how women in positions of spiritual power were still subject to the same gendered limitations.

10.4 Emelye and Passive Femininity in The Knight's Tale

Emelye, a central character in *The Knight's Tale*, presents a different image of womanhood. Unlike the assertive Wife of Bath or the devout Prioress, Emelye is portrayed as passive and objectified, existing primarily as a prize in the love triangle between Palamon and Arcite. Throughout the tale, Emelye has little agency; she does not choose either of her suitors, and her desires are largely ignored. She prays to Diana to remain chaste, but her fate is determined by the actions of the men around her.

From a feminist perspective, Emelye's role highlights the limited autonomy afforded to women in medieval society. She represents the ideal of passive femininity, where women are valued primarily for their beauty and virtue but are denied any real influence over their own lives. This passivity contrasts sharply with more vocal female characters like the Wife of Bath, raising questions about the diversity of women's experiences and the societal expectations imposed on them. Emelye's portrayal underscores the patriarchal structures that dictate women's roles as passive objects of male desire and competition.

10.5 Gender and Power in The Clerk's Tale and The Merchant's Tale

In both *The Clerk's Tale* and *The Merchant's Tale*, Chaucer explores the dynamics of marriage and power, particularly through the lens of female submission. *The Clerk's Tale* tells the story of Griselda, a woman who embodies extreme patience and obedience to her husband, Walter. Despite being subjected to numerous trials of loyalty, including the removal of her children, Griselda remains steadfastly obedient. Her unwavering submission is often interpreted as a model of ideal wifely behavior in medieval times.

However, from a feminist perspective, Griselda's story raises troubling questions about the oppressive nature of patriarchal control. Her extreme passivity and willingness to endure suffering highlight the expectations of female subordination in marriage. Chaucer's portrayal of Griselda can be seen as a critique of the unreasonable demands placed on women within patriarchal structures, though some critics argue that it reinforces the ideal of the self-sacrificing woman.

In contrast, *The Merchant's Tale* presents a different view of marriage, where female manipulation plays a central role. The character of May, who marries the much older January, uses her cunning to subvert her husband's authority and engage in an affair. May's actions complicate the portrayal of women's roles in marriage, presenting a more cynical view of female power in a patriarchal context.

10.6 Summary

Chaucer's works present a rich tapestry of female characters, each embodying different aspects of womanhood and societal expectations. From the bold and outspoken Wife of Bath to the passive Emelye, Chaucer's portrayal of women reflects the complexities and contradictions of gender roles in medieval society. Through a feminist lens, these characters can be seen as both subverting and reinforcing the traditional expectations of women. While Chaucer gives women a voice in his narratives, their roles often remain bound by the limitations of the patriarchal society in which they

live. The ambivalence in Chaucer's treatment of women continues to fuel scholarly debate, making his works a valuable site for feminist literary criticism.

10.7 Key Points

- Patriarchy: A social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property.
 - Agency: The capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own choices.
 - Misogyny: Hatred or prejudice against women.
 - Stereotype: A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.
 - Feminist Criticism: A literary analysis that examines texts from the perspective of gender inequality, focusing on the representation of women.
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10.8 Review Questions

1. How does the Wife of Bath challenge the traditional roles of women in medieval society?
 2. What are the key differences between the portrayals of the Wife of Bath and the Prioress in *The Canterbury Tales*?
 3. From a feminist perspective, how does Chaucer critique the expectations placed on women in *The Clerk's Tale*?
 4. In what ways does Emelye's character in *The Knight's Tale* reflect passive femininity?
 5. How does Chaucer's treatment of women reflect the larger patriarchal structures of his time?
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BLOCK-3: POETS AND POEMS

UNIT 11: Spenser: His Life and Works

UNIT 12: Shakespeare: His Life and Works

UNIT 13: Ben Johnson: His Life and Works

UNIT 14: John Donne: His Life and Works

UNIT 15: The Decline of Renaissance Poetry and the Rise of the Neoclassical Style

UNIT 11: SPENSER: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

STRUCTURE

- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Introduction
- 11.3 The Sonnet
- 11.4 The Courtly Love Tradition and Poetry
- 11.5 The Amoretti Sonnets
- 11.6 Sonnet 34
- 11.7 Summary
- 11.8 Key Takeaways
- 11.9 Review Questions
- 11.10 References

11.1 Objectives

The intent of this unit is to:

- Provide the student with a brief idea about the Amoretti sonnets in general.
 - Familiarize the student with a select few of Spenser's sonnets, specifically from the Amoretti sonnets.
 - Explore the relations between the formal and the substantial elements in a poem.
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11.2 Introduction

Edmund Spenser, a prominent figure in English literature, is best known for his epic poem "The Faerie Queene," which remains one of the most important works of the Elizabethan era. Here's an introduction to Edmund Spenser, covering his life, works, and literary significance:

Edmund Spenser was born around 1552, most likely in London or the southeast of England. Though details about his early life are sparse, he attended Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he excelled in his studies and developed a deep appreciation for classical literature and Renaissance humanism.

After completing his education, Spenser entered the service of Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, who was a prominent figure in Queen Elizabeth I's court. This connection provided Spenser with opportunities to establish himself in literary circles and gain royal patronage.

Literary Style and Influence:

- **Spenserian Stanza:** He is credited with inventing the Spenserian stanza, a nine-line verse form with the rhyme scheme ababbcbcc, which has been widely used by later poets including Lord Byron and John Keats.

- **Allegory and Symbolism:** Spenser's works are rich in allegory and symbolism, drawing heavily on classical mythology and Christian allegory to convey moral and political messages.
- **Impact on English Literature:** "The Faerie Queene" not only established Spenser as a major literary figure during the Elizabethan Age but also influenced subsequent poets and writers, including John Milton, who admired Spenser's epic style and moral vision.

11.3 The Sonnet

A sonnet is a poetic form that originated in Italy and became popular in English literature during the Renaissance. It typically consists of 14 lines written in iambic pentameter, with a specific rhyme scheme and a volta or thematic turn.

Structure of a Sonnet:

1. **Number of Lines:** A sonnet traditionally has 14 lines.
2. **Meter:** Most English sonnets are written in iambic pentameter, which means each line has five metrical feet (iambes), with each foot containing an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.
3. **Rhyme Scheme:**
 - There are several traditional rhyme schemes for sonnets. The most common ones include:
 - **Shakespearean or English Sonnet (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG):** This rhyme scheme consists of three quatrains (four-line stanzas) followed by a rhymed couplet (two-line stanza).
 - **Petrarchan or Italian Sonnet (ABBA ABBA CDE CDE or ABBA ABBA CDC DCD):** This rhyme scheme is divided into an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines), often with a thematic division between the two parts.
4. **Volta:** The volta, or turn, is a shift in the poem's subject matter, tone, or argument. In Petrarchan sonnets, the volta typically occurs between the octave and the sestet, whereas in Shakespearean sonnets, it often occurs in or after the third quatrain.

Characteristics of Sonnets:

- **Themes:** Sonnets often explore themes such as love, beauty, time, mortality, and philosophical or moral questions.
- **Language:** They are known for their concise and lyrical language, as well as their structured form which challenges poets to convey complex ideas within a strict framework.
- **Variations:** While traditional sonnets adhere to strict rhyme schemes and structure, modern and contemporary poets often experiment with these forms, creating variations that still capture the essence of the sonnet tradition.

Examples of Famous Sonneteers:

1. **William Shakespeare:** Known for his collection of 154 sonnets, Shakespeare's sonnets explore themes of love, beauty, and the passage of time.

2. **Petrarch:** An Italian poet whose sonnets inspired the Petrarchan sonnet form, which became popular in English and other European literatures.
3. **Elizabeth Barrett Browning:** Renowned for her collection "Sonnets from the Portuguese," which includes the famous sonnet beginning "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

Modern Usage:

- Sonnets continue to be written by poets today, both in traditional forms and innovative adaptations. They remain a popular form for exploring emotions and ideas in a structured yet expressive manner.

In essence, the sonnet is a versatile and enduring poetic form that has evolved over centuries, offering poets a structured framework to express deep emotions, explore complex ideas, and captivate readers with its musicality and precision.

11.4 The Courtly Love Tradition and Poetry

During the era of Edmund Spenser, which coincided with the Elizabethan Age in England, the courtly love tradition and poetry played significant roles in shaping literary themes and forms. Here's an exploration of how these elements manifested during Spenser's time:

Courtly Love Tradition:

1. Origins and Characteristics:

- The courtly love tradition originated in medieval Europe and was associated with the feudal aristocracy. It idealized a relationship between a knight and a noble lady, often characterized by admiration, devotion, and often unrequited love.
- Key elements included the worship of the lady from afar, the lover's service and devotion, and the concept of love as a transformative and ennobling force.

2. Literary Themes:

- Courtly love themes were prevalent in medieval romances and troubadour poetry, where knights would embark on quests and adventures in honor of their beloveds.
- In poetry, courtly love often involved elaborate praise of the beloved's beauty, virtue, and grace, and the poet's longing and suffering in the absence or unattainability of the beloved.

Poetry in Edmund Spenser's Era:

1. Elizabethan Poetry:

- The Elizabethan Age was a period of great literary flowering, characterized by experimentation with various poetic forms and genres.
- Poets of this era, including Spenser, explored themes of love, beauty, chivalry, and morality, often drawing inspiration from classical literature, medieval romance, and courtly love traditions.

2. Spenser's Contribution:

- Edmund Spenser's poetry reflects both the influence of courtly love traditions and the evolving Renaissance ideals of love and beauty.
- In "The Faerie Queene," Spenser employs allegory and romance to explore themes of idealized love, virtue, and the quest for moral perfection.
- His sonnet sequence "Amoretti" celebrates his courtship and eventual marriage to Elizabeth Boyle, employing Petrarchan conventions while adapting them to his own personal and literary contexts.

Influence and Legacy:

1. Literary Influence:

- Spenser's incorporation of courtly love themes into his works helped to popularize and adapt these traditions for Elizabethan audiences.
- His portrayal of idealized love and the quest for spiritual and moral excellence influenced later poets, including John Milton and the metaphysical poets.

2. Cultural Impact:

- The courtly love tradition in Elizabethan poetry contributed to the broader cultural fascination with love, romance, and chivalry during the Renaissance.
- It reflected and shaped the cultural ideals of the time, influencing not only literature but also visual arts, music, and courtly etiquette.

In summary, the courtly love tradition and poetry during Edmund Spenser's era were intertwined, with poets like Spenser adapting and transforming these medieval ideals into the vibrant and innovative literary expressions of the Elizabethan Age. Spenser's works, in particular, exemplify how these traditions evolved and were reimagined to reflect the cultural and literary currents of his time.

11.5 The Amoretti Sonnets

The "Amoretti" is a sequence of 89 sonnets written by Edmund Spenser, which was first published in 1595. These sonnets are notable for their personal nature, as they chronicle Spenser's courtship of and eventual marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. Here's an overview of the "Amoretti" sonnets and their themes:

Themes and Characteristics:

1. Courtship and Love:

- The "Amoretti" sonnets primarily focus on Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle, whom he addresses as his beloved.
- They express the joys and challenges of love, the beauty and virtues of the beloved, and the emotional intensity of romantic longing and fulfillment.

2. Petrarchan Influence:

- Spenser adopts the Petrarchan sonnet form for most of the "Amoretti," which consists of an octave (eight lines) followed by a sestet (six lines).
- The rhyme scheme typically follows ABBA ABBA CDC DCD or ABAB BCBC CDC DCD.

3. Nature Imagery:

- Like many Renaissance poets, Spenser uses rich and elaborate nature imagery to describe his beloved and to evoke the beauty and transience of love.
- He compares his beloved's beauty to natural elements such as flowers, gems, and celestial bodies.

4. **Spiritual and Moral Themes:**

- Alongside expressions of romantic love, the "Amoretti" also explore spiritual and moral dimensions of love.
- Spenser often portrays love as a transformative and elevating force that leads to moral growth and spiritual unity.

Structure and Organization:

- The "Amoretti" sonnets are organized sequentially, providing a narrative of Spenser's courtship and eventual marriage.
- They reflect the stages of a developing relationship, from initial attraction and admiration to deepening intimacy and commitment.

Significance:

- The publication of the "Amoretti" marked a departure from Spenser's earlier epic and allegorical works, showcasing his ability to engage with personal and intimate themes in a structured poetic form.
- These sonnets are considered among the finest examples of Elizabethan love poetry, admired for their lyricism, sincerity, and emotional depth.

11.6 Sonnet 34

Sonnet 34 from Edmund Spenser's "Amoretti" continues the theme of love and longing, typical of the Petrarchan tradition, but with Spenser's unique style and imagery. Here is the text of Sonnet 34:

Lyke as a ship, that through the Ocean wyde,
 By conduct of some star doth make her way,
 Whenas a storm hath dimd her trusty guyde,
 Out of her course doth wander far astray.
 So I whose star, that wont with her bright ray,
 Me to direct, with cloudes is over-cast,
 Doe wander now, in darknesse and dismay,
 Through hidden perils round about me plast.
 Yet hope I well, that when this storme is past,
 My Helice, the lodestar of my lyfe,
 Will shine again, and looke on me at last,
 With lovely light to cleare my cloudy grieffe.
 Till then I wander carefull comfortlesse,
 In secret sorrow, and sad pensivenesse.

Analysis:

1. **Metaphorical Imagery:**

- The sonnet begins with a metaphor comparing the speaker's life journey to a ship navigating the ocean guided by a star. When the star (representing the beloved) is obscured by clouds (representing difficulties or obstacles), the ship (the speaker) loses its way.

2. **Theme of Love and Longing:**

- Throughout the sonnet, the speaker expresses a sense of longing and despair caused by the absence or distance from his beloved, referred to as his "Helice" or lodestar.
- The imagery of darkness, storm, and hidden perils reflects the speaker's emotional turmoil and uncertainty.

3. **Hope and Resilience:**

- Despite the challenges and sorrow described, the sonnet ends on a note of hope. The speaker anticipates that once the storm (difficulties or obstacles) passes, the beloved ("Helice") will shine again, bringing clarity and comfort to his grief.

4. **Petrarchan Influence:**

- The structure of the sonnet adheres to the Petrarchan form with an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines), featuring a rhyme scheme typical of Petrarchan sonnets (ABBA ABBA CDC DCD).

Significance:

- Sonnet 34 is a poignant expression of the speaker's emotional journey in love, characterized by moments of darkness and despair contrasted with moments of hope and anticipation.
- It showcases Spenser's skill in using metaphorical imagery to convey complex emotions and his ability to adapt Petrarchan conventions to explore personal and universal themes of love and longing.

In summary, Sonnet 34 from "Amoretti" exemplifies Edmund Spenser's lyrical prowess and his exploration of themes such as love, longing, and resilience within the structured form of the sonnet.

11.7 Summary

In summary, Edmund Spenser's works, particularly "The Faerie Queene," "Amoretti," and "The Shepheardes Calendar," established him as a central figure in the development of English Renaissance literature. His mastery of allegory, his exploration of moral and ethical themes, and his poetic innovations continue to captivate readers and scholars alike, ensuring his enduring legacy in the canon of English literature.

11.8 Key Takeaways

- Spenser's works reflect the political and cultural climate of Elizabethan England, celebrating Queen Elizabeth I and promoting a vision of moral and national renewal.
- His dedication to the queen in "The Faerie Queene" underscores his allegiance to the Tudor monarchy and his aspirations for social and political harmony.

- His contributions to English literature established him as a central figure in the Renaissance literary canon, influencing generations of poets and writers who followed.
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11.9 Review Questions

1. How does Spenser use nature imagery in the "Amoretti" sonnets to convey the emotions of love and longing?
 2. Explore the role of mythological and classical references in Spenser's "Amoretti." How do these references contribute to the depth of meaning in the sonnets?
 3. How do the cultural and social contexts of Elizabethan England influence the themes and expressions of love in Spenser's "Amoretti"?
 4. In Sonnet 34 of the "Amoretti," how does Edmund Spenser use metaphorical imagery to convey the speaker's emotional journey in love?
 5. Discuss the significance of the ship and the star imagery in portraying the speaker's experience of longing and hope.
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UNIT 12: SHAKESPEARE: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

STRUCTURE

- 12.1 Objectives
 - 12.2 Introduction
 - 12.3 Shakespeare's Sonnets
 - 12.4 Literary Significance
 - 12.5 That Time of the Year (Sonnet 73)
 - 12.6 Interpretation of the Poem
 - 12.7 Summary
 - 12.8 Key Takeaways
 - 12.9 Review Questions
 - 12.10 References
-

12.1 Objectives

- To know how great a poet Shakespeare was in terms of using imageries expressing the vicissitudes of life
 - To familiarise ourselves with sonnets, a particular form of writing poetry
 - To critically evaluate life and death as portrayed by Shakespeare.
 - To know about the rhyming scheme of this sonnet.
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12.2 Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is widely regarded as one of the greatest playwrights and poets in the English language and is often referred to as England's national poet. His works have had a profound and lasting influence on literature, theatre, and the English language itself. Here's an introduction to Shakespeare:

Early Life and Background:

- **Birth and Early Years:** William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, in April 1564. His exact date of birth is not known, but he was baptized on April 26, 1564. He was the third child of John Shakespeare, a successful glove-maker and local politician, and Mary Arden, from a wealthy family in Warwickshire.
- **Education:** Shakespeare attended the local grammar school in Stratford, where he would have received a solid education in Latin grammar and literature. There is no record of him attending university.

Career in Theater:

- **Move to London:** In the late 1580s or early 1590s, Shakespeare moved to London, where he became involved in the theater scene.

- **Actor and Playwright:** He began his career as an actor and playwright, eventually becoming a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a popular playing company that later became the King's Men under King James I.
- **Literary Output:** Shakespeare wrote a diverse range of plays, including comedies, tragedies, and histories, totaling 37 plays that are recognized today. Some of his most famous works include "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Othello," "King Lear," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Literary Contributions:

- **Poetry:** In addition to his plays, Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, published in 1609, which explore themes of love, time, beauty, and mortality. His sonnets are admired for their lyrical beauty, emotional depth, and profound insights into human nature.
- **Language and Influence:** Shakespeare's impact on the English language cannot be overstated. He enriched the language with thousands of words and phrases, many of which are still in common usage today. His plays and poetry continue to be studied, performed, and celebrated worldwide.

Legacy:

- **Cultural Icon:** Shakespeare's works are considered timeless classics that transcend time and culture. They have been translated into numerous languages and adapted into various forms, including opera, ballet, film, and television.
- **Literary Influence:** His innovative use of language, characterization, dramatic structure, and exploration of universal themes have influenced countless writers, playwrights, and poets across centuries.
- **Global Significance:** Shakespeare's legacy extends beyond literature and theater to encompass broader cultural, philosophical, and political dimensions. His works continue to provoke thought, inspire creativity, and resonate with audiences around the globe.

12.3 Shakespeare's Sonnets

1. Sonnet Sequence:

- Shakespeare wrote a sequence of 154 sonnets, which were first published in 1609. These sonnets are considered among the finest in English literature and are divided into two main groups: the Fair Youth Sonnets (1-126) and the Dark Lady Sonnets (127-152).

2. Themes and Subjects:

- The Fair Youth Sonnets predominantly address a young man, often described as handsome and virtuous. They explore themes of love, friendship, time, beauty, and the complexities of relationships.
- The Dark Lady Sonnets focus on a mysterious and seductive woman. They delve into themes of lust, betrayal, obsession, and the darker aspects of romantic relationships.

3. Structure and Form:

- Shakespearean sonnets, also known as English sonnets, consist of 14 lines written in iambic pentameter.

- The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, where each quatrain (four-line stanza) develops a specific idea or theme, and the final couplet often provides a conclusion, resolution, or twist.
4. **Poetic Techniques:**
- Shakespeare employs various poetic techniques in his sonnets, including metaphor, imagery, wordplay, and rhetorical devices.
 - His language is rich with emotional intensity and vivid imagery, capturing the complexities of human emotions and relationships.

12.4 Literary Significance

Literary Significance:

1. **Influence on English Literature:**
 - Shakespeare's sonnets have had a profound influence on English poetry and literature. They set a benchmark for poetic craftsmanship and emotional depth, inspiring countless poets and writers.
 - His exploration of universal themes in the sonnets continues to resonate with readers across different cultures and time periods.
2. **Experimental Nature:**
 - While adhering to the conventions of the sonnet form, Shakespeare also subverts and plays with traditional Petrarchan and Elizabethan sonnet conventions.
 - He experiments with themes of love, desire, beauty, and mortality, offering nuanced perspectives and challenging readers' expectations.
3. **Personal and Artistic Expression:**
 - Shakespeare's sonnets are believed to reflect his personal emotions and experiences, though the identities of the Fair Youth and Dark Lady remain subjects of speculation.
 - They showcase his ability to blend personal introspection with universal truths, creating a timeless appeal that resonates with readers and scholars alike.

12.5 That Time of the Year (Sonnet 73)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west;
 Which by and by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
 Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

12.6 Interpretation of the Poem

□ Theme of Aging and Mortality:

- The sonnet explores the themes of aging, decay, and mortality. The speaker compares himself to the changing seasons and natural processes of decline.
- Images of autumnal leaves, bare branches, and twilight evoke a sense of transience and the passage of time.

□ Metaphorical Imagery:

- Shakespeare uses vivid metaphors to convey the speaker's condition. The "yellow leaves" and "bare ruined choirs" suggest a sense of loss and decline, akin to nature preparing for winter.
- The comparison of the speaker's life to a dying fire emphasizes the inevitability of death and the fleeting nature of human existence.

□ Structure and Language:

- The sonnet follows the typical Shakespearean (or English) sonnet form with 14 lines in iambic pentameter and a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCDEFEFGG.
- The language is reflective and contemplative, with a melancholic tone that underscores the speaker's acceptance of his mortality.

□ Emotional Resonance:

- Despite the somber themes, the sonnet also conveys a sense of acceptance and even resilience in the face of mortality.
- The concluding couplet shifts the focus to the enduring power of love, suggesting that the awareness of mortality intensifies the speaker's affection.

□ Impact and Interpretation:

- "Sonnet 73" is often interpreted as a meditation on the passage of time, the inevitability of death, and the consolation found in love and human connection.
- Its universal themes and evocative imagery continue to resonate with readers, making it one of Shakespeare's most beloved and analyzed sonnets.

12.7 Summary

"Sonnet 73" exemplifies Shakespeare's ability to use poetic language and imagery to explore profound human experiences and emotions. Its themes of aging, mortality, and the enduring power of love ensure its enduring relevance and appeal to readers across different cultures and generations.

In essence, "Sonnet 73" captures the essence of Shakespeare's exploration of life's fleeting nature and the timeless beauty found in accepting mortality with grace and love. William Shakespeare remains a towering figure in the world of literature and theater, renowned for his unparalleled mastery of language, profound understanding of human nature, and enduring contributions to the arts and humanities. His legacy as a playwright, poet, and cultural icon continues to enrich and inspire generations of readers, scholars, and artists worldwide.

12.8 Key Takeaways

- Sonnet 73 follows the traditional Shakespearean sonnet structure, consisting of 14 lines.
 - It is divided into three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a final couplet, each contributing to the development of a single theme or idea.
 - The rhyme scheme of Sonnet 73 is ABABCDCEFEFGG.
 - This rhyme scheme is typical of Shakespearean sonnets, where the quatrains explore different aspects of the theme and the couplet offers a concluding resolution or reflection.
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12.9 Review Questions

1. How does Shakespeare use seasonal imagery (e.g., "yellow leaves," "bare ruined choirs") to convey the speaker's condition in Sonnet 73? What do these images symbolize?
 2. Discuss the significance of the fire imagery in the sonnet. How does it enhance the theme of aging and mortality?
 3. What is the central theme of Sonnet 73? How does the speaker reflect on the passage of time and the inevitability of death?
 4. Discuss the emotional tone of Sonnet 73. How does Shakespeare convey both melancholy and acceptance in the sonnet?
 5. Compare Sonnet 73 with another Shakespearean sonnet or poem that explores similar themes. What similarities and differences do you observe in their treatment of mortality and human existence?
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12.10 References

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UNIT 13: BEN JOHNSON: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

STRUCTURE

- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Introduction
- 13.3 Ben Johnson and Poetry
- 13.4 Major Works and Collections
- 13.5 Song to Celia – The Poem
- 13.6 Interpretation of the Poem
- 13.7 Summary
- 13.8 Key Takeaways
- 13.9 Review Questions
- 13.10 References

13.1 Objectives

The intent of this poem is to:

- Provide a brief note on Ben Jonson.
 - Help the Learners read the poem themselves and form opinions on their own.
 - Critically analyze the poem in order to make the meanings clearer and understanding better.
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13.2 Introduction

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was an influential English playwright, poet, and literary critic of the Jacobean era. Here's an introduction to Ben Jonson and his contributions to English literature:

Early Life and Education:

- **Birth and Background:** Ben Jonson was born in 1572 in Westminster, London. His father died shortly before his birth, leaving the family in financial difficulty. Jonson received a classical education at Westminster School, where he studied Latin and the classics.
- **Apprenticeship and Military Service:** Jonson briefly worked as a bricklayer and then served in the military in Flanders (present-day Belgium) before returning to London to pursue a career in theater and literature.

Career in Theater:

- **Playwright:** Jonson is best known for his plays, which include comedies, tragedies, and masques. His early plays, such as "Every Man in His Humour" (1598) and "Volpone" (1605), established him as a leading playwright of the time.

- **Satirical and Moral Themes:** Jonson's plays often satirized contemporary social and political issues, and they were known for their moral themes and characters driven by single passions or humours.

Poetry and Literary Criticism:

- **Poetry:** In addition to his plays, Jonson was a prolific poet. He wrote lyrical poetry, epigrams, and elegies, often drawing inspiration from classical Roman poets like Horace and Martial. His poetry is characterized by its clarity, wit, and craftsmanship.
- **Literary Criticism:** Jonson contributed significantly to English literary criticism. His essay "On Shakespeare" (published in the First Folio of Shakespeare's works, 1623) is one of the earliest critical appraisals of Shakespeare's plays.

Courtly and Masque Performances:

- **Courtly Entertainments:** Jonson wrote masques—elaborate theatrical performances combining poetry, music, dance, and extravagant costumes—for the court of King James I. His masques, such as "The Masque of Blackness" (1605), were highly popular and showcased his versatility as a writer.

Legacy and Influence:

- **Literary Legacy:** Ben Jonson's works had a profound influence on English literature. He is considered one of the most important playwrights of the Jacobean era, alongside William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe.
- **Intellectual Legacy:** Jonson's emphasis on classical learning, craftsmanship in writing, and moral integrity shaped English literary tastes in the early 17th century and contributed to the development of English Renaissance literature.
- **Recognition:** Jonson was appointed England's first Poet Laureate in 1616, and he was highly respected by his contemporaries for his literary talents and intellectual rigor.

13.3 Ben Johnson and Poetry

Poetry Style and Themes:

1. **Classical Influence:**
 - Jonson admired and emulated classical Roman poets like Horace and Martial. His poetry often reflects a disciplined and formal style, characterized by clarity, balance, and precision in language.
2. **Satire and Wit:**
 - Jonson's poetry includes satirical elements, where he criticizes social and political issues of his time with sharp wit and humor. His satire is often directed at hypocrisy, vanity, and moral corruption.
3. **Epigrams and Short Poems:**
 - Jonson was particularly skilled in writing epigrams—short, witty poems that often make a pointed comment or observation. His epigrams are known for their clever wordplay and keen insights into human nature.

4. **Celebration of Friendship and Country Life:**

- Jonson wrote several poems celebrating the joys of friendship, loyalty, and the simple pleasures of rural life. These poems often reflect a nostalgic longing for a more pastoral and idyllic world.

13.4 Major Works and Collections

1. **"The Forest" (1616):**

- This collection includes some of Jonson's most celebrated poems, such as "To Celia" (often mistakenly attributed to Shakespeare), "To Penshurst," and "Song: To Celia."

2. **Masques and Courtly Poetry:**

- Jonson also composed poetry for court masques—elaborate theatrical entertainments performed at court. His masques blended poetry, music, dance, and elaborate costumes, showcasing his versatility as a poet and playwright.

Influence and Legacy:

1. **Literary Criticism:**

- Jonson's impact extended beyond his own poetry. He played a crucial role in the development of English literary criticism, advocating for a more disciplined approach to writing and emphasizing the importance of classical models.

2. **Successor to Shakespeare:**

- Jonson was considered a literary rival to Shakespeare during their time. While their styles differed—Shakespeare's works were more expansive and varied, while Jonson's were more controlled and polished—both writers contributed significantly to the richness of Jacobean literature.

3. **Cultural Significance:**

- Jonson's poetry continues to be studied and admired for its craftsmanship, wit, and insights into human nature. His influence can be seen in subsequent generations of poets who valued clarity, precision, and intellectual depth in their writing.

13.5 Song to Celia – The Poem

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee

As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be.

But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee!

13.6 Interpretation of the Poem

Analysis:

1. **Themes:**

- **Love and Devotion:** The poem expresses deep love and devotion to Celia, emphasizing the speaker's desire for her affection and the sweetness of her presence.
- **Beauty of Nature:** The imagery of the rosy wreath and its transformation symbolize the enduring beauty and fragrance inspired by Celia.

2. **Structure and Language:**

- **Stanza Structure:** The poem consists of two stanzas, each with eight lines (octave), following a regular rhyme scheme (ABABCDCD).
- **Language and Imagery:** Jonson employs vivid imagery and metaphors (e.g., drinking to each other with eyes, nectar of Jove) to convey the intensity of his feelings and the ethereal beauty of Celia.

3. **Rhetorical Devices:**

- **Hyperbole:** The speaker exaggerates his devotion by comparing Celia's kiss to divine nectar.
- **Personification:** The wreath is personified as if it could feel and respond to Celia's breath, emphasizing the connection between her and the natural world.

4. **Musical Quality:**

- The poem's meter and rhyme scheme contribute to its musicality and lyrical quality, enhancing its appeal as a song or a poem meant to be sung or recited.
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13.7 Summary

"Song to Celia" has remained popular and has been adapted into songs, musical compositions, and literary analyses. Its themes of love, beauty, and the transience of nature continue to resonate with readers and audiences. In summary, Ben Jonson's "Song to Celia" is a lyrical poem that celebrates love, beauty, and the enduring power of nature. Its elegant language, evocative imagery, and heartfelt sentiments make it a timeless piece in English literature.

13.8 Key Takeaways

- The poem consists of two stanzas, each with eight lines (octave), following a regular rhyme scheme (ABABCDCD).
- Jonson uses vivid imagery and metaphorical language (e.g., "Drink to me only with thine

eyes") to convey the intensity of the speaker's emotions and the purity of his love for Celia.

- The poem's rhythmic flow, enhanced by its meter and rhyme scheme, gives it a musical quality that adds to its appeal as a song or poem meant to be sung or recited.

13.9 Review Questions

1. Describe the structure of "Song to Celia." How does Jonson organize the poem into stanzas, and what is the effect of this structure on the poem's overall meaning?
2. Why do you think "Song to Celia" has remained popular over the centuries? How do its themes of love, beauty, and romantic idealism resonate with readers across different cultures and time periods?
3. Compare "Song to Celia" with another poem that explores similar themes of love and devotion. What similarities and differences do you observe in their treatment of romantic relationships and emotions?
4. How does "Song to Celia" make you feel as a reader? What aspects of the poem do you find most captivating or thought-provoking?
5. Explore the use of imagery and figurative language (e.g., metaphors, personification) in the poem. How do these literary devices enhance the poem's themes and emotional impact?

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UNIT 14: JOHN DONNE: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

STRUCTURE

- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Introduction
- 14.3 John Donne and Poetry
- 14.4 Major Themes in Donne's Poetry
- 14.5 The Sun Rising
- 14.6 Interpretation of the Poem
- 14.7 Summary
- 14.8 Key Takeaways
- 14.9 Review Questions
- 14.10 References

14.1 Objectives

In this unit, we shall introduce you to John Donne who wrote towards the end of the 16th century and early 17th century. Donne and a few of his contemporaries - Marvell, Crashaw, Vaughan and Herbert - are known as the Metaphysical Poets. A study of this unit will enable you:

- to distinguish the characteristics of metaphysical poetry
- to recognise the distinction between Milton's religious sonnet ('ON HIS BLINDNESS') and Donne's 'HOLY SONNET X'.
- to analyse the two poems of Donne – 'The Sunne Rising' and 'Holy Sonnet X' which are included in your course.

14.2 Introduction

John Donne (1572-1631) was an English poet, satirist, lawyer, and cleric in the Church of England. He is often regarded as one of the greatest metaphysical poets, known for his complex and intellectually rigorous verse. Here's an introduction to John Donne and his contributions to literature:

Early Life and Education:

- **Birth and Background:** John Donne was born in 1572 in London, England, into a Roman Catholic family at a time of religious turmoil in England. His family faced persecution due to their Catholic faith.
- **Education:** Donne received education at home and then attended Hart Hall (now Hertford College), Oxford, and later studied law at the Inns of Court in London. He also traveled across Europe, which exposed him to various intellectual and cultural influences.

Career and Literary Works:

- **Poetry:** Donne's poetry is characterized by its intellectual depth, wit, and use of metaphysical conceits—extended metaphors that draw unexpected parallels between dissimilar things. His early works include love poems, satires, elegies, and religious verse.
- **Major Works:** Some of Donne's notable works include:
 - **"Songs and Sonnets" (published 1633):** This collection includes famous poems like "The Flea," "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," and "The Sun Rising," which explore themes of love, spirituality, and the human condition.
 - **Holy Sonnets:** Donne's religious poetry, including his series of Holy Sonnets, reflects his profound spiritual struggles and search for divine grace.
- **Prose:** Donne also wrote prose works, such as sermons and essays, which demonstrate his skill as a rhetorician and theologian. His sermons are known for their intellectual rigor and eloquence.

Metaphysical Poetry:

- **Definition:** Donne is considered a central figure in the metaphysical poetry movement, which emerged in the 17th century. Metaphysical poets, including Donne, used elaborate metaphors and explored complex philosophical and theological themes.
- **Distinctive Style:** Donne's poetry often combines intellectual exploration with emotional intensity. His use of wit, paradox, and unconventional imagery challenges readers to contemplate profound truths and mysteries.

Religious Conversion and Later Life:

- **Conversion to Anglicanism:** Donne converted from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism in his early thirties, a decision that influenced his later poetry and sermons.
- **Career as a Cleric:** Donne's religious convictions deepened, and he eventually became a prominent cleric in the Church of England, serving as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Legacy and Influence:

- **Literary Impact:** Donne's poetry and prose have had a lasting impact on English literature. His innovative use of language and exploration of complex themes influenced later poets, including T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats.
- **Critical Reception:** Donne's work fell out of favor in the 18th century but experienced a revival in the 20th century when his metaphysical style and intellectual engagement were reassessed and celebrated.

14.3 John Donne and Poetry

Poetic Style and Characteristics:

- **Metaphysical Poetry:** Donne is considered a central figure in the metaphysical poetry movement. Metaphysical poetry is characterized by intellectual exploration, elaborate metaphors (known as conceits), and a blend of emotion and thought.

- **Conceits:** Donne's poetry often uses complex and extended metaphors that draw unexpected parallels between dissimilar things, challenging readers to contemplate profound truths and ideas.

14.4 Major Themes in Donne's Poetry

1. Love and Sensuality:

- Donne's love poetry explores themes of physical and spiritual love, often intertwining the sacred and the profane. His poems like "The Flea" and "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" showcase his exploration of love in various forms.

2. Religious Themes:

- Later in life, Donne's poetry shifted to focus on religious themes, reflecting his conversion to Anglicanism and his later career as a cleric. His Holy Sonnets and divine poems explore themes of sin, redemption, and divine grace.

3. Death and Mortality:

- Donne's poetry also engages with themes of death and mortality. His poem "Death, be not proud" is a meditation on the nature of death and the power of faith to overcome it.

Poetic Techniques and Innovations:

- **Use of Language:** Donne's poetry is known for its linguistic complexity, wit, and intellectual depth. He employs intricate wordplay, paradoxes, and vivid imagery to explore his themes.
- **Rhythm and Meter:** Donne's mastery of meter, particularly his use of irregular rhythms and dramatic pauses, adds to the expressive power of his verse.

14.5 The Sun Rising

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
 Why dost thou thus,
 Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
 Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
 Late schoolboys and sour prentices,
 Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
 Call country ants to harvest offices;
 Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
 Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
 Why shouldst thou think?

I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long.
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both the Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, "All here in one bed lay."

She's all states, and all princes I;
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic; all wealth alchemy.
Thou, Sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.

14.6 Interpretation of the Poem

Analysis:

1. **Speaker's Address to the Sun:**
 - The poem begins with the speaker addressing the sun in an accusatory tone, calling it a "busy old fool" and a "saucy pedantic wretch." The speaker is annoyed that the sun is disturbing their privacy and love-filled moments with its intrusive rays.
2. **Rejection of Time and Seasons:**
 - The speaker dismisses the sun's importance and mocks its role in dictating time and seasons to lovers. The idea that love transcends such temporal constraints is a central theme of the poem.
3. **Celebration of Love and Intimacy:**
 - The poem celebrates the intimacy between the speaker and their lover, suggesting that their love is all-encompassing and timeless. The lover is described as "all states, and all princes," suggesting that their union transcends social status and worldly honors.
4. **Metaphysical Conceit:**
 - Donne employs a metaphysical conceit by comparing the lover's bedroom to the entire universe. The speaker argues that the lover's bed is the center of the universe and that the sun should shine there, as it represents the entire world.

5. Wit and Paradox:

- Donne's use of wit and paradox is evident throughout the poem, such as when the speaker suggests they could eclipse the sun with a wink. This technique challenges conventional ideas and invites readers to consider alternative perspectives on love and cosmic order.

6. Conclusion:

- The poem concludes with a playful invitation for the sun to shine upon the lovers, acknowledging that its duty to warm the world is fulfilled by warming their intimate space.

14.7 Summary

"The Sun Rising" exemplifies John Donne's mastery of metaphysical poetry, blending intellectual depth with emotional intensity to explore themes of love, intimacy, and the human condition. John Donne's poetry remains celebrated for its intellectual complexity, emotional depth, and profound engagement with themes of love, religion, and mortality. His exploration of metaphysical themes and innovative use of language continue to captivate readers and influence poets to this day, solidifying his place as one of the greatest poets in English literature.

14.8 Key Takeaways

- The poem celebrates the intense and all-consuming nature of love. Donne portrays the lover's relationship as the center of the universe, where everything else—including the sun's duties—is insignificant compared to the lover's presence.
- Donne challenges conventional notions of time and authority. He mocks the sun for interrupting the lovers' intimate moments and dismisses its role in dictating time and seasons.
- Through its metaphysical conceit, the poem explores the relationship between microcosm (the lovers' world) and macrocosm (the universe). Donne uses paradoxes and wit to examine profound philosophical questions about existence and human experience.

14.9 Review Questions

1. How does Donne portray the theme of love in "The Sun Rising"?
2. What imagery and metaphors does he use to convey the intensity of the speaker's feelings towards their lover?
3. How does Donne challenge conventional notions of time and the sun's role in dictating human affairs?
4. Analyze the metaphysical conceit in "The Sun Rising," where the speaker compares the lover's bedroom to the entire universe.
5. How does Donne use imagery and language to create vivid pictures and evoke strong emotions in

the poem?

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UNIT 15: THE DECLINE OF RENAISSANCE POETRY AND THE RISE OF THE NEOCLASSICAL STYLE

STRUCTURE

- 15.1 Objectives
 - 15.2 Introduction
 - 15.3 Characteristics of Renaissance Poetry
 - 15.4 The Decline of Renaissance Poetry
 - 15.5 The Rise of the Neoclassical Style
 - 15.6 Key Characteristics of Neoclassical Poetry
 - 15.7 Influence of Classical Literature
 - 15.8 Critical Reception and Legacy
 - 15.9 Summary
 - 15.10 Key Terms
 - 15.11 Review Questions
 - 15.12 References
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15.1 Objectives

This unit is intended to equip the student with a basic knowledge of Renaissance poetry and its broader ramifications. To this end, the unit will:

- To examine the characteristics and themes of Renaissance poetry and its eventual decline.
 - To explore the emergence of the Neoclassical style and its defining features.
 - To analyze the cultural, social, and historical factors contributing to the transition from Renaissance to Neoclassical poetry.
 - To assess the influence of classical literature on the Neoclassical poets and their works.
 - To evaluate the critical reception of both Renaissance and Neoclassical poetry.
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15.2 Introduction

The Renaissance, spanning roughly from the 14th to the early 17th century, was a period marked by a resurgence of interest in classical antiquity and a flourishing of the arts and literature. This era produced a wealth of poetic works characterized by themes of love, beauty, and humanism, with poets like William Shakespeare, John Donne, and Edmund Spenser leading the charge. However, by the late 17th century, the exuberance of Renaissance poetry began to decline, giving way to the rise of the Neoclassical style.

Neoclassicism, influenced by the ideals of ancient Greek and Roman literature, emphasized reason, order, and adherence to established forms. Poets such as Alexander Pope and John Dryden became prominent figures during this transition, focusing on themes of moral virtue, decorum, and social commentary. The shift from the emotional and individualistic expression of the Renaissance to the

rational and structured approach of the Neoclassical period marked a significant evolution in English literature. This topic explores the factors contributing to this decline and rise, examining the characteristics of both poetic movements and their lasting impact on literary history.

15.3 Characteristics of Renaissance Poetry

Renaissance poetry is characterized by its emphasis on humanism, individualism, and a celebration of beauty and nature. Poets of this period drew inspiration from classical sources, often incorporating elements of mythology and allegory into their works. The sonnet form gained popularity, particularly through the influence of Petrarchan and Shakespearean structures. Themes of love, desire, and the fleeting nature of beauty permeate the poetry of this time, reflecting a deep appreciation for human experience and emotion.

The use of metaphor and imagery is prominent in Renaissance poetry, with poets employing elaborate language and rhetorical devices to convey their thoughts and feelings. Additionally, the exploration of philosophical and spiritual questions became a hallmark of the period, as poets sought to understand the complexities of existence. This rich tapestry of themes and styles culminated in a vibrant literary culture that celebrated the individual voice.

Check Your Progress

- 1. Discuss the chief characteristics of Renaissance poetry.**

15.4 The Decline of Renaissance Poetry

By the late 17th century, the exuberance of Renaissance poetry began to wane due to a combination of cultural and societal shifts. The English Civil War, political upheaval, and the Restoration period led to a more conservative atmosphere, causing poets to adapt their styles to reflect the changing times. The focus shifted from personal expression and individualism to societal norms, order, and decorum.

As the ideals of the Renaissance began to clash with the emerging sensibilities of the age, the emotional and often extravagant expressions of Renaissance poetry fell out of favor. Critics began to question the relevance of the themes and styles of the previous century, leading to a decline in the popularity of Renaissance poets. The shift in audience tastes and the changing cultural landscape contributed significantly to the decline of this poetic form, paving the way for the rise of the Neoclassical style.

15.5 The Rise of the Neoclassical Style

Neoclassicism emerged as a reaction against the excesses of the Renaissance, embracing the principles of clarity, order, and restraint. Influenced by classical literature and philosophy, Neoclassical poets sought to emulate the styles and themes of ancient Greek and Roman authors. They emphasized reason and logic over emotion, focusing on the moral and didactic aspects of poetry.

15.6 Key Characteristics of Neoclassical Poetry

Key characteristics of Neoclassical poetry include the use of heroic couplets, a structured approach to form, and a focus on social commentary. Poets like Alexander Pope and John Dryden became prominent figures of this movement, using their works to critique society, politics, and human behaviour. The emphasis on wit, satire, and moral instruction became defining features of Neoclassical poetry, as poets sought to engage readers through intellectual and philosophical discourse.

15.7 Influence of Classical Literature

Classical literature played a crucial role in shaping the Neoclassical style, providing models for poetic form and content. Neoclassical poets drew inspiration from ancient texts, particularly in their use of classical mythology, themes of heroism, and the exploration of human nature. The works of authors such as Homer, Virgil, and Horace served as benchmarks for Neoclassical poets, who sought to emulate their elegance and precision.

This return to classical ideals also reflected a broader cultural movement toward rationalism and empiricism, which emphasized the importance of reason and observation in understanding the world. The influence of classical literature reinforced the Neoclassical emphasis on order, harmony, and the moral dimensions of art, distinguishing it from the more personal and emotional expressions of Renaissance poetry.

15.8 Critical Reception and Legacy

The transition from Renaissance to Neoclassical poetry has been the subject of extensive critical analysis. While some critics view the Neoclassical style as a decline in poetic expression due to its rigid adherence to form and decorum, others recognize its significance in shaping modern literary sensibilities. The Neoclassical emphasis on reason and social responsibility laid the groundwork for later movements, including Romanticism, which would react against its constraints.

The legacy of both Renaissance and Neoclassical poetry continues to be felt in contemporary literature. The exploration of human experience, emotion, and the use of poetic form have influenced generations of writers, making these periods essential to the study of English literature.

15.9 Summary

The decline of Renaissance poetry and the rise of the Neoclassical style mark a significant transition in English literary history. While Renaissance poetry celebrated individual expression and emotional depth, the Neoclassical movement embraced reason, order, and moral instruction. This shift was influenced by cultural and societal changes, as well as the enduring impact of classical literature. Understanding this evolution provides insight into the complexities of poetic expression and the ongoing dialogue between form and content in literature.

15.10 Key Terms

- Renaissance: A cultural and intellectual movement that emphasized humanism, individualism,

and a return to classical antiquity.

- Neoclassicism: A literary movement characterized by a return to classical ideals, focusing on reason, order, and moral instruction.
 - Heroic Couplets: A form of verse consisting of two rhymed lines of iambic pentameter, commonly used in Neoclassical poetry.
 - Satire: A literary technique that uses humor, irony, or ridicule to criticize or mock societal norms and human behaviour.
 - Decorum: The principle of appropriateness in literary style and content, emphasizing a proper relationship between subject matter and expression.
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15.11 Review Questions

1. What are the key characteristics of Renaissance poetry, and how do they differ from those of Neoclassical poetry?
 2. How did cultural and societal shifts contribute to the decline of Renaissance poetry?
 3. Discuss the significance of classical literature in shaping the Neoclassical style.
 4. What role did poets like Alexander Pope and John Dryden play in the development of Neoclassical poetry?
 5. How does the transition from Renaissance to Neoclassical poetry reflect broader changes in literary and cultural sensibilities?
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BLOCK-4: SHAKESPEARE

UNIT 16: Shakespeare and The Age

UNIT 17: Shakespeare and Rise of Drama

UNIT 18: Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'

UNIT 19: Shakespeare and The Beginning of 17th Century

UNIT 20: The Legacy of William Shakespeare
in Global Literature and Culture

UNIT 16: SHAKESPEARE AND THE AGE

STRUCTURE

- 16.1 Objectives
- 16.2 Introduction
- 16.3 Historical Context
- 16.4 Shakespeare's Life and Works
- 16.5 Cultural and Intellectual Movements
- 16.6 Shakespeare's Impact on Language
- 16.7 Summary
- 16.8 Key Takeaways
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16.1 Objectives

In this Block, we will try to analyse one of Shakespeare's tragedies. Even though Shakespeare has written a number of tragedies and comedies, four of them are the most well-known: i) Othello, ii) King Lear, iii) Hamlet and iv) Macbeth.

16.2 Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) lived during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in England, a time marked by significant cultural, political, and intellectual developments. Here's an overview of Shakespeare and his age:

16.3 Historical Context

Historical Context:

1. Elizabethan Era (1558-1603):

- **Cultural Renaissance:** The Elizabethan era was a period of flourishing cultural and artistic achievement in England. It saw the rise of English Renaissance literature, drama, poetry, and music.
- **Political Stability:** Under Queen Elizabeth I, England experienced relative political stability, economic growth, and expansion of international trade and exploration.
- **Religious Tensions:** Despite the stability, there were religious tensions, with the Elizabethan Settlement attempting to reconcile Protestant and Catholic factions.

2. Jacobean Era (1603-1625):

- **Transition and Change:** The Jacobean era began with the accession of King James I (James VI of Scotland), succeeding Elizabeth I. It continued the cultural vitality of the Elizabethan era but with distinct changes in politics and society.

- **Literary Development:** The era saw the continuation of literary and theatrical achievements, with Shakespeare's later plays and the works of other playwrights like Ben Jonson.

16.4 Shakespeare's Life and Works

- **Literary Output:** Shakespeare is known for his extensive body of work, including 38 plays, 154 sonnets, and two long narrative poems. His plays cover a wide range of genres—from comedies like "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Twelfth Night" to tragedies such as "Hamlet" and "Macbeth."
- **Theater and Performance:** Shakespeare was closely associated with the Globe Theatre in London, where many of his plays were performed. His works were popular among both the aristocracy and the common people, reflecting a broad appeal across social classes.
- **Influence and Legacy:** Shakespeare's influence on English literature and the theater has been profound. His plays continue to be performed worldwide and studied for their exploration of human nature, complex characters, and enduring themes such as love, power, ambition, and mortality.

16.5 Cultural and Intellectual Movements

- **Humanism:** Shakespeare's works often reflect humanist ideals, exploring the complexities of human emotions, relationships, and moral dilemmas.
- **Renaissance Ideas:** The Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were characterized by a revival of classical learning, with a renewed interest in ancient Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, and art influencing English culture.
- **Theater and Society:** The theater was a vibrant part of Elizabethan and Jacobean society, serving as a platform for social commentary, political critique, and entertainment.

16.6 Shakespeare's Impact on Language

1. **Language and Expression:** Shakespeare's innovative use of language, including the introduction of new words and phrases, enriched the English language and contributed to its evolution.
2. **Idioms and Proverbs:** Many idioms and expressions in modern English have their origins in Shakespeare's plays, demonstrating his lasting linguistic legacy.

16.7 Summary

William Shakespeare's life and works are inseparable from the dynamic cultural and intellectual milieu of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. His contributions to literature, language, and theater have left an indelible mark on Western culture, making him one of the most revered and influential figures in English literature.

16.8 Key Takeaways

- **Diverse Genres:** Shakespeare wrote plays across various genres, including comedies (e.g., "A Midsummer Night's Dream"), tragedies (e.g., "Hamlet," "Othello"), histories (e.g., "Henry V," "Richard III"), and romances (e.g., "The Tempest").
 - **Complex Characters:** Shakespeare created multifaceted and psychologically complex characters that explore universal themes such as love, jealousy, ambition, and betrayal. Characters like Hamlet, Macbeth, and Romeo have become archetypes in literature.
 - **Language and Poetry:** Shakespeare's command of language and poetic techniques, such as iambic pentameter and metaphorical language, enriched his plays and contributed to their enduring appeal. His sonnets also showcase his skill in lyrical poetry.
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16.9 Review Questions

1. How did the political landscape of the Elizabethan era, under Queen Elizabeth I, influence Shakespeare's works?
 2. What were the key social and political changes in England during the transition from the Elizabethan era to the Jacobean era under King James I? How did these changes affect Shakespeare's later works?
 3. How did the theaters of Shakespeare's time, such as the Globe Theatre, shape the presentation and reception of his plays? What was the role of theater in Elizabethan and Jacobean society?
 4. Who were Shakespeare's literary influences, both English and international? How did these influences manifest in his plays and poetry?
 5. What recurring themes and motifs are present in Shakespeare's works? How do these themes reflect the concerns and values of his age?
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UNIT 17: SHAKESPEARE AND RISE OF DRAMA

STRUCTURE

- 17.1 Objectives
 - 17.2 Introduction
 - 17.3 Shakespeare's Contributions
 - 17.4 Influence on Drama
 - 17.5 Shakespearean Tragedy
 - 17.6 Impact and Legacy
 - 17.7 Summary
 - 17.8 Key Takeaways
 - 17.9 Review Questions
 - 17.10 References
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17.1 Objectives

Studying the rise of drama helps to understand the historical and cultural context in which dramatic literature evolved. It provides insights into the social, political, and economic factors that influenced the development of theatre and drama during specific periods, such as the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras in England. Drama reflects and critiques the values, beliefs, and societal norms of its time. Learning about the rise of drama helps to appreciate its cultural significance as a medium for exploring human experiences, emotions, and moral dilemmas.

17.2 Introduction

William Shakespeare played a pivotal role in the rise of drama during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras in England. Here's an exploration of Shakespeare's contributions to the development and popularity of drama during his time:

Historical Context:

1. **Emergence of Theaters:**

- During Shakespeare's lifetime (1564-1616), the theater scene in London experienced significant growth. Theaters like The Globe, The Rose, and The Blackfriars became popular venues for dramatic performances.

2. **Patronage and Audience:**

- The popularity of drama was supported by both royal patronage and a growing urban audience from diverse social backgrounds. Theaters attracted crowds seeking entertainment, education, and social interaction.

17.3 Shakespeare's Contributions

Range of Genres:

- Shakespeare wrote plays across a wide range of genres, including tragedies (e.g., "Hamlet," "Macbeth"), comedies (e.g., "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Twelfth Night"), histories (e.g., "Henry V," "Richard III"), and tragicomedies (e.g., "The Tempest," "The Winter's Tale"). This diverse output contributed to the richness and variety of English drama.

Complex Characters and Themes:

- Shakespeare's plays are characterized by complex characters who grapple with moral dilemmas, political intrigue, love, and ambition. His exploration of universal themes and human emotions resonated deeply with audiences of his time and continues to captivate audiences today.

Innovative Language and Style:

- Shakespeare's mastery of language, including his use of iambic pentameter, metaphor, and imagery, elevated English drama to new heights. His poetic techniques and inventive language continue to influence literary and theatrical expression.

Theatrical Techniques:

- Shakespeare's plays employed a variety of theatrical techniques, such as soliloquies, asides, and dramatic irony, to engage audiences and deepen characterization. His plays were designed to evoke emotional responses and provoke thought.

Cultural Impact:

Literary Legacy:

- Shakespeare's works have had a profound and enduring impact on English literature and global culture. His plays are studied, performed, and adapted worldwide, attesting to their universal themes and timeless relevance.

Shaping the English Language:

- Shakespeare's contribution to the English language is significant. He coined and popularized numerous words, phrases, and expressions that have become integral to the English lexicon.

17.4 Influence on Drama

□ Continued Popularity:

- The enduring popularity of Shakespeare’s plays has contributed to the ongoing appreciation and study of drama as an art form. His works have inspired generations of playwrights, actors, directors, and scholars.

□ Cultural Reflection:

- Shakespeare’s dramas reflect and critique the social, political, and moral issues of his time. Through his plays, he captured the complexities of human experience and challenged societal norms, leaving a lasting mark on the development of drama.

17.5 Shakespearean Tragedy

Shakespearean tragedy refers to a specific form of drama written by William Shakespeare that follows a particular structure and explores profound themes through tragic plotlines and characters. Here’s an exploration of Shakespearean tragedy and its key characteristics:

Key Characteristics of Shakespearean Tragedy:

1. **Tragic Hero:**
 - Central to Shakespearean tragedy is the concept of a tragic hero—a character of noble stature who possesses a fatal flaw (hamartia) that leads to their downfall. This flaw typically involves a moral weakness, such as ambition, jealousy, or hubris.
2. **Conflict and Plot:**
 - Shakespearean tragedies are driven by a central conflict or dilemma that escalates throughout the play. The plot often involves a series of events leading to a catastrophic conclusion, usually involving death or ruin.
3. **Themes of Fate and Destiny:**
 - Shakespearean tragedies often explore themes of fate, destiny, and the inevitability of human suffering. Characters grapple with forces beyond their control, and their actions have profound consequences.
4. **Structure and Language:**
 - The structure of Shakespearean tragedy typically includes five acts, each with its own rising action, climax, and resolution. Shakespeare’s use of poetic language, blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), and rhetorical devices enhances the emotional and dramatic impact of the play.
5. **Hubris and Moral Lessons:**
 - Tragic heroes in Shakespeare’s plays often exhibit hubris, excessive pride or arrogance, which blinds them to their own flaws and leads to their downfall. Through their tragic journey, Shakespeare imparts moral lessons about the consequences of unchecked ambition or moral compromise.

Examples of Shakespearean Tragedies:

1. **"Hamlet":**

- The play "Hamlet" explores the psychological turmoil of its titular character, Prince Hamlet, who seeks revenge for his father's murder. Hamlet's indecision and obsession with avenging his father's death ultimately lead to tragic consequences for himself and those around him.

2. **"Macbeth":**

- "Macbeth" portrays the ambitious rise and tragic fall of its protagonist, Macbeth, who is initially portrayed as a brave and loyal soldier. His unchecked ambition and ruthless pursuit of power drive him to commit murder and tyranny, leading to his own downfall.

3. **"Othello":**

- In "Othello," the tragic hero, Othello, is undone by jealousy and manipulation. The play explores themes of racial prejudice, deception, and the destructive power of jealousy as Othello's mistrust and insecurity lead to his tragic end.

4. **"King Lear":**

- "King Lear" depicts the downfall of its titular character, King Lear, whose tragic flaw is his inability to see beyond flattery and recognize genuine love and loyalty. The play explores themes of betrayal, filial ingratitude, and the consequences of pride.

17.6 Impact and Legacy

- Shakespearean tragedies have had a profound influence on Western literature and drama. They continue to be studied, performed, and adapted across different cultures and languages, reflecting their enduring relevance and universal appeal.
- Shakespeare's exploration of human frailty, moral ambiguity, and the inevitability of suffering resonates with audiences, making his tragedies timeless reflections on the complexities of the human condition.

17.7 Summary

In summary, Shakespearean tragedy represents a distinct form of drama characterized by its exploration of tragic heroes, fatal flaws, profound themes, and poetic language. Through his tragedies, Shakespeare delves into the depths of human experience, offering profound insights into the nature of power, ambition, love, and mortality.

17.8 Key Takeaways

- **Cultural Renaissance:** The rise of drama coincided with the broader cultural Renaissance in Europe, marked by a renewed interest in classical learning, literature, and the arts. In England, this period saw a flourishing of creativity and innovation in dramatic literature.

□ **Theater as Entertainment and Education:** The emergence of theaters like The Globe and The Rose provided venues for both entertainment and education. Drama became a popular form of public entertainment, attracting audiences from diverse social backgrounds and contributing to the growth of urban culture.

□ **Development of Theatrical Techniques:** Playwrights and theater practitioners developed new techniques in staging, characterization, and dramatic structure. The use of soliloquies, asides, and elaborate stagecraft enhanced the dramatic impact of performances and engaged audiences emotionally and intellectually.

□ **Exploration of Human Experience:** Drama served as a vehicle for exploring complex themes and universal truths about human nature, society, morality, and the human condition. Playwrights like William Shakespeare used drama to depict the joys, struggles, aspirations, and tragedies of ordinary and extraordinary individuals.

□ **Shakespearean Influence:** William Shakespeare, in particular, had a transformative impact on drama. His plays spanned a wide range of genres—from comedies and tragedies to histories and romances—and showcased unparalleled mastery of language, characterization, and thematic depth. Shakespeare’s works continue to be studied, performed, and revered globally for their enduring relevance and artistic brilliance.

17.9 Review Questions

1. What role did theaters like The Globe and The Rose play in the popularization of drama?
2. How did these venues contribute to the cultural and social life of Elizabethan and Jacobean England?
3. How did playwrights and theater practitioners innovate in terms of staging, set design, and performance techniques during this period?
4. How did Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights use drama to explore universal themes such as love, power, ambition, and mortality?
5. How did William Shakespeare’s works contribute to the development and legacy of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama?

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UNIT 18: SHAKESPEARE'S 'MACBETH'

STRUCTURE

- 18.1 Objectives
- 18.2 Introduction
- 18.3 Context of Shakespeare's Works
- 18.4 Overview of Macbeth
- 18.5 Act – by Act Summary
- 18.6 The Supernatural in Macbeth
- 18.7 Summary
- 18.8 Key Takeaways
- 18.9 Review Questions
- 18.10 References

18.1 Objectives

This Unit will provide some background material as well as a perspective on Act I - V of Macbeth. By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the political and cultural context in which Macbeth was written;
- recount the sources and historical facts that lie behind this play;
- identify and describe the main characters;
- relate the story-line;
- discuss the major themes and issues that are involved in the play.

18.2 Introduction

"Macbeth" by William Shakespeare is a tragic play that explores the consequences of unchecked ambition and the corrupting influence of power. Here's an introduction to "Macbeth" and its context within Shakespeare's body of work:

Overview of "Macbeth":

- **Plot Summary:** "Macbeth" tells the story of Macbeth, a brave Scottish general, who receives a prophecy from three witches that he will become king of Scotland. Encouraged by his ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth murders King Duncan and seizes the throne. However, consumed by guilt and paranoia, Macbeth descends into tyranny, committing further atrocities to secure his power. The play culminates in Macbeth's downfall and death in a climactic battle with Macduff, a Scottish nobleman.
- **Themes:** Central themes in "Macbeth" include ambition, fate vs. free will, the consequences of evil deeds, the supernatural, and the nature of masculinity. The play explores how ambition drives individuals to commit immoral acts and the psychological toll of guilt and paranoia.

- **Characters:** Macbeth is a complex character who undergoes a profound transformation from a loyal warrior to a ruthless tyrant. Lady Macbeth, his ambitious and manipulative wife, plays a pivotal role in goading Macbeth to murder. Other significant characters include Banquo, Macbeth's loyal friend who becomes a victim of Macbeth's ambition, and the three witches who prophesy Macbeth's rise and fall.

18.3 Context of Shakespeare's Works

- **Elizabethan/Jacobean Era:** "Macbeth" was likely written around 1606 during the reign of King James I, a period known for its flourishing of arts and literature. Shakespeare's plays during this time reflect the social, political, and religious tensions of Renaissance England.
- **Literary Legacy:** Shakespeare is celebrated as one of the greatest playwrights in English literature, known for his mastery of language, characterization, and dramatic structure. His works encompass a wide range of genres, including tragedies ("Hamlet," "Othello"), comedies ("A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Twelfth Night"), histories ("Henry V," "Richard III"), and tragicomedies ("The Tempest," "The Winter's Tale").
- **Impact and Influence:** "Macbeth" exemplifies Shakespeare's ability to delve into profound human experiences and moral dilemmas, making his works timeless and universally relevant. His exploration of human psychology, complex characters, and universal themes continues to resonate with audiences and inspire adaptations, interpretations, and performances worldwide.

18.4 Overview of Macbeth

- **Plot Summary:** "Macbeth" tells the story of Macbeth, a brave Scottish general, who receives a prophecy from three witches that he will become king of Scotland. Encouraged by his ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth murders King Duncan and seizes the throne. However, consumed by guilt and paranoia, Macbeth descends into tyranny, committing further atrocities to secure his power. The play culminates in Macbeth's downfall and death in a climactic battle with Macduff, a Scottish nobleman.
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- **Characters:** Macbeth is a complex character who undergoes a profound transformation from a loyal warrior to a ruthless tyrant. Lady Macbeth, his ambitious and manipulative wife, plays a pivotal role in goading Macbeth to murder. Other significant characters include Banquo, Macbeth's loyal friend who becomes a victim of Macbeth's ambition, and the three witches who prophesy Macbeth's rise and fall.

18.5 Act – by Act Summary

Act 1:

- **Act 1, Scene 1:** Three witches (the Weird Sisters) meet on a Scottish heath and discuss their plans to meet Macbeth after the battle.
- **Act 1, Scene 2:** King Duncan of Scotland hears news of the battle against the traitorous Macdonwald and the valor of Macbeth and Banquo.
- **Act 1, Scene 3:** The witches prophesy that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually king. They also predict that Banquo's descendants will inherit the throne.
- **Act 1, Scene 4:** King Duncan declares his intention to visit Macbeth's castle and bestow honors upon him.
- **Act 1, Scene 5:** Lady Macbeth reads a letter from Macbeth about the witches' prophecies. She resolves to convince Macbeth to murder Duncan to fulfill the prophecy.

Act 2:

- **Act 2, Scene 1:** Macbeth hallucinates a dagger leading him to Duncan's chamber. He kills Duncan and is overcome with guilt and paranoia.
- **Act 2, Scene 2:** Lady Macbeth helps Macbeth plant evidence on Duncan's guards to frame them for the murder.
- **Act 2, Scene 3:** Duncan's sons flee the castle, suspecting foul play. Macbeth is crowned king, but he is plagued by guilt and starts to fear Banquo's descendants, as they threaten his rule.

Act 3:

- **Act 3, Scene 1:** Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance to prevent the fulfillment of the witches' prophecy about Banquo's descendants.
- **Act 3, Scene 2:** The murderers kill Banquo, but Fleance escapes.
- **Act 3, Scene 4:** At a banquet, Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost, which disturbs him deeply. Lady Macbeth tries to calm the guests, but Macbeth's behavior becomes increasingly erratic.

Act 4:

- **Act 4, Scene 1:** Macbeth visits the witches again, who conjure apparitions that offer him cryptic warnings and reassurances about his future.
- **Act 4, Scene 2:** Macduff, a Scottish nobleman, flees to England to join Duncan's son, Malcolm, who is gathering an army to overthrow Macbeth.
- **Act 4, Scene 3:** Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff's family out of spite and to eliminate potential threats.

Act 5:

- **Act 5, Scene 1:** Lady Macbeth is consumed by guilt and madness, sleepwalking and hallucinating the blood on her hands.
- **Act 5, Scene 2:** Scottish rebels, led by Malcolm and Macduff, march against Macbeth's forces.

- **Act 5, Scene 3:** Macbeth learns of Lady Macbeth's death and prepares for battle, determined to fight to the end.
- **Act 5, Scene 4:** Macbeth encounters Macduff on the battlefield and learns that Macduff was not "born of woman," as the witches foretold. Macduff kills Macbeth.
- **Act 5, Scene 5:** Malcolm is declared king, restoring order to Scotland.

Analysis of Act – I

Act 1 of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" sets the stage for the tragic events that unfold throughout the play. Here's a detailed analysis of Act 1, focusing on its key themes, characters, and dramatic elements:

Summary of Act 1:

Act 1, Scene 1:

- **Setting:** A desolate place with thunder and lightning.
- **Key Events:**
 - Three witches (the Weird Sisters) meet and plan to encounter Macbeth after the battle.

Act 1, Scene 2:

- **Setting:** A camp near Forres.
- **Key Events:**
 - Duncan, King of Scotland, receives news of Macbeth and Banquo's bravery in battle against rebels and the traitor Macdonwald.
 - Macbeth and Banquo are introduced as loyal and valiant warriors.

Act 1, Scene 3:

- **Setting:** Upon a heath.
- **Key Events:**
 - The witches prophesy Macbeth's future: he will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually king.
 - They also predict that Banquo's descendants will inherit the throne.

Act 1, Scene 4:

- **Setting:** Forres. The palace.
- **Key Events:**
 - Duncan announces his intention to visit Macbeth's castle and praises him for his bravery.
 - Macbeth considers the witches' prophecies and ponders the possibility of becoming king.

Act 1, Scene 5:

- **Setting:** Macbeth's castle.

- **Key Events:**
 - Lady Macbeth reads a letter from Macbeth about the witches' prophecies and his encounter with them.
 - She resolves to convince Macbeth to take action to fulfill the prophecy.

Themes Introduced:

- **Ambition:** Act 1 establishes ambition as a central theme. Macbeth's ambition to become king is ignited by the witches' prophecies, setting in motion the events of the play.
- **Fate vs. Free Will:** The witches' prophecies raise questions about fate and free will. Macbeth initially dismisses their words but becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of his destiny.
- **Appearance vs. Reality:** Characters' true intentions are often masked by appearances. Lady Macbeth presents a facade of loyalty and ambition while plotting Duncan's murder.

2. Characterization:

- **Macbeth:** Initially portrayed as a brave and loyal warrior, Macbeth's character begins to show signs of ambition and moral ambiguity as he contemplates the witches' prophecies.
- **Lady Macbeth:** Ambitious and manipulative, Lady Macbeth is determined to seize power by any means necessary, even if it means manipulating her husband into committing murder.
- **The Witches:** Supernatural beings who play a crucial role in the plot by prophesying Macbeth's rise to power. They embody the play's themes of fate, ambiguity, and the supernatural.

3. Dramatic Tension:

- **Foreshadowing:** The supernatural elements and prophecies create an atmosphere of foreboding and foreshadow the tragic events to come, building tension and suspense.
- **Irony:** Dramatic irony is present as the audience knows more than the characters, particularly regarding Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's intentions.

4. Language and Imagery:

- **Poetic Language:** Shakespeare's use of poetic language, metaphors, and imagery enhances the atmosphere and characterization. Imagery of darkness, blood, and ambition permeates Act 1, foreshadowing the play's darker themes.

Analysis of Act – II

Act 2 of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" deepens the unfolding tragedy, intensifying the themes of ambition, guilt, and the consequences of unchecked ambition. Here's a detailed analysis of Act 2, focusing on its key events, themes, characters, and dramatic elements:

Summary of Act 2:

Act 2, Scene 1:

- **Setting:** Inverness. A room in Macbeth's castle.

- **Key Events:**
 - Macbeth hallucinates a dagger leading him to Duncan’s chamber, reflecting his inner turmoil and ambivalence about the murder.
 - He murders King Duncan offstage and returns with bloody hands, tormented by guilt and paranoia.

Act 2, Scene 2:

- **Setting:** Inverness. The same.
- **Key Events:**
 - Lady Macbeth waits anxiously for Macbeth to return. She hears a noise and worries that their plan has failed.
 - Macbeth returns, visibly shaken. He confesses to Lady Macbeth that he heard voices and regrets not being able to say “Amen” after Duncan’s prayers.

Act 2, Scene 3:

- **Setting:** Outside Macbeth’s castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - A porter answers the door, providing comic relief with his drunken ramblings.
 - Macduff and Lennox arrive to wake Duncan but discover his murder. Macbeth feigns shock and kills Duncan’s guards in a fit of rage, arousing suspicion.

Act 2, Scene 4:

- **Setting:** Outside Macbeth’s castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - Ross and an old man discuss the unnatural events that have occurred since Duncan’s murder: a darkening of the day, an owl killing a falcon, and Duncan’s horses turning wild.
 - Macduff expresses suspicion of Macbeth’s role in Duncan’s murder and decides to go to Scone to support Malcolm’s ascension to the throne.

Themes Explored:

- **Guilt and Conscience:** Act 2 delves deeper into Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s guilt and psychological turmoil following Duncan’s murder. Macbeth’s hallucination of the dagger and Lady Macbeth’s deteriorating mental state reveal the consequences of their actions.
- **Ambition and Power:** Macbeth’s ambition drives him to commit murder, but Act 2 reveals the moral and psychological cost of his ambition. The murder of Duncan marks a point of no return for Macbeth, leading to further atrocities to secure his power.
- **Appearance vs. Reality:** The contrast between appearances and reality deepens in Act 2. Macbeth feigns innocence and shock after Duncan’s murder, while Lady Macbeth maintains composure but is privately consumed by guilt and fear.

2. Character Development:

- **Macbeth:** Act 2 portrays Macbeth's transformation from a respected warrior to a ruthless tyrant. His inner conflict and guilt-stricken conscience reveal the complexities of his character as he grapples with the consequences of his actions.
- **Lady Macbeth:** Lady Macbeth's character undergoes a significant change in Act 2. Initially confident and determined, she becomes haunted by guilt and begins to unravel mentally, foreshadowing her eventual descent into madness.

3. Dramatic Tension and Irony:

- **Foreshadowing:** The unnatural occurrences—such as the darkening of the day and animals behaving strangely—foreshadow the disruption of the natural order and the impending chaos in Scotland under Macbeth's rule.
- **Irony:** Dramatic irony heightens as characters, including Macduff and Malcolm, express suspicions about Macbeth's involvement in Duncan's murder, unaware of the depth of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's guilt and complicity.

4. Language and Imagery:

- **Imagery of Blood:** Blood imagery intensifies in Act 2, symbolizing guilt, violence, and the irreversible consequences of murder. Macbeth's hands stained with blood and Lady Macbeth's obsession with washing away the guilt reflect their moral decay.

Analysis of Act – III

Act 3 of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is pivotal in the development of the tragic plot and characters. Here's a detailed analysis of Act 3, focusing on its key events, themes, characters, and dramatic elements:

Summary of Act 3:

Act 3, Scene 1:

- **Setting:** Forres. The palace.
- **Key Events:**
 - Banquo suspects Macbeth of foul play to fulfill the witches' prophecy. He reflects on his own ambitions and fears that Macbeth may have murdered Duncan to become king.
 - Macbeth hires two murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance.

Act 3, Scene 2:

- **Setting:** Forres. The palace.
- **Key Events:**
 - Macbeth and Lady Macbeth host a banquet. Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost sitting in his place, terrifying him and revealing his guilty conscience.
 - Lady Macbeth dismisses the guests and tries to calm Macbeth, who becomes increasingly unstable.

Act 3, Scene 3:

- **Setting:** A park near the palace.
- **Key Events:**
 - The murderers ambush Banquo and Fleance. They kill Banquo but Fleance escapes, fulfilling the witches' prophecy that Banquo's descendants will inherit the throne.
 - Macbeth learns of Banquo's death and the escape of Fleance, feeling a temporary sense of relief but also growing paranoia.

Act 3, Scene 4:

- **Setting:** Forres. The palace.
- **Key Events:**
 - At another banquet, Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost again, causing a public spectacle that unnerves the guests.
 - Lady Macbeth tries to cover for Macbeth's behavior, dismissing the guests once more and expressing concern for his deteriorating mental state.

Themes Explored:

- **Guilt and Paranoia:** Act 3 continues to explore Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's guilt and paranoia following Duncan's murder. Macbeth's hallucinations of Banquo's ghost and his unraveling mental state reveal the psychological toll of their actions.
- **Ambition and Consequences:** The consequences of Macbeth's unchecked ambition intensify in Act 3. His willingness to commit murder to secure his throne leads to further bloodshed and moral deterioration.
- **Appearance vs. Reality:** The contrast between appearance and reality deepens as Macbeth tries to maintain a facade of kingship and stability while his inner turmoil and guilt manifest through hallucinations and erratic behavior.

2. Character Development:

- **Macbeth:** Act 3 portrays Macbeth's descent into paranoia and tyranny. His ambition has transformed into ruthless ambition, willing to eliminate anyone who threatens his power, including his former friend Banquo.
- **Lady Macbeth:** Lady Macbeth's character continues to deteriorate as she struggles to maintain control over Macbeth and cover up his erratic behavior. Her earlier resolve and ambition give way to guilt and fear.
- **Banquo:** Banquo's murder highlights Macbeth's betrayal and the fulfillment of the witches' prophecy. His ghost serves as a haunting reminder of Macbeth's moral corruption and the consequences of ambition.

3. Dramatic Tension and Irony:

- **Foreshadowing:** The escape of Fleance foreshadows future threats to Macbeth's throne, as the witches prophesied that Banquo's descendants would inherit kingship.
- **Irony:** Dramatic irony heightens as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth struggle to maintain appearances of normalcy while their guilt and paranoia intensify. Guests at the banquet remain unaware of the true reasons behind Macbeth's erratic behavior.

4. Language and Imagery:

- **Imagery of Blood and Darkness:** Blood imagery continues to symbolize guilt, violence, and the moral decay of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Darkness imagery reflects the increasingly bleak and chaotic state of Scotland under Macbeth's rule.

Analysis of Act – IV

Act 4 of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is a crucial act that intensifies the tragic conflict and propels the play towards its climax. Here's an analysis of Act 4, focusing on its key events, themes, characters, and dramatic elements:

Summary of Act 4:

Act 4, Scene 1:

- **Setting:** A dark cave. In the midst of a boiling cauldron.
- **Key Events:**
 - The witches gather around a cauldron, preparing a potion and summoning apparitions to reveal Macbeth's future.
 - The apparitions deliver cryptic messages to Macbeth: the first apparition warns him to beware of Macduff, the second assures him that no man born of woman can harm him, and the third prophesies that he will be safe until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane Hill.

Act 4, Scene 2:

- **Setting:** Fife. Macduff's castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - Ross visits Lady Macduff, who expresses concern over her husband's sudden departure to join Malcolm in England. She and her son discuss the concept of loyalty and abandonment.

Act 4, Scene 3:

- **Setting:** England. Before the King's palace.
- **Key Events:**
 - Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty, pretending to be unfit to rule and revealing his true virtues when convinced of Macduff's loyalty.

Analysis of Act – V

Act 5 of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is the culmination of the tragic events set in motion by Macbeth's ambition and the prophecies of the witches. Here's an analysis of Act 5, focusing on its key events, themes, characters, and dramatic elements:

Summary of Act 5:

Act 5, Scene 1:

- **Setting:** Dunsinane. A room in the castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - A gentlewoman and a doctor observe Lady Macbeth sleepwalking and confessing to the murders she and Macbeth have committed. She tries to wash imaginary blood from her hands, revealing her guilt and mental anguish.
 - The doctor states that her condition requires spiritual, not medical, intervention.

Act 5, Scene 2:

- **Setting:** The country near Dunsinane. A campfire.
- **Key Events:**
 - Scottish rebels, led by Lennox and Siward, join forces with Malcolm and the English army to overthrow Macbeth's tyrannical rule.
 - They prepare to march on Dunsinane, using branches from Birnam Wood as camouflage, fulfilling the witches' prophecy.

Act 5, Scene 3:

- **Setting:** Dunsinane. A room in the castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - Macbeth prepares for battle, confident in the witches' prophecies that no man born of woman can harm him.
 - A servant informs Macbeth that Birnam Wood appears to be moving towards Dunsinane, shocking Macbeth and foreshadowing his imminent downfall.

Act 5, Scene 4:

- **Setting:** Country near Birnam Wood. A plain.
- **Key Events:**
 - Malcolm orders his soldiers to cut down branches from Birnam Wood and use them as camouflage to approach Dunsinane Castle.
 - Macbeth awaits the advancing army, still defiant and determined to fight.

Act 5, Scene 5:

- **Setting:** Dunsinane. Within the castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - Macbeth receives news that Lady Macbeth has died, likely by suicide. He reflects on the futility of life and the inevitability of death, showing a moment of introspection and despair.
 - Despite his growing despair, Macbeth resolves to fight to the end, believing in the witches' prophecies and refusing to surrender.

Act 5, Scene 6:

- **Setting:** Dunsinane. Before the castle.
- **Key Events:**
 - Malcolm orders the soldiers to throw down their branches and prepare for battle.
 - The English army, aided by the Scottish rebels, advances towards Dunsinane Castle.

Act 5, Scene 7:

- **Setting:** Dunsinane. Another part of the field.
- **Key Events:**
 - Macbeth kills Young Siward in battle, demonstrating his prowess and determination despite the odds.
 - Macduff confronts Macbeth, revealing that he was not "of woman born" but was delivered by Caesarean section—fulfilling the witches' prophecy.

Act 5, Scene 8:

- **Setting:** Dunsinane. Another part of the field.
- **Key Events:**
 - Macbeth and Macduff engage in a fierce battle. Macduff ultimately kills Macbeth, fulfilling the final prophecy and ending Macbeth's tyrannical reign.
 - Malcolm is proclaimed King of Scotland, restoring order and justice.

Themes Explored:

- **Fate and Free Will:** Act 5 explores the interplay between fate and free will. Macbeth's belief in the witches' prophecies leads him to make choices that ultimately seal his fate, demonstrating the consequences of unchecked ambition.
- **Guilt and Conscience:** Guilt haunts both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth throughout Act 5. Lady Macbeth's descent into madness and suicide reflect the psychological toll of their crimes, while Macbeth's despair shows the unraveling of his moral compass.
- **Order and Disorder:** The chaos and disorder of Macbeth's rule contrast with the restoration of order and justice under Malcolm's leadership, highlighting the consequences of tyrannical ambition.

2. Character Development:

- **Macbeth:** Act 5 portrays Macbeth's transformation from a respected warrior to a desperate and disillusioned tyrant. His defiance and determination in the face of defeat reveal his tragic flaw and hubris.
- **Lady Macbeth:** Lady Macbeth's death symbolizes the ultimate consequences of her ambition and guilt. Her descent into madness and suicide reflect the psychological and emotional turmoil caused by her actions.
- **Macduff:** Macduff emerges as a heroic figure who represents justice and the restoration of order. His confrontation with Macbeth and ultimate victory fulfill the play's thematic resolution.

3. Dramatic Tension and Irony:

- **Foreshadowing:** The witches' prophecies and supernatural elements introduced in earlier acts come to fruition in Act 5, underscoring the inevitability of Macbeth's downfall.
- **Irony:** Dramatic irony intensifies as Macbeth remains unaware of Macduff's unique birth and his role in fulfilling the witches' prophecies until their final confrontation.

4. Language and Imagery:

- **Imagery of Darkness and Blood:** Imagery of darkness and blood continues to symbolize guilt, violence, and the moral decay of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Their deaths mark the culmination of their tragic journey.

18.6 The Supernatural in Macbeth

The supernatural plays a significant role in William Shakespeare's tragedy "Macbeth," contributing to its eerie atmosphere, thematic depth, and character motivations. Here's an exploration of the supernatural elements in "Macbeth":

1. The Witches (Weird Sisters):

- The play opens with three witches who appear on a Scottish heath and prophesy Macbeth's rise to power. They ignite Macbeth's ambition by foretelling that he will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually king. Their ambiguous and supernatural nature suggests they possess knowledge beyond mortal understanding, influencing Macbeth's decisions throughout the play.

2. Prophecies:

- The witches' prophecies drive the plot of "Macbeth." Macbeth's initial skepticism gives way to obsession as the prophecies begin to come true, leading him to commit murder to fulfill his ambitions. The prophecies also create an atmosphere of foreboding and inevitability, suggesting that fate is predetermined and immutable.

3. Supernatural Beings and Visions:

- Macbeth and Lady Macbeth both experience supernatural visions and hallucinations that reveal their guilt and inner turmoil. Macbeth sees a floating dagger before murdering King Duncan, and later encounters Banquo's ghost at a banquet, symbolizing his guilt and descent into madness. Lady Macbeth sleepwalks, reliving the murder of Duncan and washing imaginary blood from her hands, showcasing her psychological unraveling.

4. Ambiguous Nature of Evil:

- The supernatural elements in "Macbeth" blur the lines between reality and illusion, suggesting that evil forces are at work manipulating human actions. The witches represent a malevolent force, but they also reflect the characters' own ambitions and desires, raising questions about whether their actions are driven by fate or personal choice.

Functions of the Supernatural in "Macbeth":

- **Character Motivation:** The supernatural prophecies spur Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to pursue their ambitions ruthlessly, illustrating how external influences can shape human behavior.

- **Atmosphere and Mood:** The presence of supernatural elements creates a dark, ominous atmosphere that intensifies as the play progresses, heightening tension and suspense.
- **Theme of Ambition:** The supernatural reinforces the play's exploration of ambition as a destructive force. Macbeth's unchecked ambition, fueled by the witches' prophecies, leads to his moral decay and ultimate downfall.
- **Reflection of Jacobean Beliefs:** In Shakespeare's time, belief in witches, supernatural forces, and the influence of the occult was prevalent. "Macbeth" reflects these cultural beliefs and fears, providing insight into Jacobean attitudes towards the supernatural and its perceived impact on human affairs.

18.7 Summary

In conclusion, the supernatural elements in "Macbeth" serve as integral components of the play's thematic exploration, character development, and dramatic impact. They contribute to its enduring fascination and relevance, highlighting Shakespeare's skill in blending the natural and supernatural realms to probe deep into human ambition, morality, and the consequences of unchecked power. "Macbeth" continues to resonate with audiences because of its profound themes, complex characters, and exploration of moral dilemmas. It remains a timeless masterpiece that offers valuable insights into the human psyche and the consequences of ambition and power.

18.8 Key Takeaways

- **Ambition and Power:** The play vividly illustrates how unchecked ambition can corrupt individuals. Macbeth's desire for power, initially spurred by the witches' prophecies, leads him to commit murder and tyranny, ultimately resulting in his own downfall.
- **Guilt and Conscience:** Shakespeare explores the psychological effects of guilt and conscience through Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Their guilt-ridden hallucinations, paranoia, and descent into madness underscore the moral consequences of their actions.
- **Fate vs. Free Will:** The interplay between fate and free will is a central theme in "Macbeth." While the witches' prophecies suggest a predetermined path for Macbeth, his choices and actions ultimately shape his destiny, highlighting the complexity of human agency.
- **Appearance vs. Reality:** Throughout the play, characters often present false appearances to conceal their true intentions. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth manipulate others and disguise their guilt, showcasing the deceptive nature of outward appearances.
- **Corruption of Power:** "Macbeth" explores how power can corrupt individuals and lead to moral decay. Macbeth's rise to kingship transforms him from a respected warrior into a tyrant who ruthlessly eliminates anyone perceived as a threat.
- **Supernatural Elements:** The presence of the witches and their prophecies injects supernatural elements into the play, contributing to its eerie atmosphere and emphasizing the theme of fate. The witches symbolize the supernatural forces that influence human affairs.

- **Gender Roles:** Lady Macbeth challenges traditional gender roles through her ambitious and manipulative nature. Her ambition and desire for power contrast sharply with the expectations of women in Shakespearean society, highlighting gender dynamics and expectations.
- **Tragic Hero:** Macbeth is a classic example of a tragic hero—a character of noble birth with a fatal flaw that leads to their downfall. His ambition and unchecked desire for power, combined with his internal struggles and moral conflicts, contribute to his tragic end.
- **Redemption and Justice:** The play concludes with the restoration of order and justice under Malcolm’s rule, symbolizing the consequences of tyranny and the restoration of rightful leadership.
- **Universal Themes:** "Macbeth" addresses timeless themes such as ambition, power, guilt, fate, and the human condition. Its enduring relevance lies in its exploration of universal truths about human nature and the complexities of moral decision-making.

18.9 Review Questions

1. Can you summarize the plot of "Macbeth"? What are the main events and conflicts driving the story?
2. Who are the main characters in "Macbeth"? What are their motivations and how do they contribute to the unfolding tragedy?
3. How does ambition drive the actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth? How do their ambitions lead to their downfall?
4. Discuss the theme of fate versus free will in "Macbeth." To what extent are the characters responsible for their own actions, and how much is predetermined by supernatural forces?
5. Explore the significance of Macbeth’s soliloquies and the use of dramatic irony in the play. How do these techniques deepen the audience’s understanding of the characters’ motivations and inner conflicts?

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UNIT 19: SHAKESPEARE AND THE BEGINNING OF 17TH CENTURY

STRUCTURE

- 19.1 Objectives
 - 19.2 Introduction
 - 19.3 Literary Impact
 - 19.4 Political and Social Context
 - 19.5 Legacy and Influence
 - 19.6 Summary
 - 19.7 Key Terms
 - 19.8 Review Questions
 - 19.9 References
-

19.1 Objectives

Studying the beginning of the 17th century involves exploring a rich tapestry of historical, cultural, political, and literary developments. The objectives of learning about this period include:

- Understanding Historical Transitions: Understanding Historical Transitions.
 - Exploring Cultural Renaissance.
 - Examining Political and Religious Upheavals.
 - Analyzing Literary and Artistic Movements.
 - Understanding Social Structures and Norms.
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19.2 Introduction

During the beginning of the 17th century, Shakespeare's objectives as a playwright and poet were shaped by the cultural, social, and political context of the time. Here are some key objectives that Shakespeare likely pursued during this period:

1. **Artistic Mastery and Innovation:**
 - **Objective:** Shakespeare aimed to demonstrate his skill and innovation as a playwright, pushing the boundaries of dramatic structure, characterization, and language.
 - **Achievement:** He experimented with various genres (tragedy, comedy, history, romance) and developed complex plots, nuanced characters, and poetic language that continue to influence literature and drama.
2. **Reflecting Contemporary Society:**
 - **Objective:** Shakespeare sought to reflect and critique the societal issues and political realities of his time.
 - **Achievement:** His plays often explore themes such as power, ambition, justice, and the human condition, resonating with both contemporary audiences and modern readers for their universal insights.
3. **Exploration of Human Nature:**

- **Objective:** Shakespeare aimed to delve deeply into the complexities of human nature, emotions, and moral dilemmas.
 - **Achievement:** His characters, from tragic heroes like Macbeth to comedic figures like Falstaff, exhibit psychological depth and moral ambiguity, allowing audiences to empathize with their struggles and motivations.
4. **Cultural Commentary and Critique:**
- **Objective:** Shakespeare used his plays to comment on cultural norms, religious beliefs, and ethical dilemmas of his time.
 - **Achievement:** Through characters' dialogues and plot developments, he challenged societal conventions, questioned authority, and explored the consequences of political ambition and moral corruption.
5. **Entertainment and Popular Appeal:**
- **Objective:** Shakespeare aimed to entertain diverse audiences while addressing profound themes.
 - **Achievement:** His plays combined drama, comedy, romance, and tragedy, appealing to a wide range of theatergoers from different social classes and educational backgrounds.
6. **Legacy and Influence:**
- **Objective:** Shakespeare aimed to establish a lasting literary legacy and influence future generations of writers and artists.
 - **Achievement:** His works have been translated into numerous languages, adapted into various forms (stage, film, literature), and continue to be studied for their literary merit and cultural significance worldwide.
7. **Collaboration and Patronage:**
- **Objective:** Shakespeare collaborated with actors, playwrights, and patrons to produce and stage his plays.
 - **Achievement:** He worked closely with the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men) and enjoyed patronage from Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, which supported the production and publication of his plays.

19.3 Literary Impact

□ Shakespeare's Works:

- Shakespeare's plays span a range of genres, including tragedies ("Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear"), comedies ("Twelfth Night," "A Midsummer Night's Dream"), histories ("Henry V," "Richard III"), and romances ("The Tempest," "The Winter's Tale").
- His mastery of language, characterization, and dramatic structure transformed English drama and set new standards for storytelling and theatrical performance.

□ The Globe Theatre:

- Shakespeare was closely associated with the Globe Theatre, where many of his plays were performed. This iconic venue became a cultural hub in London, attracting diverse audiences and contributing to the popularity of theatre.

19.4 Political and Social Context

□ Political Unrest:

- The early 17th century was marked by political instability and tensions, including challenges to the monarchy and religious conflicts. Shakespeare's plays often reflected these turbulent times, exploring themes of power, authority, and justice.

□ Renaissance Humanism:

- Shakespeare's works were influenced by Renaissance humanism, which emphasized the potential and complexities of human beings. His characters exhibit psychological depth and moral dilemmas, reflecting humanist ideals.

19.5 Legacy and Influence

□ Literary Legacy:

- Shakespeare's impact on English literature and drama has been profound and enduring. His plays continue to be studied, performed, and adapted worldwide, showcasing the universality of his themes and characters.

□ Language and Innovation:

- Shakespeare's use of language, including his mastery of verse, prose, and wordplay, enriched the English language and contributed to its development as a literary medium.

□ Cultural Icon:

- Shakespeare is celebrated as a cultural icon whose works transcend time and place. His ability to capture the complexities of human experience and emotion continues to resonate with audiences across generations.

19.6 Summary

In summary, Shakespeare's career coincided with a transformative period in English history and literature. His contributions to drama, language, and storytelling have secured his place as one of the greatest playwrights and poets in the English language, leaving an indelible mark on literature and culture. Shakespeare's objectives during the beginning of the 17th century were multifaceted, encompassing artistic ambition, social commentary, exploration of human nature, entertainment, and the establishment of a lasting literary legacy. His achievements in these areas have cemented his status as one of the greatest playwrights in English literature and a pivotal figure in cultural history. learning

about the beginning of the 17th century serves to deepen understanding of historical, cultural, and intellectual developments that shaped the modern world. It allows individuals to appreciate the complexities of human experience, societal evolution, and the enduring legacies of the past.

19.7 Key Takeaways

- **Shakespeare:** His works exemplify unparalleled literary mastery, encompassing a wide range of genres (tragedy, comedy, history, romance) and exploring profound themes of human nature, power, ambition, and morality.
 - **17th Century Literature:** The 17th century witnessed the continuation of Renaissance humanism and the emergence of metaphysical poetry (John Donne), satirical wit (Ben Jonson), and innovative prose (Francis Bacon), contributing to the richness of English literature.
 - **17th Century Writers:** Writers of the 17th century, influenced by the Renaissance and Reformation, explored themes of individualism, religious conflict, and scientific inquiry, reflecting a period of intellectual curiosity and philosophical introspection.
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19.8 Review Questions

1. Discuss the significance of Shakespeare's language and poetic techniques in his plays, using specific examples.
 2. How did political events such as the accession of King James I influence Shakespeare's works and themes?
 3. In what ways did Shakespeare critique and reflect the social norms and values of Elizabethan and Jacobean society in his plays?
 4. What role did patronage play in Shakespeare's career, and how did it impact the content and style of his works?
 5. What philosophical questions or debates does Shakespeare explore in his tragedies, and how are these relevant to broader human experiences?
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UNIT 20: THE LEGACY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE IN GLOBAL LITERATURE AND CULTURE

STRUCTURE

- 20.1 Objectives
 - 20.2 Introduction
 - 20.3 Shakespeare's Influence on English and European Literature
 - 20.4 Shakespeare in Non-Western Literatures and Cultures
 - 20.5 Shakespeare in Modern Media: Film and Theatre
 - 20.6 Thematic Universality of Shakespeare's Works
 - 20.7 Shakespeare in Popular Culture
 - 20.8 Summary
 - 20.9 Key Terms
 - 20.10 Review Questions
 - 20.11 References
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20.1 Objectives

The objectives of learning about this period include:

- To explore the impact of William Shakespeare on global literature and culture.
 - To understand how Shakespeare's themes, characters, and narrative techniques have transcended time and geography.
 - To examine the influence of Shakespeare's works on various literary traditions, including adaptations in different cultures.
 - To discuss the relevance of Shakespeare's themes to contemporary society.
 - To evaluate how Shakespeare's legacy is reflected in modern cultural expressions, including theater, film, and art.
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20.2 Introduction

William Shakespeare, often regarded as the greatest writer in the English language, has left a profound and enduring legacy that transcends time, language, and culture. Born in 1564, Shakespeare wrote 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and numerous poems, exploring complex themes of love, power, ambition, betrayal, identity, and human nature. His works have been translated into every major language and continue to be performed and studied across the globe, making him a universal figure in world literature. Shakespeare's genius lay in his ability to craft stories that delve into the depths of the human experience, addressing emotions, desires, and conflicts that resonate with audiences centuries after his death.

Shakespeare's influence on the English language is unparalleled. He invented over 1,700 words and countless phrases that have become an intrinsic part of everyday speech. His mastery of dramatic structure, character development, and psychological realism transformed the landscape of English drama and set the standard for future generations of writers. His works explore timeless themes that

cross cultural and temporal boundaries, making them relevant in diverse contexts from 16th-century England to the modern globalized world. The universality of Shakespeare's works allows them to be reinterpreted and reimagined through various lenses, enabling each generation and culture to find new meanings within his texts.

What distinguishes Shakespeare's legacy is not only his literary contributions but also his cultural reach. His works have been translated into more than 100 languages and adapted into every conceivable artistic medium, including film, opera, dance, visual arts, and even popular culture. His plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, have been retold in ways that reflect the values, issues, and conflicts of different societies, demonstrating their enduring appeal and relevance. Whether it is Bollywood adaptations in India, samurai epics in Japan, or modern-day gangster films in Hollywood, Shakespeare's stories continue to inspire and connect with people around the world.

The global impact of Shakespeare's works also extends into the realm of academia and education. His plays are a staple of literature curricula in schools and universities around the world, shaping how literature is studied and appreciated. The questions his works raise about ethics, morality, human behavior, and society provide fertile ground for academic inquiry and debate. Shakespeare's capacity to engage with philosophical, political, and psychological questions makes his works a vital part of the human intellectual tradition, studied alongside great thinkers and philosophers.

In addition to his influence on literature, Shakespeare has permeated various aspects of popular culture, from movies and television shows to music and theater. His influence can be seen in modern storytelling, where themes of tragic love, political intrigue, and moral dilemmas frequently draw from his works. Through this widespread influence, Shakespeare has become a cultural icon whose legacy continues to inspire new interpretations and adaptations, ensuring that his relevance endures in both high culture and everyday entertainment.

This examination of Shakespeare's legacy will delve into the many dimensions of his influence on global literature and culture, exploring how his works have been adapted, reinterpreted, and celebrated across the world. It will also consider how Shakespeare's themes remain relevant to contemporary issues and continue to shape artistic and cultural expressions. By understanding the breadth and depth of Shakespeare's global legacy, we can appreciate not only his contributions to literature but also his impact on the collective imagination of humanity.

20.3 Shakespeare's Influence on English and European Literature

Shakespeare's influence on English literature is immeasurable. Writers like Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and James Joyce borrowed themes, language, and plot structures from his plays. His use of iambic pentameter and inventive vocabulary enriched the English language, coining phrases and words that are still in use today. In Europe, Shakespeare's plays inspired the Romantic movement, particularly in Germany and France. Writers like Goethe and Victor Hugo saw Shakespeare as a genius who transcended the classical boundaries of literature, bringing a new emotional depth and complexity to the art of storytelling.

In addition, Shakespeare's works have often been reimagined by contemporary European writers and filmmakers. Modern adaptations of his plays can be found in novels, films, and stage productions that reinterpret his stories through the lens of current societal issues, such as gender, race, and class struggles. The fact that his works continue to be performed in different languages across Europe speaks

to the enduring relevance of his insights into human nature.

20.4 Shakespeare in Non-Western Literatures and Cultures

Shakespeare's works have had a significant impact on non-Western literatures as well. In India, for example, Shakespeare's plays were introduced during the British colonial period and have since been adapted into local languages, including Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil. His stories of power, love, and conflict resonate deeply in a country with its own rich dramatic traditions. Indian filmmakers have reinterpreted Shakespeare's works in Bollywood, bringing his timeless themes to a broader audience. Vishal Bhardwaj's adaptations of "Macbeth" ("Maqbool"), "Othello" ("Omkara"), and "Hamlet" ("Haider") are prime examples of how Shakespearean drama has been localized to fit Indian social and political contexts.

In Japan, Shakespeare has influenced both literature and theater. The tradition of "Noh" and "Kabuki" performances incorporated elements of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques, and his plays have been adapted into Japanese cinema, including Akira Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood" (an adaptation of Macbeth). These adaptations showcase how Shakespeare's works can be reinterpreted to resonate with different cultural and historical circumstances.

20.5 Shakespeare in Modern Media: Film and Theatre

In the 20th and 21st centuries, Shakespeare's works have found new life in film and theater. Directors such as Orson Welles, Kenneth Branagh, and Baz Luhrmann have brought his plays to the silver screen, introducing Shakespeare to modern audiences. Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* is a striking example of how Shakespeare can be adapted into contemporary settings while maintaining the integrity of his language. Similarly, Branagh's *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* reflect the flexibility of Shakespearean drama, as they appeal to both purists and newcomers.

Theater productions of Shakespeare's works also continue to evolve, with directors experimenting with setting, casting, and themes. Contemporary performances may challenge traditional interpretations, presenting alternative gender roles or exploring racial dynamics in plays like *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare's enduring presence in film and theater underscores his capacity to address universal human experiences, making his works relevant to each new generation.

20.6 Thematic Universality of Shakespeare's Works

One of the reasons for Shakespeare's global appeal is the universality of his themes. His plays explore fundamental aspects of human existence—love, betrayal, ambition, morality, and the quest for identity—that transcend cultural and historical boundaries. Whether it is the star-crossed lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*, the moral dilemmas in *Hamlet*, or the corrupting influence of power in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare taps into emotional and ethical conflicts that remain relevant today. His ability to capture the complexity of human emotions and social dynamics ensures that his works continue to resonate with audiences worldwide.

In a world that is increasingly interconnected, Shakespeare's exploration of identity and difference has taken on new significance. His plays often grapple with questions of belonging and otherness, which have gained renewed relevance in the context of global migration, cultural exchange, and political change. The tensions between loyalty and self-interest, individuality and community, which

Shakespeare so masterfully depicted, continue to speak to contemporary social and political challenges.

20.7 Shakespeare in Popular Culture

Shakespeare's reach extends far beyond the traditional realms of literature and theater. His works have permeated popular culture in ways that often surprise audiences. From television series to music, Shakespeare's influence can be seen in countless forms. For example, popular television shows like *The Simpsons* and *Star Trek* have made numerous references to Shakespeare, highlighting his continued relevance in modern entertainment. Musicians, too, have drawn inspiration from his plays, with artists like Bob Dylan and Taylor Swift incorporating Shakespearean themes into their lyrics.

Moreover, his presence in education has ensured that generations of students around the world are introduced to his works at a young age. Shakespeare is not only a figure of academic study but also a symbol of cultural literacy. In this sense, his legacy extends into the everyday lives of people, influencing how they understand language, narrative, and the human experience.

20.8 Summary

William Shakespeare's legacy in global literature and culture is vast and multifaceted. His works have not only shaped the development of English literature but have also influenced writers and artists across the world. From non-Western adaptations to modern cinematic interpretations, Shakespeare's themes continue to resonate with people from different cultures and backgrounds. His ability to tap into universal aspects of the human experience has ensured that his works remain relevant and influential across time, geography, and artistic forms.

20.9 Key Takeaways

- Shakespearean Drama – The body of plays and works written by William Shakespeare, characterized by complex characters and universal themes.
 - Adaptation – The process of reinterpreting a literary work for a different medium, such as film or theatre.
 - Universal Themes – Concepts such as love, ambition, and morality that are relevant across cultures and time periods.
 - Cultural Legacy – The lasting influence of a person, work, or event on subsequent generations and cultural practices.
 - Postcolonial Shakespeare – The study of how Shakespeare's works have been interpreted and adapted in former colonies of the British Empire.
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20.10 Review Questions

1. How has William Shakespeare influenced the development of English and European literature?
2. In what ways have non-Western cultures adapted Shakespeare's works?
3. What are some of the universal themes in Shakespeare's plays that resonate with modern audiences?
4. How have Shakespeare's works been adapted into modern media such as film and television?

5. What role does Shakespeare play in contemporary popular culture?

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