



JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)

The Motto of the University
(SEWA)

SKILL ENHANCEMENT

EMPLOYABILITY

WISDOM

ACCESSIBILITY



**M.A. English
Semester – I
MAEM23101T
Poetry-I Chaucer to Renaissance**

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**JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV
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M.A. English

Course Code: MAEM23101T

Course: Poetry-I Chaucer to Renaissance

Programme Coordinator

&

Course Coordinator and Editor

Dr. Navleen Multani

Associate Prof. in English

Head, School of Languages

Course Outcomes

- Comprehend poems from 14th to 16th Century
- Understanding of the social and historical context
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Appreciate poetry
- Enhanced knowledge of cultures



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PREFACE

Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala, established in December 2019 by Act 19 of the Legislature of State of Punjab, is the first and only Open University of the State, entrusted with the responsibility of making higher education accessible to all especially to those sections of society who do not have the means, time or opportunity to pursue regular education.

In keeping with the nature of an Open University, this University provides a flexible education system to suit every need. The time given to complete a programme is double the duration of a regular mode programme. Well-designed study material has been prepared in consultation with experts in their respective fields.

The University offers programmes which have been designed to provide relevant, skill-based and employability-enhancing education. The study material provided in this booklet is self-instructional, with self-assessment exercises, and recommendations for further readings. The syllabus has been divided in sections, and provided as units for simplification.

The Learner Support Centres/Study Centres are located in the Government and Government aided colleges of Punjab, to enable students to make use of reading facilities, and for curriculum-based counselling and practicals. We, at the University, welcome you to be a part of this institution of knowledge.

Prof. G. S. Batra,
Dean Academic Affairs

M.A. (English)

Semester – I

MAEM23101T: Poetry-I (Chaucer To Renaissance)

MAX. MARKS: 100

EXTERNAL: 70

INTERNAL: 30

PASS: 40%

Credits: 5

Objective

The aim of the course is to introduce the learners to English poetry and make them read important works, keeping the historical and social context in mind. Besides, the course has been designed to make the learners focus on the creative and technical aspects as well as enable readers to develop a critical sense to interpret poetry.

Instructions for the Paper Setter/Examiner

1. The syllabus prescribed should be strictly adhered to.
2. The question paper will consist of five sections: A, B, C, D, and E. Sections A, B, C, and D will have two questions from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 15 marks each. The candidates will attempt one question from each section.
3. Section E will have four short answer questions covering the entire syllabus. Each question will carry 5 marks. Candidates will attempt any two questions from this section.
4. The examiner shall give a clear instruction to the candidates to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.
5. The duration of each paper will be three hours.

Instructions for the Candidates

Candidates are required to attempt any one question each from the sections A, B, C, and D of the question paper and any two short questions from Section E. They have to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.

Section-A

Geoffrey Chaucer: *Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*

Section - B

John Milton: *Paradise Lost, Book 1*

Section - C

William Shakespeare: *Sonnets 18, 29, 73, 108 and 116*

Section - D

John Donne:

“The Good Morrow”

“The Sunne Rising”

“The Extasie”

“The Flea”

“Batter My Heart”

Suggested Readings

1. Martz, Louis L., ed., *Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice Hall, N.J., 1966.
2. Pattison, Mark. *Milton*, Lyall Book Depot, Chandigarh, 1966
3. Gardner, Helen, ed., *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall, 1982.
4. Gerald, Hammond, *The Metaphysical Poets*, Macmillan, 1974.
5. Kaul, R.K. ed., *The Rape of the Lock*, Cult Series.
6. *The Rape of the Lock*, Casebook series
7. Brower, R.A. *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion*
8. <http://swayam.gov.in/>
9. <http://edx.org/> formerly <http://mooc.org/>
10. <http://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/>

M.A. (English)

MAEM23101T: Poetry-I (Chaucer to Renaissance)

Section-A

UNIT I : Geoffrey Chaucer *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s – 25 October 1400)

1.1.2 *The Canterbury Tales*

2. The Prologue

2.1 Summary

2.2 Themes

2.2.1 Realism: Society and class

2.2.2. Style, Tone and Structure

2.2.3 Conflict between Appearance and Reality

2.2.4 A Journey from Earth to Heaven

2.2.5 Religion

2.2.6 Money

3. Analysis of Main Characters

4. Review Questions

5. Suggested Readings

1.0 Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. identify 'frame narrative' of Chaucer's Prologue
2. discern the key characters and thematic concerns in Prologue
3. analyse style and language in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*
4. Understand practices and influences in medieval times

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s – 25 October 1400)

Literary texts from English literature can be found in the writings of the Old and Middle English ages (600-1485). Throughout the Middle Ages, Geoffrey Chaucer holds a distinctive place in history. Chaucer, "father of English literature" was an English poet, writer and civil servant best known for *The Canterbury Tales*.

Chaucer was a commoner by birth. Due to his intelligence and perceptive assessments of moral character he was able to travel freely among the nobility. His father ran a successful wine business. Philippa was the wife of Chaucer's. He had a daughter Elizabeth and two sons

Chaucer's grandfather and father both had modest positions at court. His name may be seen in Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster and Prince Lionel's wife, household records.

As a domestic worker, Chaucer most likely travelled with Elizabeth on her numerous excursions and may have joined her at lavish events like the Feast of St. George hosted by King Edward in 1358 for the kings of France, Scotland, Cyprus, and a wide range of other notable individuals. The poet was significantly influenced by Edward III's fourth son, John of Gaunt. One of the most educated people in his day was Chaucer. Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, saints' stories, sermons, French poetry by Machaut and Deschamps, as well as Latin and Italian poetry by Ovid, Virgil, Boccaccio, and Petrarch were among his translations. He also demonstrates a thorough understanding of law, alchemy, early physics, astronomy, physiognomy, medicine, and astrology. It is recorded on his grave in Westminster Abbey that the poet died on October 25, 1400.

Chaucer served the English army in France from 1359 to 1360 and was captured close to Reims. He was returned to England after being freed in exchange for a ransom, to which Edward himself gave sixteen pounds. Chaucer returned to France during that year while carrying official documents, perhaps joining Edward's household as the King's valet and occasionally emissary. Chaucer once more fought in France with the English army in 1369, but by 1370 he was out on a kingly diplomatic trip. Chaucer made his first recorded trip to Italy in December 1372 and stayed there until May 1373 after being hired to bargain with the Genoese over the selection of an English trade port. He most likely learned about Italian poetry and art during his travels to Genoa and Florence. Richard, who became king in 1377, maintained Chaucer's high esteem during his rule. His public services were mostly rendered in England throughout the majority of 1377 and 1378.

Following his tenure as Clerk of the King's Works, Chaucer was appointed as deputy forester of the royal forest of North Petherton in Somerset. His other appointments included Justice of the peace in Kent (1385), Clerk of the King's Works (1389), and Deputy Forester of the Royal Forest of Westminster in London (1390). He also participated in Parliament at this time and was chosen as a Knight of the Shire (1386).

Chaucer's masterpieces are: *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowles*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Legend of Good Women*, and also in his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*. He is a kind observer of people, a good storyteller, and a good humorist. In addition to being a reformer, he is first and foremost a life-celebrant who wittily remarks on human follies while also being a lover of people.

1.1.2 *The Canterbury Tales*

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* begins with the General Prologue. The journey to Thomas Becket's shrine in Canterbury, Kent, serves as the narrative's framing element. Thirty pilgrims congregate at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, London. They agree to participate in a storytelling competition while they are on the road. Harry Bailly, the host of the Tabard, becomes the moderator of the contest. In the "General Prologue," concise yet vivid portraits of the majority of the pilgrims serve as introductions.

Key facts:

A collection of 24 stories, written in more than 17,000 lines

Language: Middle English

2. The Prologue

2.1 Summary

The Canterbury Tales' narrator hires a room at the Tabard Inn one spring day before starting his journey back to Canterbury. That evening, a group of individuals arrive at the inn, all of them are also heading to Canterbury to obtain the graces of "the holy happy martyr", St. Thomas à Becket. Due to their final goal, they refer to themselves as "pilgrims" and welcome the narrator into their group. The narrator talks about his recently discovered friends while travelling. To help the trip to Canterbury go more smoothly, the inn's host, Harry Bailey, advises that each member of the group tell two stories on the way there and two more on the way back. A lavish meal will be provided by the other guests as compensation for the storyteller's performance. The Host resolves to adjudicate the tales while travelling with the pilgrims to Canterbury.

Analysis

These introductory words serve primarily to create the scene and explain the purpose of the visit to Canterbury. The original intention of Chaucer was for each pilgrim to tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two more on the way back, but this never accomplished. The tales that exist today only cover the journey to Canterbury. The General Prologue begins with a description of spring's re-emergence from winter. The narrator talks about the April rains, the emerging foliage and flowers, and the twittering birds. He claims that people start to feel the urge to embark on a pilgrimage around this time of year. Many faithful English pilgrims go for far-off holy places, but even more decide to journey to Canterbury to pay respects to Saint Thomas Becket's remains at Canterbury Cathedral, where they express gratitude to the martyr

for his assistance when they were in need.

The narrator describes how a large group of twenty-nine passengers entered as he was getting ready to embark on such a trip while lodging at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. They were a mixed bunch of travellers who, like the narrator, were headed to Canterbury. Pilgrims spent that evening sleeping at the Tabard before rising early in the following morning to begin their adventure. The narrator announces his intention to name and characterise each character before starting the story. People from all social groups congregate at the Tabard Inn each April, at the start of spring, to prepare for a pilgrimage to Canterbury to seek the blessings of St. Thomas à Becket, the English martyr. The author, Chaucer, is a traveller. The Tabard Inn Host advises that in order to spend the time more amicably that evening, each member of the group recount anecdotes about their journeys to and from Canterbury. At the conclusion of the journey, the best storyteller will receive a formal banquet. The pilgrims select straws shortly after they depart for the day. The Knight picks the shortest straw and consents to tell the first story.

2.2 Themes

2.2.1 Realism: Society and Class

With Chaucer's skill in telling stories, we are able to enjoy engaging with a "real" group of people while also gaining a basic grasp of medieval culture. Chaucer depicts all facets of English life in *The Prologue*. These pilgrims were a mixed-gender group of people from various social strata and occupations. Special consideration is given to the social position of the various professions. The initial pilgrims introduced symbolise the greatest social position, with social rank dropping with each subsequent pilgrim. The extensive prologue paints a picture of the shifting societal structure. Representatives of the aristocracy or people with aspirations to nobility are at the top of the social scale.

The Knight and his family, which includes the Squire, are first in this line of succession. The Prioress, the Monk, and the Friar are among the second group of people of the highest social standing. While they belong to a lower class, their affluence has allowed them to associate with the aristocrats. Only the Knight and his son, the Squire, are likely to be considered actual aristocrats, both on the outside and the inside, among this group of pilgrims. The Prioress and the Monk's refinement brought about by excellent breeding, is primarily external and influenced. High social ranked pilgrims are mostly businessmen. This group includes: the Merchant, who illegitimately amassed money by trading French coins; The Sergeant of Law, who amassed his wealth by using his legal expertise to acquire foreclosed property for next to nothing, the Clerk, who fits in with this group of pilgrims due to his kind nature and vast book knowledge, and the

Franklin, who amassed enough wealth to become a country gentleman. The following group of pilgrims belongs to specialised unions of craftsmen. The Haberdasher, the Dyer, the Carpenter, the Weaver and the Tapestry-Maker are some of these skilled workers.

Few pilgrims belong to low socio-economic middle-class group. The first person introduced in this group is the Chef, who is highly regarded by his fellow passengers for being a master of his craft. The Shipman, who has extensive global travel and experience, and the Physician, a licensed physician, are both members of this socioeconomic class. The Woman of Bath is also a member of this group because of her intelligence and manners. The next category of pilgrims, the poor or lower class, consists of the Parson and the Plowman. All the Christian qualities are represented by each, notwithstanding their extreme poverty.

The immoral lower class is represented in the final group of pilgrims. The Manciple, who makes money by purchasing meals for the attorneys at the Inns of Court, and the vulgar Miller, who robs his clients, are two of the pilgrims in this group. The dishonest Summoner accepts money, while the Reeve delivers shady tales and deceives his youthful master. The Pardoner, who trades in phoney pardons and artefacts, is the last and most corrupt of this list of undesirables.

2.2.2. Style, Tone and Structure

“With him [Chaucer] is born our real poetry” Mathew Arnold

“Chaucer found his English a dialect and left it a language” James Russell Lowell

The Canterbury Tales is remarkable because Chaucer introduces each character using a narrative framework before having them each relate their own story. The portion of the poem that provides this framing narrative is called the General Prologue. There are many pilgrims, so the narrator chooses to just describe them all. They are all very unique and have exceptionally dissimilar personalities. He refers to them all by their professions, so we know what they do, but his descriptions are fascinating because he frequently tries to highlight inconsistencies between what they do for a living and how they actually behave. Although he normally showers flattering remarks for everyone, one can trace the element of sarcasm and irony also. Chaucer's style is distinguished by clarity of language and ecstatic novelty. His writing style is free from ambiguity, and propounds clear philosophical maxims. Nearly all of his characters are described by him using everyday language that the average person can comprehend. His use of similes and metaphors is appropriate throughout the Prologue. His writing is neither stuffy nor scholarly. His writing style is more refined and geared for both academics and laypeople.

“Where Langland’s cries aloud in anger threatening the world with hell fire, Chaucer looks on and smiles” Observes Aldous Huxley Chaucer's style is both satirical and comical. He

assesses the society critically. In fact, he utilises irony as his weapon to highlight the idiosyncrasies of society. His approach is not sharp like that of Swift. Chaucer first describes the good attributes of his characters' personalities, and then underlines the veiled malicious aspects of their natures. In the first few lines, the personalities of Squire, Prioress, and Wife of Bath are well-developed; it is only afterwards that we begin to comprehend their true nature. Chaucer keeps himself away from extravagance, didacticism and complexity. On the contrary, simplicity and lucidity are his forte. He does not adopt a style of writing like many of his contemporaries. His goal is to make his readers' faces brighter. His discourse includes all the characteristics of story, description and reflection.

2.2.3 Conflict between Appearance and Reality

The conflict between authenticity and falsity is also a major theme in the Prologue. Chaucer underlines the human inclination for deception and fallacy through the characters of the Prioress, the Pardoner, the Friar and the Merchant to name a few. These pilgrims conceal their reality and pretend what they actually are not. The Prioress is trying to portray herself as a courtly dandy. The Merchant pretends that he is financially stable. These lies are exposed gradually. The Friar convinces people that he is deprived and needs alms. Some characters represent weak social groups, such as women and the elderly, as being particularly prone to lying. The Pardoner manipulates his victims using false tactics. Chaucer portrays deception as a vice which spreads in the society gradually and then infects the entire nation.

2.2.4 A Journey from Earth to Heaven

The religious voyage from London to Canterbury symbolises the journey from Earth (vice, deception and dishonesty) to Heaven (repentance, integrity, and liberty). In the beginning of voyage, many pilgrims are concealing their true selves, vices and secrets. Their trip to Canterbury is a symbol of learning, permitting each pilgrim to be absolutely free of these sins by the time they arrive at the Cathedral. This voyage is a metaphor for 'Great Learning' of life. The tavern therefore depicts the immoral life on Earth, whereas Canterbury represents the sinless life in paradise that everyone strives to attain.

2.2.5 Religion

In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer ponders on the question of 'religiousness.' The main concern is to consider the relevance of the holiness and piety in the materialistic world. The issue is: whether the external display of piety, such as those made by the Summoner and the Pardoner, are sufficient to qualify as genuine 'religiousness'? This issue becomes complicated than it appears on the surface level. In view of the fact that the medieval church valued superficial manifestations of piety, personalities like the Parson and the Plowman hint that

something more could be necessary for real holiness, and that the "something more" might not be as finicky and difficult as Prioress, Pardoner, or Summoner would have us accept as true.

2.2.6 Money

As *The Canterbury Tales* is set in a period of economic transition for medieval society, money and riches are heavily emphasised throughout, especially in the portrayals of pilgrims. The descriptions of the attire worn by characters, the horses and the technology they own show us articles purchased with money. Portraits of individuals like the Merchant, the Tradesmen, or the Woman of Bath teach us about the various ways people might gain money. The Reeve and the Pardoner are only two examples of characters that steal or cheat their way to wealth. Several of the images show how the ability to handle money may result in power, whether merited or not, and how the Clerk's lack of care for money can be just as problematic as extreme greed.

3. Analysis of Main Characters

Harry Bailey, the Host

He owns the Tabard Inn. The Host offers to accompany the pilgrims on their journey and promises to make everyone happy. He serves as their leader, resolves conflicts and judges the stories. The Host establishes himself as a very competent tour guide, a role that is incredibly challenging to carry out since he must satisfy such a diverse group of pilgrims. He demonstrates that he is capable of mediating most disputes and maintaining order. The Host manages to get the Chef back on his horse even after he loses control while intoxicated. He settles disputes like those between the Miller and the Reeve or the Friar and the Summoner. The Host makes fun of the parson for being excessively prudish. He softly urges the storytellers to finish their narrations as time is running out. He laughs freely at himself. In general, he is a good leader, an effective mediator of conflicts, an agent of peace, and a global citizen who understands how to relate to a wide range of people.

The Knight

The Knight is the most esteemed traveller in social circles. He has a great social standing, valour, honesty, and honour. His stature and dignity set him apart from the other pilgrims. The Knight has participated in several conflicts and rendered his king with honour. He embodies courage, honour, and chivalry in its purest form. He is also the picture of gentility—a man who values honesty, independence and dignity. He is revered and looked up to by everyone. The knight has a sense of humility despite his high rank. He neither joins in the argument or the whining nor does he criticise it. He has distinguished himself several times in war, yet he never mentions his bold and valiant actions. He is polite to the other pilgrims without developing a

friendship with them and is content with his position in life.

The Knight himself is a fantastic fit for *The Knight's Story*. He decides on a tale featuring adventure, chivalry, love and knights. The noble places a lot of stress on honour codes, manners, and good behaviour. He chooses Theseus, the legendary Greek hero, as his hero. Theseus was the King of Athens and Sophocles depicts him as the perfect ruler in the *Oedipus Trilogy*. Theseus was the most revered individual in Ancient Greek civilization. Theseus represents all the finest human values, much like the Knight himself.

The Miller

The Miller's physical build suits his rude and immoral narrative. He has a large build, "a sturdy Carl (fellow) full huge" of muscle and bone. He consistently triumphs in wrestling matches. He is rude and terrifying to see. The most striking feature is a big wart at the top of his nose. The hairs on his nose are as long and red as thistles sprouting out of it. The Miller is a great person, but like the Summoner, someone you would not want to run into at night. He is a drunkard, brash, and rude man who tells a vulgar but real story about a carpenter. Among all the stories, his is one of the greatest plots and the funniest scenarios. As seen by his story, the Miller also has a clear animosity for carpenters and maybe the Reeve himself as he was formerly a member of a carpenter's league.

The Wife of Bath

Anybody who has ever read *The Wife of Bath's* prologue, which is replete with absurd assertions, will find it interesting. First of all, the Wife is the model for a particular sort of female character that frequently occurs in subsequent literature and the progenitor of the modern emancipated woman. Even while some may also consider her to be his most ridiculous creation, she is, for the unprejudiced reader, Chaucer's most endearing creature. Her marital philosophy shocks her friends, eliciting such reactions that the single man never wants to get married. According to the Clerk and the Parson, her opinions are not only scandalous, but also heretical and go against what the church teaches. In reality, the Clerk is inspired by her opinions to tell a story about a woman who is quite different from the Wife of Bath's character. Her prologue offers a matrimonial perspective that no pilgrim had ever considered, and it is followed by a story that demonstrates her point. No pilgrim can challenge her argument because she delivers it with such unbridled enthusiasm and conviction, and such unwavering confidence in its validity. They may be frightened by it, but they cannot challenge it.

Her dressing sense is unique. She wears colourful scarlet and red stockings. The Wife of Bath enjoys her freedom and is overtly sensuous. She had five spouses, the last one being half of her age. She discloses in her prologue that a woman should always be the head of the household.

She argues that men will find happy marriages as soon as they learn to submit to women's authority. In her prologue, the Wife effectively defends her stance by drawing on all kind of intellectual information; nevertheless, when an authoritative source disagrees with her viewpoint, she ignores it and turns to personal experience. She has had the experience of having five spouses; therefore her personal experiences speak for themselves and are more convincing than a scholastic argument.

The Pardoner

Before moving on to describe those who have lofty aspirations, like the Squire, and those whose behaviour and demeanour hint at certain noble traits, like the Prioress, Chaucer begins the Prologue by describing the most noble of them all, the Knight. He then discusses the intermediate class (such as the merchant, clerk, and man of the law), before descending to the most vulgar (the Miller and the Reeve). The Pardoner is listed last in the decreasing sequence. The reader learns through the Pardoner's prologue and story that he is well-read, psychologically intelligent, and has made a sizeable fortune from his line of work. He is the most complicated personality. He manipulates others by using his intelligence and psychological powers. He can deliver a strong sermon despite not being a good person.

Since the Pardoner exploits the church and revered holy items as means of achieving selfish gain, Chaucer places him at the absolute bottom of humanity. Dante divides hell into nine concentric rings in his *Divine Comedy*, another renowned work from the middle ages. The least offensive sinner is placed in the first circle, which is followed by circles containing increasingly nasty and vicious sinners, including traitors like Judas Iscariot and Brutus.

Hence, even if the Pardoner is the most awful traveller, he is also the most interesting. The Pardoner's frank admission of his own self-love and greed is what makes him most shocking. Because of the way he manipulates his victims using contemporary psychology, some reviewers have dubbed him as *The Canterbury Tales'* most contemporary figure. His assessment of himself is important as well; he claims that, while not being moral himself, he can tell a moral story. He is a character that deserves attention just for this idea.

The Prioress (Madame Eglantine)

She is a devout nun who oversees her monastery. She is described as humble and quiet with a desire for fine taste. She has elegant table manners, speaks French. She has good dressing sense. The Prioress is kind, caring and empathetic. She performs charitable work also. The Prioress is a timid and delicate woman who is exceedingly elegant. She is well-mannered, eats like an aristocracy, and wears a gold brooch with the Roman phrase "Love conquers all" engraved on it.

The Monk

In Middle Ages, monks had to obey the rules of monasteries. Their their lives were firmly devoted to God. However, this monk is more dedicated to eating and hunting than the Rule. He is big, boisterous, and well-dressed in furs and hunting boots. He looks after the monastery's property. Delicious food and alcohol is his weakness. He prefers the pub than the chilly, austere monastery.

The Friar

A sensuous, licentious man named Hubert, known as the Friar, seduces young girls before arranging their marriages. He is a sucker for cash and is more familiar with taverns than poverty houses. Friars were heavily criticised in Chaucer's day since they were wandering priests without affiliations with a monastery. The friar actively performs the sacraments in his town, notably those of marriage and confession, and is always willing to make friends with young women or wealthy men who may want his assistance. Chaucer's worldly Friar has started taking bribes also.

The Summoner

He is a church representative who summons members for church trials. He has a red complexion, boils and pimples, and skin covered with infectious scales. He is as repulsive as his line of work and terrifies children with it. The Summoner is frequently intoxicated, agitated, and under qualified for his position. He attempts to seem erudite by rambling off the few Roman words he knows.

The Parson

He is extremely impoverished, yet holy and good. He attempts to live a flawless life and set an example for others while giving his few resources to his impoverished parishioners. The Parson, the sole devoted Christian in the group, is economically poor, but abundant in virtuous ideas and acts. He is the pastor of a major town and preaches the Gospel. He embodies all that the Pardoner, Friar, and Monk do not.

The Squire

He is a conceited, lustful young man who is running for knighthood. He fancies himself a lady's man and has excellent singing, poetry-writing, and riding skills. The Squire is son of the Knight. He enjoys dancing and flirting. The Squire is handsome and has curly hair.

The Clerk

He is a serious, pious Oxford University student who values education and is well-liked by all the pilgrims. Due to his obsession with reading, he lives in extreme poverty. He is pale and threadbare because he chose to spend his money on education and literature rather than on

expensive clothing. While he doesn't speak much, when he does, his remarks are intelligent and filled with moral excellence.

The Man of Law (or Sergeant of Law)

He is vigilant, cynical, and intelligent lawyer. He is one of the most educated men amongst the pilgrims. He respects justice in all circumstances and is well familiar with every clause of English law.

The Manciple

He may not be as smart as the law students, but he is witty and cunning enough to be able to save some cash for himself. Obtaining supplies for a college or court was the responsibility of a manciple. He is brighter than the thirty attorneys he feeds despite having no formal education.

The Merchant

The Merchant is a clever and educated. He belongs to wealthy, emerging middle class and is skilled at negotiating. He mostly deals in fabrics and furs. He belongs to affluent and influential class in Chaucer's society.

The Shipman

He is a big, crude man who can steer a ship yet stumbles when mounted. The Shipman has visited every harbour and river in England, as well as exotic ports in Spain and Carthage. He is brown-skinned from years of sailing. He is renowned for stealing alcohol while the ship's captain is dozing off; therefore he is a bit of a scoundrel.

The Physician

He is a competent doctor who has sound knowledge of astrology, drugs, and medications. He enjoys gold and prospers financially throughout the pandemic. One of the greatest in his field, the Physician is able to treat most illnesses since he is aware of their causes. Although he maintains ideal physical health, the narrator questions the Physician's spiritual well-being since he rarely studies the Bible and has an unhealthy passion of material gain.

The Franklin

He is a powerful and prosperous landowner who values luxury life and pleasant company. He is such a food and wine lover that his table is constantly set and ready for meals.

The Reeve

He is an extremely old and grumpy man. The Reeve was formerly a carpenter. He disapproves of the Miller's story about the foolish old carpenter.

The Plowman

The Plowman is a kind-hearted sibling of the Parson. He is a peasant and lives a godly Christian life. He donates his tithes to the church.

The Guildsmen

The five Guildsmen appear as a unit in the Prologue. Craftsmen with similar trades came together to improve their negotiating power and live communally.

Roger, the Cook

He is well-known for his cooking skills. His story remains unfinished. The Guildsmen employ him as the Chef. Although Chaucer cites a crusty sore on the Cook's thigh, he does not provide any further details on him.

The Nun's Priest

He is the cleric who escorts the nuns so that they may submit their confessions. The General Prologue makes no mention of the Nun's Priest or the Second Nun. His tale of Chanticleer, however, is cleverly constructed and shows that he is a funny, self deprecating preacher.

The Second Nun

She is not described in the General Prologue, but she narrates a saint's life in her tale. It can be judged from her story that she is a highly pious nun who believes that lethargy leads to sin

The Yeoman

He is the personal attendant of the Knight and Squire. According to the narrator, based on his attire and weaponry, he could be a forester. He resembles Robin Hood. He is all green-clad and armed to the teeth with a sword, a dagger, and a bow. His short hair and dark face give the impression that he spends a lot of time outside.

The Narrator

It is very evident from the narrator's narration that he himself is a fictional figure. Even if he goes by the name Chaucer, we should be vigilant for taking his ideas and ideologies at face value. The narrator describes himself as an extrovert and naive individual in the General Prologue. Chaucer's narrative voice, which alternates between being credulous and mocking, filters every event through it, therefore the way he depicts other travellers helps us understand Chaucer's character the best. Later, the Host reproaches him for being mute and sour.

The Canon and the Canon's Yeoman

The Canon, who is not a pilgrim, enters with his Yeoman but departs when the Yeoman starts telling a story. As the Canon overhears his Yeoman telling the Canterbury pilgrims his secrets, the relationship between the two men turns hostile. The Canon rides out in a huff, abandoning the Yeoman to continue spreading the beans despite his previous declaration that he wanted to join such a cheerful company.

4. Review Questions

1. What characteristics prompt Chaucer to rank the Pardoner at the absolute lowest of society? Why is the Pardoner thought to be Chaucer's most engaging and contemporary figure among contemporary readers?
2. Why do the characters in *The Canterbury Tales* travel to Canterbury on a pilgrimage?
3. According to the Wife of Bath, what do women most want?
4. For which social classes did Chaucer write?
5. Which characters are connected to the Church?
6. Discuss "The Prologue" as a portrait gallery.
7. How does Chaucer present the women among the pilgrims?
8. Which characters in the Prologue most closely approach true holiness? In what ways do they, and their portraits, differ from those of the other pilgrims?

5. Suggested Readings

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M.A. (English)
MAEM23101T: Poetry-I (Chaucer to Renaissance)
Section-B

Unit- I : *Paradise Lost-I* John Milton

Structure

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1.0 Objectives

- To know about the Biblical story of Fall from Grace
- To understand importance of obedience
- Reasons for rebellion against Heaven
- Comprehend the consequences of choice
- Study nature of sin and know about redemption

1.1 Introduction to John Milton

John Milton, (1608-1674) English poet and pamphleteer, is best known for the significant epic poem, *Paradise Lost*. He is one of the major figures in English literature and the last great liberal intelligence of the English Renaissance. Milton, in his prose works, advocates abolition of the Church of England and the execution of Charles I. He espouses a political philosophy that opposes tyranny and state sanctioned religion. His works on theology and values the freedom of conscience. He argues that people are free by nature and have the right to overthrow a tyrant. Milton insists on the rights of those who detach themselves from any established state Church that binds "souls with secular chains". The writings of John Milton span three eras: Stewart England; the Civil War (1642-1648) and Interregnum and the Restoration. Milton's notable works include *Poems of Mr. John Milton* (1645), *Both English and Latin* (1645), *Areopagitica* (1644), *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643). The values expressed in all his works focus on tolerance, freedom, and self-determination. Milton's first polemic pamphlet, *Of Reformation in England and the Causes that Hither to Have Hindered it* (1641), questions religion, politics, power and freedom. Milton's prose engages with polemic as well as philosophic issues.

1.1.1 Three Periods of Milton's Literary Career

First Period (1632-1637) : This period of Milton's career is marked by Puritanic note.

Second Period (1640-1660) of his career reflects Milton's engagement with constitutional struggles. Controversial pamphlets and sonnets written in this period constitute the autobiography of Milton.

Third Period reveals Milton's poetic power at the highest. Despite loss of eyesight, he composed sonnets of spiritual significance. *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were written in this period.

Works of Milton

Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity (1629)

Arcades (1630)

L'Allegro and L'Penseroso (1634)

Comus (1634)

Lycidas (1637)

Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1643)

Of Education (1644)

Areopagitica (1644)

Paradise Lost (1658-1665)

Paradise Regained (1665-67)

Milton's poetry is inseparable from Milton the man. He combines the best in classical and in Christian culture. His humanism, religious zeal, purity and lofty ideals feature in his works. As Milton upheld the liberty of individual conscience, his writings raise a voice against forces of suppression. He disapproved of monarchy because it negated civil liberties. He denounces church as it imposed ritualism on people. According to Milton, a poet's life should be "a true poem". His appetite for knowledge, love for liberty, intolerance of corruption and tyranny combine to expand the canvas of Milton's writings.

1.1.2 The Age of Milton

The life of Milton bears the influences of times he lived in. Traces of the spirit of age are found in abundance in his poetry. The spirit of Renaissance and Reformation influence Milton's poetic career. Renaissance, revival of ancient Greek and Latin learning took place in the 15th and 16th centuries. Renaissance increased the interest in Greek and Latin literatures. It also induced a logical and rational perception. It ushered in religious reformation. Renaissance developed a sense of inquiry which led to breach with the Roman Catholic form of Christianity.

Reformation brought a break with Roman catholic beliefs and practices. A compromise between extreme Catholicism and extreme Protestantism gives life to Anglicanism. The contenders of the purest form of Protestantism were known as Puritans. Puritans and minorities in the age of Elizabeth, rebelled against established authority. Milton's poems bear great influences of Puritanism.

Milton's poetic genius developed in an age of conflicts. His use of blank verse is a great contribution to poetic art in English *Paradise Lost* fuses the Hellenic and the Hebraic, the

renaissance and reformation, to tell the story of the fall of man. Milton's sublime poetry transcends imagination and experience. His grand style and seriousness have distinct spiritual import. His imagination ranges from heaven to earth and makes the invisible visible. With a blend of ancient and modern art, picturesqueness and classicism, Milton speaks of common things and elevates them to lofty heights.

Matthew Arnold observes: "In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm, and diction, he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect, he is unique amongst us. No one else in English literature possesses the like distinction."

Critics argue that the intense seriousness of Milton's poetry did not allow humour of any kind. Digressions, allusions, ellipses, inversions and Latinism make his poetry obscure.

1.2 Introduction to *Paradise Lost I*

Poetry, whether in epic form or not, teaches men to think and act in all problems of life. *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, is an extraordinary work of John Milton. The poem takes shape by a process of mental composition, dictation of 50 lines and repeated checking because of Milton's blindness. To the displeasure of his father, Milton changed his religion from Catholic to Protestant. Milton's acquaintance with or knowledge of radical and Puritan ideas on church and state, public and private morality greatly shaped *Paradise Lost*. The scope and thoroughness of his studies show the importance he attached to truth and a clear system of ideas. Though Milton was a poet and scholar of distinction, his anti-catholic opinions were regarded as a blemish on his mind and character. Milton's poetic greatness lies in his power to transform dogmas and intellectual notions into urgent emotion. This emotion is sustained throughout the poem.

The fall, an act of disobedience, is the central idea of the poem. Milton makes obedience a symbol of faith, of the state, of inward truth, from which the epic sets out, and to world which it stores and marches. Eve disobeys God and Adam, in order to obey the serpent and her own appetites. Adam disobeys God and his own reason, when he obeys Eve and 'the Link of Nature'. Satan's disobedience is personified. Initially, he appears at the lowest point (in Milton's cosmos) but he rallies and begins to rise. As Milton reveals Satan's greatness and full splendour of his evil, the forces of destruction and decay that assail mankind and drag him down into a living death are also shown.

The fallen angels in their torments, their passions and resolutions, their policies and past times, represent a life cut off from the source of life, God. They cannot understand or possess other life (true life) and their only purpose is to destroy and extend the universe of death. Hell

stands for false religions and false civilizations. A pagan heritage – half noble and half corrupt – the gorgeous architecture of pandemonium, the pomp of Satan’s kingship project his defiant assertions. Milton presents evil in its tragic splendor, the mingling of beauty and horror and the glorifying of evil in Satan. The poem plots out Milton’s belief that we can know good through knowing evil. Satan is made the gateway to acquire this knowledge. The sublimity of Satan in revolt thus guarantees the sublimity of Adam’s final obedience. The ultimate lesson of the poem is that faith and reason can give “a Paradise within”.

Milton’s submission to the mysterious transcendence of faith is found in recurrent patterns in his verse. The profound rejection of human or pagan values is only done to achieve purity of true religion. The building of pandemonium, Satan’s public virtue, the solidarity among the devils, and the story of Mulciber’s fall are the explicit forms that exhibit Milton’s version of primitive Christian claims to transcend mere human ideals. He tries to restore the meaning of conflict between early Christianity and the allurements of a luxurious civilization.

The disobedience of man is the subject of *Paradise Lost*. Disobedience of man in consuming fruit of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, and his fall as a consequence, bringing death into the world, and all the woes from which man has continued to suffer. Although the story begins with the man who fell, it also mentions the “greater man” who will redeem us.

1.2.1 Sources

Milton’s life, contemplation and experience during the Civil War influence *Paradise Lost*. The epic brings out the perpetual war between good and evil in the world and in the soul of man. The tragic vision of Milton about human history and experience ends with a ray of hope and happiness. *Paradise Lost* is followed by a recovery of a “Paradise with a happier form”.

The Bible (including the Apocryphus) is the basic source of the story of disobedience and rebellion against the divine order. For structure and literary embellishments, Milton follows classics like Homer’s *Illiad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Conventions of classics like the invocation of Muse, the roll call of leaders, the reported narrative events, beginning story in “middle of things”, prophetic unfolding of celestial agencies. Milton also uses Spenser’s style for modelling heroic villains and figurative treatment of religious/ moral ideas by depicting characters, Sin and death.

1.3 Summary

1.3.1 The Opening, Scope and Purpose of *Paradise Lost*

The opening paragraph of twenty-six lines proposes the subject of *Paradise Lost*: man's disobedience and the loss of paradise till one greater Man restores us, and regains the blissful seat. Thus, the epic poet, following classical tradition, is announcing his theme, and giving a summary of the fable (narrative). He indicates the scope and purpose of his poem. *Paradise Lost* intends to deal with the loss of Paradise, its recovery and reveals that the Fall of Man and his recovery are only parts of larger design. The celestial cycle, including the revolt of the Angels and the war in heaven, creation of man, his temptation, and fall followed by his redemption, the whole of human history, to the flood, and from the flood to the birth of the Christ. Part of history is given in dramatic form and a part as vision and prophecy. The great argument (Subject Matter) is designed in such a way that the poet himself says:

I may assert eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men,

Thus the great moral as Addison said, "is the most universal and useful that obedience to the will of God makes men happy and that disobedience makes them miserable." But this "great moral" is only a part of Milton's great Argument. The opening lines indicate it:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste,
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden.

These four opening lines are so emphatic that most readers are dazzled and overlook the implication of what is stated immediately after these lines;

Till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat.

1.3.2 Plot Summary

Milton states theme of disobedience, loss and restoration (Lines 1-5); invokes aid of the heavenly Muse (6-23) and reveals his plan and purpose (24-26). After indicating purpose in the opening paragraph, Milton talks about the primary cause of man's fall (27-44). He implores his Muse to recall, "What causes moved our grandparents, Adam and Eve, in that happy state in Eden, to fall off from the creator, and transgress His will. Who seduced them to that foul revolt?" The reply to this question gives a glimpse of Satan, "the inferno serpent whose guile, stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived the mother of mankind." Helen Gardner calls him devil. He acted by guile, entered, serpent's body to tempt Eve (mother of mankind).

Milton draws attention to evil and force by recalling motivation of Satan's rebellion.

(The account of Satan's rebellion which begins in *Paradise Lost* is found in middle of Book V). The elevation of the 'Son of God' is the root cause of Satan's rebellion. Envy and Pride drive Satan to raise an 'impious war in Heaven'. Milton presents Satan, the grand foe, in a grand manner. The impassioned argument, and villainous designs of Satan lend tragic beauty to the character. Lines 44-56 refer to Satan's rebellion and consequent fall. The comic posture of Satan, penal fire and tragedy of ruined archangel rouse pity and terror. The rebellious and fallen angels become vulnerable to pain and misery. They are confined to darkness of hell(56-83). When Satan is in hell, Milton gives the devil chance to expound his philosophy of evil(84-191).

Satan's speech is a recollection of the glorious enterprise. He talks about his lost happiness and pain but refuses to repent or change. Satan believes that only weak repent. He loves liberty and has the courage to retain his position. He declares:

Here at least

We shall be free ...

To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:

Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven

His speech is contrived without confession of evil. It opposes the accepted notions of values. The ruined archangel is obdurate and proud. Malice, egotism and spiritual blindness characterize Satan. The surmounting will and refusal to repent repudiate Christian teaching and reveal desire for power. Satan's war brings out cosmic theme of eternal contest between good and evil. The delusive Satan is presented with Homeric similes (monster called 'Leviathan') by Milton. The rising of Satan from burning lake and alighting on dryland is accompanied by imagery of earthquake and volcanic eruption (192-330).

Beelzebub accompanies Satan. while moving from liquid to solid fire. Though driven to degradation, Satan holds the illusion that he has the power to do anything. His speech reveals the psychology of defeat. He cannot abandon the thought of his superiority. On losing heaven, Satan boasts that his mind can make a heaven of hell. He moves from a false philosophy of happiness in unhappiness to Satanic philosophy or freedom.

As he sees heaven to be a totalitarian state, Satan's rebellion in heaven is for equality and liberty. "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven", is a monstrous leap. Satan believes that God cannot envy him and his state of utter desolation.

Satan associates with co-partners of loss and addresses his followers cleverly. His followers transform heavenly virtues to black hordes of locusts and barbarians (331-375). Satan, like military dictator in defeat, tries to lift the spirits of fallen angels (552-669). At the behest of Satan, fallen angels erect a temple-like building called Pandemonium (home of demons). This is

built under the direction of Mammon (represents materialism). In Book I, after stating the subject and invoking the muse to his adventurous song, Milton proposes the opening question: what moved our grandparents so happily placed in Eden, to fall off from their Creator? It was the infernal serpent, whose guile, stirred up with envy and revenge deceived the mother of mankind.

Chronologically, the story begins with God's announcement that all angels in heaven will bow before the Son who, on account of his merit, was Viceregent. Lucifer, an archangel with his followers, revolted against this encroachment on their dignity. This led to a three-day war in heaven, after which the rebellious angels were buried down into hell. Thus, the Son's superiority in merit as well as in might was established.

These fallen angels, imprisoned in adamant chains, and penal fire were left free by God's 'permissive' will to decide their future course of action as they willed. Hell as a place of punishment, a kind of concentration camp, has three regions: full of dark fire, solid ground of burnt soil, and pandemonium, some sort of an artificially lighted assembly hall. Satan, the archangel, turned into an archfiend, and his companions in defiance of God and dismal defeat are shown by the poet to retain even in hell some attributes of heroism. They can deceive themselves, and on another, are experts in the art of perpetuating falsehood in fine phrases, and are capable of continuing to believe, even in dismal defeat, that they are yet not defeated. Hell is not only a place but also a condition of perverse mind. Deadly sins like jealousy and envy are the hell that accompanies Satan where he goes.

Milton, in his earlier years, was ambitious to write a heroic poem celebrating the worldly exploits of national hero such as King Arthur or Alfred. Intense thinking, and experience of men (and their doings) drove him ultimately to the realization that the glory of man or nothing as compared to the glory of God. The only real kingdom is the kingdom of heaven. Non-Christian heroism, plan of men's salvation, belongs to hell. Satan's barbaric heroism, so brilliantly displayed through perverse speeches and actions, is hollow and false. Book I shows hellish hate in defeat, yet still in battle against heavenly love.

1.3.3 Paraphrase

Lines 1-26: an invocation of the Heavenly Muse; and the Holy Spirit to add him in this; his great work of singing about man's disobedience and the consequent loss of Paradise.

Lines 28-83: The prime cause of Man's fall; the temptation of Satan in the form of a serpent. Satan, revolting against God, and drawing to his side, many legions of angels, was defeated and driven out by God, and cast into hell. There he is discovered, when the action of the poem

begins, surrounded by fallen angels, among whom Beelzebub, next to him in power, is conspicuous.

Lines 84-124: Satan's speech to Beelzebub. Exerting his own indomitable will, and determination to resist, he urges his companion in rebellion to persevere likewise.

Lines 125-156: Beelzebub's answer. He acknowledges Satan's courage, whilst lamenting their fall more bitterly than Satan. But he urges the hopelessness of continuing that context against the Almighty, for the very fact that the force of angel is unfailing, may be meant to aggravate the bitterness of their servitude.

Lines 157-191: Satan's reply. Though servitude may be their portion, yet they must hope, and study in that servitude, to frustrate the intention of their Master. He points out that the thunder and lightning, the artillery of heaven, have ceased, and urges him to employ his respite to collect their scattered forces and consult for the future.

Lines 192-241: a description of Satan, as he lies stretched out on the fiery flood; his size is illustrated by comparisons. He is allowed by Providence to rise and win his way to land, but the land burns no less than the sea.

Lines 242-270: Satan's speech Lines 242-264 is a soliloquy, the rest is addressed to Beelzebub. He first laments the change from heaven to hell, then consoles himself with the thought that mind and not the place makes for happiness or misery. Hell at least is his own, here he can reign. He then exhorts Beelzebub to rally the rest.

Lines 271-282: Beelzebub's answer. It needs but Satan's voice to raise them, still prostrate as they were lately.

Lines 283-330: Satan is described as he appeared, making for the shore. He surveys his host lying scattered and amazed on the flood.

Lines 331-375: The rebel angels rise obedient to his call as numerous as locusts or barbarian hordes. In heaven they were princes, but they had lost their heavenly names.

Lines 376-521: A catalogue of the chief leaders, being an enumeration of the principle, Syrian and Arabian deities, to which is added a general preference to the gods of Greece.

Lines 522-621: Satan encourages his defeated hosts, and bids Azazel raise his standard. At the signal of the army falls in the battle array, and marches to the sound of martial music. The appearance of Satan, still glorious, though fallen, is compared to the sun seen through a mist or eclipse. Touched by remorse at the sight of his comrades, he essays to address them, but is long hindered by tears.

Lines 622-662: Satan's speech. The battle, though fatal in its issue, was not inglorious. Who could have foreseen the defeat of such forces, who would not predict that they should recover

their loss? The reason of their defeat was their ignorance of the strength of their foe. Now they know their strength and they can meet it by fraud. It is reported that a new world needs to be created. This may give them a starting for their enterprise. They determine to persevere in war.

Lines 663-751: The effect of Satan's words. A group, under the direction of Mammon, proceeds to build a palace to serve as a council hall; some quarry, the hell for gold, others melt the ore. The structure rises as if by magic. Its magnificence is illustrated by comparison with the monuments of made by men.

Lines 752-798: The council is summoned. The thronging councillors are compared to bees swarming. As they enter the contract in size till they are no bigger than pygmies or fairies. The Seraphim and the cherubim alone, who are seated by themselves retain their proper dimensions.

1.3.4 Explanation of Some Important Passages

Sing Heavenly Muse that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the Heaven and Earth
Rose out of Chaos.

Milton, in the magnificent opening blank verse paragraph of *Paradise Lost* Book I, states the theme of epic, the form of man, and then invokes the heavenly Muse (Urania), who inspired the Hebrew prophets of old, to inspire him as Moses, the great leader of the Israel and their law-giver, was inspired on Mount Horeb, or Sinai twice. Once, when he was acting as shepherd to Jethro, his father-in-law, he drove the flock of sheep near Mt. Horeb, called the 'Mount of God'. He was called by the divine spirit to climb the top of Horeb where God appointed him leader of the Israelites and commanded him to liberate them from 'the slavery of pharaoh, King of Egypt'. For the second time, Moses as inspired by God on the top of Mount Sinai, after the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage, while leading them to the promised land, Moses reached Mount Sinai. He was summoned by God to the secluded and inaccessible top of Mount Sinai, where he gave him his 'Ten words' or the 'Ten Commandments', which became his law to the Israelites, 'His favorite people'. Moses was the first to relate to them, the history of the creation of the world, which forms the subject of Genesis, the First Book of the Bible, known as the Book of Moses.

What thought the field be lost?
All is not lost: the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And what is else not be overcome?
That glory never shall his wraith or might
Extort from me.

These lines from Satan's first speech in hell give a peep into his dauntless courage and indomitable spirit which could not be subdued even by a crushing defeat. Satan spoke to Beelzebub who thought the battle in heaven ended in a defeat for him. The defeat could not crush his spirit and weaken his resolve to pursue his eternal revenge upon and hatred of God. He would never acknowledge him as his Victor and if his mind remained unslaved, it could not be claimed by God. The real defeat would be the conquest of his spirit, a privilege which neither God's fury nor his great power, could ever compel Satan to yield.

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallambrosa, where the Etrusian shades
High over-arched embower

In these lines, Milton uses a suitable simile to give an idea of the vast multitude of the fallen angels as they lay floating unconscious on the surface of the fiery lake in hell by comparing them to countless leaves scattered upon the surface of the streams in the shady valley of Tuscany in north Italy.

The fallen angels were as innumerable as the leaves that fall in the autumn season and float on the streams in the shady valley of Tuscany. The high trees growing in that valley spread their branches overhead and with thick foliage form a shady retreat. It is one of the best and most exact similes of Milton. It conveys not only the sense of a vast multitude but also the posture and situation of the fallen angels. The fallen angels, like the leaves, fall from a height. Lastly, the fallen angels, like the leaves, are pale and faded.

1.4 Let Us Sum Up

Paradise Lost is a theological and historical epic. It deals with central concepts of Christianity. It is an allegory that takes up political, social and religious issues of Milton's time. E. V. Rieu maintains that *Paradise Lost* is symbolic and philosophical. It embodies an idealistic ethical system which presents evil and enduring truth of free-will and the possibility of triumph of good. John Ruskin, in *Sesame and Lilies*, writes:

“Milton's account of the most important event in his whole system of the universe, the fall of angels, is evidently unbelievable to himself; . . . his poem is a picturesque drama, in which every artifice of invention is visibly and consciously

employed” (136-137).

The perennial problems of man death, life, evil, good, repentance, suffering, joy, condemnation and redemption have been interpreted by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. Through this epic poem, Milton establishes universal facts. These are as follows:

Evil is present in the world in the form of maladjustments and imperfections.

Evil is opposed to good but subservient to it.

Good is absolute.

Evil is self-destruction and good is eternal.

Satan’s perilous voyage and efforts to rouse perversion in man can be countered (resisted) by man with power of Choice, reason and free will.

Evil may deceive men but man’s choice can restore supremacy of good.

Satan's temptations, Eve's biting the forbidden fruit and man's disobedience result in a loss which will later turn to gain, the future of humanity on earth. *Paradise Lost* upholds virtues of patience not passivity, of enlightened learning and not submissive ignorance.

1.5 Questions

1. Why does *Paradise Lost* open with Satan as the main character?
2. How does war begin in heaven?
3. Describe the poisonous nature of fallen angels.

1.6 Suggested Readings

1. G.A. Wikes, *The Thesis of Paradise Lost* Melbourne University Press, 1961.
2. David Daiches, “The Opening of *Paradise Lost*” in *The Living Milton*, Frank Kermode (London, 1960); Joseph H. Summers, *The Muse’s Method* (London 1961), pp. 11-31; Gilbert Murray, *The Classicist Traditionals in Poetry* (Harvard, 1927), pp.7-22.

M.A. (English)
MAEM23101T: Poetry-I (Chaucer to Renaissance)
Section-B

Unit- II : *Paradise Lost-I* John Milton

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Theme, Structure and Universe of *Paradise Lost*

2.1.1 Theme

2.1.2 Unity of Action / Structure

2.1.3 Beginning, Middle and End of *Paradise Lost*

2.1.4 Invocation

2.1.5 The Universe of *Paradise Lost*

2.2 Milton's Style and Characterisation

2.2.1 Characterisation

2.2.2 Universal Subject

2.2.3 Hero and other associates in *Paradise Lost*

2.2.4 Speeches of Elaborate Length in *Paradise Lost*

2.2.5 Similes, Metaphors and Allusions in *Paradise Lost*

2.2.6 Grand Style

2.3 Human Interest in *Paradise Lost*

2.3.1 Sublimity

2.3.2 Moral Tone

2.4 Let us Sum up

2.5 Questions

2.6 Suggested Readings

2.0 Objectives

- To understand importance of invocation
- To understand language and style
- To gain insights into characters
- To analyze moral perspectives

2.1 Theme, Structure and Universe of *Paradise Lost*

2.1.1 Theme

The theme of a literary work is a concept made concrete through its representation in character, action and imagery. The subject of *Paradise Lost* is Man's disobedience and the ensuing loss of paradise on earth, but its theme in the simplest term is love. The theme of Fall in *Paradise Lost* goes beyond a national epic. It gives Milton scope to analyze the question of freedom, free will and individual choice. The central episode of Satan's revolt against God, and his defeat, by the sun is illuminated as the origin of the difficulties which Man will experience (though not yet created) and as continuous admonition of Satan's defeat, before, during, and at the end of mortal time.

The thesis of *Paradise Lost* is that full recognition of Eternal Providence will justified to mend the ways of going towards men:

“That, to height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men”

The justification of God's ways lies in the demonstration that man can know the nature of God, only by knowing the nature of evil. Man can rise, only by first, having descended, and that obedience is the natural consequence of love.

2.1.2 Unity of Action/ Structure

The fable of this epic poem can be read more or less in three distinct parts: the rebellion of the angels and their struggle with God (Book I, II, III and the end of the greater part of Book V and VI); the creation of mankind, the intervention of the saviour; and the state of man's existence (Books I, IV, and part of V, VII and VIII); the stratagem of Satan against man, the disobedience of Adam, and Eve, and their banishment from paradise (Books IX and XII).

There is a perfect unity of action in *Paradise Lost* as in the great classical epics of Homer and Virgil. The theme of *Paradise Lost* is 'fall of man'; everything in the poem either leads up to it or follows from it. The plucking of fruit of the Tree of Knowledge by Eve is the apex of the whole architecture of *Paradise Lost*.

So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
Forth-reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat.
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through her all works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost.

The war between God and Satan, followed by Satan's fall, is only a prelude to the main action. Satan, defeated and punished, sought to take revenge on God, by bringing about the fall

of man. Hence, the fall of Satan does not constitute a separate action, (as contended by some critics). The whole action of *Paradise Lost* is single and compact. There are some episodes, as that of sin and death, which are the necessary appurtenance of the classical epic. Since Milton's characters are mostly supernatural God, Angels, Devils, with but two human beings, who are also more like angels than men, this makes the action of *Paradise Lost* also different from other epics. In *Paradise Lost* it concerns the whole creation: "everything is done under the immediate visible direction of heaven".

2.1.3 Beginning, Middle and End of *Paradise Lost-I*

Paradise Lost begins not at the beginning, but in the middle. It retraces the earlier history, and finally takes the story forward to complete the narration. The fall of man is a long story, and its beginnings are to be traced back to creation (by the Almighty), Milton deals with the Fall of Satan or Lucifer in the first book. This is a striking episode, which arrests our attention, for we are introduced to Satan lying in the sulphurous lake of endless fires, after having being hurled down from high heaven by God. This is in accordance with the classical convention that the action of an epic should plunge abruptly into the middle of the action. Who was Satan, why he fell, are the questions that engage our attention The poet proceeds to tell us all about these in the later part.

2.1.4 Invocation of *Paradise Lost*

There is an introductory invocation or prayer to inspire and bless the poet to complete his task properly. This is common to ancient epics. Instead, Milton prays to God to give him the necessary inspiration to complete this task. He surfaces his faith in the concept of God according to the tenets of the Christian religion.

In the invocation to the Muse, Milton follows a poetic tradition adopted from antiquity, but in such a way, so as to fill it with significance. The Heavenly Muse is in reality the divine inspiration which revealed the truths of the religion of Moses and also the Spirit of God, dwelling in the heart of every believer.

2.1.5 The Universe of *Paradise Lost*

"Every great work of art creates its own universe that obeys its own imaginative laws. As we read or listen, we come to learn what may be expected, and what may not, what we can demand, and what we cannot, or should not ask." This view of Helen Gardner is very sensible and we should agree with her that the universe of *Paradise Lost* is intensely dramatic and filled

with energies and wills. Besides having an unprecedented concentration, Milton's epic also has a wider scope in time and space. It ranges from the height of heaven to the depths of hell. In Helen Gardner's words: "Milton's conception of his subject is the source of what has always been regarded as one of the chief glories of *Paradise Lost*, its wealth of epic similes".

Paradise Lost is the outcome of a Puritan's deep reflections on the Bible. Though Milton accepts the whole of biblical history as genuine and sacred, he takes great liberty in interpreting it. The outcome is a ceaseless conflict between his faith and his temperament – the universe, with its wealth of epic similes.

2.2 Milton's Style and Characterisation

"The name of Milton," says Raleigh, "has become the mark, not of a biography, not of a theme, but of a style, the most distinguished in our poetry." "Milton's is the language," says Pattinson, "of one who lives in the companionship of the great and the voice of the past." It would not be wrong to say that the word "sublimity" best describes Milton's mature style. The portrait of Satan, in book one is an ample proof:–

He, above the rest
In shape and gesture, proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower, his form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess,
Of glory obscured: as when the sun new-risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight shades,
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs

Images of a tower, and Archangel, the sun rising through mists, or in an eclipse, the ruin of monarchs, and the revolution of kingdoms, this crowd of great and confused images affect us exactly because they are crowded and confused. The images used in poetry are of obscure kind. His remoteness from common speech is not a defect. As Tillyard puts it: "the heightened style of *Paradise Lost* was something demanded of him as an epic poet a rigour against which there was no possible appeal." Satan's size in power is compared to "that sea-beast Leviathan". He compares the vast number and confusion of the fallen angels "thick as autumnal leaves that

strew the brooks in Vallombrose”. *Paradise Lost* is resplendent with such epic similes.

2.2.1 Characterisation

John Milton shows a different conception of hero in this epic poem. This is due to the ambiguous interplay between God, Man and Satan. The character of Satan strikes us as the most impressive figure in *Paradise Lost*. The poet’s great achievement lies not only in the portrayal of the majestic figure of Books I and II but in the slow and steady degeneration of the “arch fiend” into a slimy, deceitful serpent. The portrayal of Satan in the first two books is such that there is a controversy about the hero of this epic. Many critics have taken Satan to be the hero. The misinterpretation, perhaps, is due to the fact that such a view is based on the reading of the first two books only. In fact, the hero is Adam – a tragic figure in many ways. Adam’s character, though not as dynamic as Satan’s, nevertheless, is very finely etched. Adam’s role is not that of a warrior (which Satan is) but that of a God-fearing man, faced with temptation and defeated in the conflict between himself and Satan. But the defeat is not final. Through the help of the Messiah (Christ, the son of God), Adam regains the Paradise “happier far”. Satan is not personification of evil but of self-will. P B Shelley, in *A Defense of Poetry*, adduces Satan’s tenacity of will and commitment to principle as follows: “Milton’s Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent inspite of adversity and torture” (10). Satan, for Shelley, is a hero physically and morally. Shelley admires Satan’s energy to ceaselessly war with God and acceptance of suffering.

There are some critics who feel that either God or the Messiah is the hero of this epic. This seems to be an absurd thesis. Neither God nor the messiah takes part in the central action of *Paradise Lost*. It is true that Adam has a somewhat passive role as well, but the fact remains that the whole epic turns round ‘man’s first disobedience’. Adam disobeyed God, and by this act of disobedience, he not only lost Paradise but also brought about the fall of the whole human race. No action can be more tremendous in its import and significance than that which brought the fall of the whole of humanity. Ultimately, Adam and his race come out triumphant by the grace of God and regain the lost paradise.

2.2.2 Universal Subject

“Milton’s Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent inspite of adversity and torture” (10). Satan, for Shelley, is a hero physically and morally. Shelley admires Satan’s energy to

ceaselessly war with God and acceptance of suffering. Milton's *Paradise Lost* has a greater significance than either the *Illiad* or the *Aeneid* because it deals with the whole human race. The epic reveals the destiny of all humanity through sin of the first man created by God. Thus Milton promotes a universal view of man's life on Earth and shows how he has a past, a present, and a future devised for him by the might of God and as a result of his own. This is the didactic or philosophical view of an epic. Milton sees that he has undertaken to write about the Fall of Man and to justify the ways of God to men. Man is born endowed with free will and great powers but he is subject to the decrees of the Almighty who is filled with love for his own creations. We can make or mar our destiny since we are given freedom to work out the will of God or suffer from the consequences of disobeying Him. This is a cosmic or eternal view, which is bound to inspire all of us with hope for the future. Coleridge commented on the universal appeal of *Paradise Lost*. He observes, "It represents the origin of evil and the combat of evil and good, it contains a matter of deep interest to all mankind, as forming the basis of all religion, and the true occasions of all philosophy whatsoever."

2.2.3 Hero and other associates in *Paradise Lost*

The characters introduced into an epic poem are all endowed with powers and capacities of heroic proportions. *Paradise Lost* differs from the classical epics in the number of characters portrayed. The earlier epics were rich in characterization with many mortals and gods taking part in the action. Their personality and the motivation of all the participants in the different phases of the story capture the interest of readers; and there is also constant suspense about their fates. The subject matter of the Fall of Adam and Eve, obviously precluded any such generosity of characterization, especially of human beings. The central character, Adam, lacks heroic destiny. The corruption of Eve and Adam along with humankind leads to spiritual struggle for regaining Paradisal equity. Satan's exploratory journey through chaos is given a new cosmic context.

2.2.4 Speeches of elaborate length in *Paradise Lost*

Speeches of elaborate length are another feature of epics. Apart from the poet's explanations and descriptions of the background and scenery, the characters themselves speak fully explaining their thoughts, feelings, and motives beyond our understanding. There is often a good deal of repetition, but this repetition adds fullness to the action. Besides, direct reporting adds to the vividness of the narrative, and we feel as if we are spectators or participants in the scene or action.

2.2.5 Similes, Metaphors and Allusions in *Paradise Lost*

Another feature of epics is the frequency with which figures of speech are employed. Similes and metaphors are most common. Book I abounds in the Homeric similes. They offer a scope for the poet to exhibit his varied knowledge of nature, books, and men in all aspect of life.

Next to similes, we have allusions, references to different aspects of older tradition, folklore, mythology, art and related activities of human beings in different parts of the world. Milton was one of the most learned of the world's poets. All that was known to the ancient world, and to his contemporaries in all branches of human endeavor, is found referred to in one context or the other in *Paradise Lost*.

2.2.6 Grand style

The next essential characteristic of an epic is its grand style. A great action needs a worthy style for its adequate presentation, and Milton's poetic style in *Paradise Lost* is the last word of sublimity in English poetry. *Paradise Lost* excels as a poetic work, both for the loftiness and for the grandeur. Truly, Tennyson called Milton "mighty mouthed inventor of harmonies" and "God gifted organ voice of England". The language of *Paradise Lost* bustles with Latinisms and to some extent this fact elevates the style. Anything common or trivial would have spoiled the effect of the great epic.

2.3 Human interest in *Paradise Lost*

The human interest in the poem centers on the figure of Adam who is the central character of *Paradise Lost*. The epic, like the tragedy, is according to Aristotle, the story of human action. *Paradise Lost* is essentially a story of human action; though there are only two human characters in this epic – and they make their appearance as late as the fourth book of the poem yet their act of disobedience is the central theme of the epic; and this act of eating "the fruit of that forbidden tree" is of tremendous significance, for on it depends the fate of the whole human race. The last two lines of the poem, describing the departure of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden are full of deep pathos and appeal to every human heart:

They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way.

2.3.1 Sublimity

An epic is a serious poem embodying sublime and noble thoughts. Milton's *Paradise*

Lost is a sublime and noble poem characterized for the imagination of man to engage with greater ideas than those which Milton has presented in the first, second and sixth books. The seventh book, which describes the creation of the world, is equally wonderful and sublime.

2.3.2 Moral tone

An epic is not without a moral. Besides giving a general representation to passions and affections, virtues and vices, the epic poet does not leave out a moral which he expects his readers to imbibe. The moral forms an integral and intrinsic part of Milton's poem. It seeks to "vindicate the ways of God to men, to show the reasonableness of religion and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law."

Dryden, however doubted its claim to be called an epic, because (1) it is not heroic enough; its main theme is not a war but the tale of man's loss of happiness; (2) unlike other epics it ends unhappily; (3) again, unlike other epics, it contains only two human characters, the other being "heavenly machines".

The objections are either superficial or conventional. It is a needless restriction on epic poetry to say that it must always have a war as its main theme. Similarly, the fact that epics generally end happily does not mean that all epics must end so. Besides, as Johnson points out, *Paradise Lost* does not end unhappily. "If success is necessary", he says, "then Adam's deceiver was at least crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank." If Adam loses the eternal paradise, he gains "a paradise within him happier far." Dryden's third objection is sufficiently refuted by Addison. He says that the number of characters in Milton's epic is not many, yet each of the characters is represented in more than one aspect. Thus we have Adam and Eve as they are before their fall and as they are after it. God is revealed as the Creator, the avenger of man's wrongs and as man's redeemer. Satan has three different aspects of his character. He is God's enemy, man's tempter and a great leader to his followers. Besides, abstract characters, such as sin and death, are introduced. God and the angels, good and bad, are also characters. They are not merely "heavenly machines."

2.4 Let Us Sum Up

Milton is the greatest English poet. He is a consummate literary artist with a marvellous union of intellectual and creative powers. He is the most sublime of English poets and an acknowledged master of what Matthew Arnold calls 'the grand style' The thought, diction and charactersation impressively embody loftiness and moral earnestness.

2.5 Questions

1. Discuss the epic features of *Paradise Lost*.
2. What is the significance of pandemonium?

2.6 Suggested Readings

1. John M. Steadman's *Milton and the Renaissance*, Oxford, 1967.
2. Joseph Matthew Kuntz "A Critical Analysis of the Epic Hero in *Paradise Lost*" (1956) http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1088.

M.A. (English)

MAEM23101T: Poetry-I (Chaucer to Renaissance)

Section-C

UNIT 1: William Shakespeare *Sonnets 18, 29, 73, 108 and 116*

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction to William Shakespeare

1.2 Introduction to Elizabethan Age

1.3 Historical Background

1.4 Analysis of Sonnets, Theme, Style, Symbols & Questions

1.4.1 Sonnet 18

1.4.2 Sonnet 29

1.4.3 Sonnet 73

1.4.4 Sonnet 108

1.4.5 Sonnet 116

1.0 Objectives

- To acquaint the student with the socio-cultural and literary forces that led to the Elizabethan period.
- To familiarize the students with the details of William Shakespeare's life as biographical details shed light on the works of an author.
- To demonstrate an understanding of significant cultural and societal issues presented in Shakespearean literature through writing
- To interpret and analyze Shakespearean sonnets

1.1 Introduction to William Shakespeare

Shakespeare, also known by the stage names Bard of Avon and Swan of Avon, was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He is frequently referred to as the nation's poet and is widely regarded as the greatest playwright of all time. Shakespeare holds a special place in literary history. Shakespeare's plays, which were written in the late 16th and early 17th centuries for a small repertory theatre, are now performed and read more frequently in more countries than ever before. Other poets, like Homer and Dante, and novelists, like Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, have also transcended national boundaries. The forecast of his great contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare "was not of an era, but for all time," has been fulfilled. He is a writer of exceptional intelligence, insight, and poetic force. While other authors have

possessed similar traits, Shakespeare applied his sharp intellect not to obscure or distant themes but to people, emotions and conflicts. Other authors have used their intellectual acuity in this way, but Shakespeare is remarkably skilled with language and imagery. His mental energy, when applied to understandable human situations, finds complete and unforgettable expression, persuasive and imaginatively engaging. Shakespeare's achievements can therefore endure when translated into other languages and into civilizations that are different from Elizabethan England.

1.2 Introduction to Elizabethan Age

The body of writings produced during the reign of Elizabeth I of England (1558–1603) is known as Elizabethan literature. This period is the most illustrious in history of English literature saw the greatest literary success for authors like Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Roger Ascham, Richard Hooker, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare. The term "Elizabethan" simply serves as a historical marker and does not specify any unique aspect of the text. Shakespeare's plays, the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza, and dramatic blank verse all flourished during the Elizabethan era, which was also a golden age for theatre and the creation of a wide range of exquisite prose (from historical chronicles, versions of the Holy Scriptures, pamphlets, and literary criticism to the first English novels). Most creative expressions, notably play, saw a significant darkening in tone around the turn of the 17th century, which more or less coincided with passing away of Elizabeth. After the new king, James I, the period of English literature from 1603 to 1625 is referred to as the Jacobean period. Yet, the work from the initial years of his reign, at least, is occasionally characterized to as "Jacobean" insofar as 16th-century themes and patterns were carried over into the 17th century.

1.3 Historical Background

The Elizabethan era spans the time between the Gothic and Renaissance periods. This period began in 1558, the year Elizabeth I, the sixth and final Tudor monarch, assumed the throne, and ended in 1603, the year she passed away. Elizabeth was the daughter of King Henry VIII and Anna Boleyn, his second wife, and was born on September 7th, 1533, in Greenwich. Hendrik had a daughter named Mary from his first marriage to Catharina van Aragon as well. Elizabeth was crowned in London in 1558 following the passing of Mary. Elizabeth I reined throughout this time for 45 years until her death in 1603 (Since she never married, Queen Elizabeth is frequently referred to as the virgin queen).

The Elizabethan era, which saw numerous advancements, is regarded as the English historical Golden Age. The Queen's leadership is largely responsible for the significant developments that took place during this time. Elizabeth I was regarded as England's best empress. This period was relatively tranquil in times of numerous conflicts and struggles.

Various conflicts between the Catholic Church and the Protestants just before the Elizabethan era marked the times. Moreover, the conflicts between the Crown and the Parliament were ended. At the time, England was a wonderful place to live.

The Elizabethan period is frequently referred to as the Renaissance, a time of fresh perspectives. English poetry, music, and Elizabethan theatre were produced at this time, in addition to literature. William Shakespeare's plays and were liked literary works by the lower classes. The Elizabethan era also experienced several issues at the end of the period. Spain persevered in starting a war with England between 1585 and 1604. This was because Catholic Spain discovered that Protestant England was aiding the Dutch in gaining their independence from Spain. The conflict was known as the Anglo-Spanish War. England's economy had been ravaged by the war. The Treaty of London, which ended these wars in favour of Spain, was signed in 1604, the year after Queen Elizabeth's demise.

1.4 Analysis of Sonnets, Theme, Style, Symbols & Questions

1.4.1 Sonnet 18: Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day?

Introduction

William Shakespeare, an English playwright and poet, wrote 154 sonnets, with "Sonnet 18" as his best-known. The speaker of the sonnet questions if he should compare the Fair Youth to a summer day but then remarks that he possesses traits that go beyond a summer day. He also points out that a summer day's characteristics can and will alter over time. The speaker continues by saying that as long as people can read the poem, the Fair Youth will live forever in its lyrics. An irony is being expressed in this sonnet: the summer day, which the young man is expected to outlive, is what will be immortalised, not the young man (the poem has little or no description of the young man).

The poem is a component of the Fair Youth collection (which comprises sonnets 1–126 in the accepted numbering stemming from the first edition in 1609). Moreover, it is the first cycle poem following the opening sequence, now known as the procreation sonnets. Yet, given that it discusses the idea of obtaining immortal life through the written word—a theme they find in sonnets 15 to 17 some academics claim that it is a member of the procreation sonnets. According to this interpretation, it serves as a bridge leading to the time subject of sonnet 20.

Style

Sonnet 18 is a traditional English or Shakespearean sonnet of 14 iambic pentameter lines, three quatrains, and a couplet. Moreover, it adheres to the conventional rhyme scheme: CDCD EFEF GG ABAB. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet rhetorical technique is used throughout the poem. The beauty and affection of a beloved, frequently an unreachable love, were commonly

discussed in Petrarchan sonnets, albeit not always. A volta, or shift in the poem's subject matter, begins in the third quatrain. The couplet's first line exhibits the characteristic rhythm of iambic pentameter.

Themes

Admiration

The speaker frequently praises his beloved's attractiveness throughout the entire poem. In each of the three quatrains, he expresses admiration for his beloved's beauty in a new way. He begins by inquiring as to whether or not he ought to compare his beloved to a sunny day.

The speaker discusses the limitations of summer in contrast to his beloved in the very next line (which is where the comparison begins). Depending on the amount of sunshine, he claims that a summer day might be either very hot or extremely chilly. His adored, on the other hand, is moderate and avoids extremes. Also, the speaker asserts that his girlfriend is more beautiful than a summer day. The speaker deepens his admiration by contrasting the beauty of his beloved with the beauty of other transient things. He claims that the summer is overly brief and quickly turns into the fall. Similar to this, everything else in the world will eventually lose its appeal. Either they will meet in an accident or they will meet their untimely demise.

The poem uses excellent analogies to further emphasise this awe of the beloved's beauty. The speaker illustrates the uniqueness of his beloved's beauty by using metaphors like the "eye of heaven" to compare it to his own attractiveness.

Cruelty of Nature

In this poetry, nature is portrayed as a stern and ruthless foe. The severe gusts, according to the speaker, in May shake the tender buds. This shows that nature's forces always harm the world's most beautiful creations. Also, the two extremes of summertime sunshine deprive people of pleasant weather. The vicious nature of humanity prevents them from enjoying themselves in this world.

The speaker also makes reference to how every fair item would eventually lose its fairness as a result of its interaction with natural cycles. Nature is full with threats that can steal object's attractiveness at any time. In the poem, death is also portrayed as an arrogant enemy. The beauty of many things is destroyed by it, one of nature's brutal agents. It prevents people from enjoying their lives and robs them of them.

Death is Inevitable

The poem emphasizes the fact that everyone will die. No matter how strong they are, everyone will eventually go to the grave. The poem's portrayal of the fleeting summer serves as the initial step in the development of this concept. The speaker claims that the summer is only

temporary and will soon come to an end.

The speaker then elaborates on this notion and asserts that death is the end of everything in the universe. Death disintegrates everything into dust. But, the speaker tells his love that by making him an immortal in his poems, she will shield him from such a destiny.

A Source of Immortality: Poetry

The speaker tells his beloved about his method of becoming eternal in the poem's final couplet. He claims that by describing his beauty in his poetry, he has rendered him eternal. He is confident that people will read his poetry, even when they have left this world for good. They will recognise the beauty of his lover when they read his poetry. His beloved shall live forever in this way.

Symbols

The sonnet has a number of symbols, including nature and the other seasons, which represent life and death, as well as summer, which is a symbol of youth and beauty.

Paraphrase of stanzas

Does it make sense if I liken you, my darling, to a perfect summer day? Actually, you're more attractive, better, and calmer [than a summer day] than they are. Because the trees' buds can occasionally be blown off by strong winds, even in May. Sometimes occasionally it feels like summer does not last very long. The sun might be quite hot, or it might occasionally be hidden by clouds or bad weather. In all honesty, beautiful things age and lose their appeal. This could be the result of pure bad luck or the natural ageing process that affects everyone and everything. Although and this is the key you will maintain your "summery" appearance forever. And you won't lose your beauty, either. Death [personified] will also be unable to take ownership of you because He cannot steal you. Once I've immortalized you in this poetry that I'm composing, he'll take you away from me by bringing you to his dark place. Until humans are no longer able to breathe or see, it is the maximum life span of my poem. My poem will ensure that the memory of your beauty endures forever.

Critical Analysis

One of Shakespeare's most well-known compositions, Sonnet 18 is regarded by many as one of the greatest love poems ever written. It is written in iambic pentameter form, like other sonnets, and consists of four quatrains and a rhyming couplet. It addresses the subject of beauty and how time affects it. Shakespeare also boasts in this sonnet that he can use poetry to preserve the beauty of his love, which has led some commentators, like James Boyd-White, to say that it is really just "one lengthy exercise in self-glorification" rather than a poem about love.

Shakespeare's love is beautifully described in the opening lines of the sonnet. The fact that

Shakespeare compares his love to a summer day and comes to the conclusion that their beauty is superior to that of summer and the sun is noteworthy. We are not given any precise information about how they seem. The poem begins with the well-known compliment:

“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”

This question is flattering in and of itself because a summer day is frequently thought to be beautiful. Shakespeare, however, argues that his love is more beautiful than the summer and lacks its propensity towards disagreeable extremes: “Thou art more lovely and more temperate:”

Shakespeare expresses particular complaints of the summer, saying that its beauty is ruined by high winds and that its briefness depresses us:

“Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date”

It should be remembered that May was seen as a summer month at the time the sonnet was written because England had not yet embraced the Gregorian calendar. Shakespeare highlights the brittleness and fleeting nature of summer's beauty in the aforementioned quotation. The word "lease" is used to warn us that everything beautiful is just fleeting and that eventually its beauty will be taken away violently. The term "fair" is used often to emphasise how everything that is beautiful will inevitably meet this fate. Shakespeare, however, claims that his love will be perpetuated through his poetry and will not lose their beauty to the passage of time or to death:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander’st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st”

Shakespeare's confident assertion allows one to argue that the poem's true intent was to honour oneself by praising one's own poetic ability rather than to pay a loved one a tribute. There are subtle hints that Shakespeare wrote this poem to praise himself throughout the entire text. For instance, the word "I" is emphasised in the first line whereas the word "thee" is not because of the rhythmic structure. This implies that Shakespeare preferred to think about himself over his love. Shakespeare could be understood as saying that he will brag instead of death when he personifies death in the third quatrain and declares that it will not "brag" to power over Shakespeare's love.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 expertly explores the topics of beauty and how time affects it by utilising a range of poetic devices as well as a good iambic pentameter framework. Due to Shakespeare's overt desire to attract attention to himself as the poet and the lack of specificity in

his depiction of his beloved's beauty, this sonnet may not properly be recognised as a love poem.

Questions

1. Who is "thee"?
2. Does this poem necessarily keep living so long as humans keep breathing? Is the speaker right?
3. Lines 8 and 12 seem to do a bit of foreshadowing. Why? Why not just surprise us with the turn and the couplet?
4. What's up with all of the personification?

1.4.2 Sonnet 29

Introduction

Shakespeare, an English playwright and poet, composed 154 sonnets, including Sonnet 29. It belongs to the Fair Youth series (which comprises sonnets 1-126 in the accepted numbering stemming from the first edition in 1609). The speaker laments his failure and exclusion in the sonnet, yet he feels better when he thinks about his sweetheart. Sonnet 29 follows the traditional structure of a sonnet by having 14 lines of iambic pentameter that end in rhymed couplets.

Style

The fourteen-line Sonnet 29, written in iambic pentameter and consisting of three rhyming quatrains with a rhyming couplet at the end, has the same fundamental structure as other sonnets by Shakespeare. Although the b and f rhymes in this sonnet happen to be the same, it nevertheless adheres to the traditional English rhyme scheme of abab cdcd efef gg. Sonnet 29 has two separate portions, as noticed by Bernhard Frank, with the Speaker describing his current state of depression in the first octave and then conjuring up what seems to be a nicer vision in the last sestet.

Murdo Shakespeare's Sonnet 29 differs from the other sonnets, in William McRae's opinion, due to two aspects of its internal structure. [3] The absence of a "when/then" sequence is the first distinctive feature. A sonnet's first eight lines usually create a dilemma (a "when" statement), which is then fixed in the final six lines (a "then" statement). But, as McRae points out, the Speaker in this sonnet is unable to offer a resolution, maybe as a result of his profound loss of self-worth, and instead utilises his conclusion to contrast the unfavorable sentiments expressed in the preceding octave. According to McRae, this deviation from the standard sonnet format gives the poem a sense of being "torna part". The repetition of the b-rhyme in lines 2 and

4 ("status" and "fate"), as well as in lines 10 and 12 is the second distinctive feature ("state" and "gate"). The repetition of the b-rhyme, according to McRae, refocuses the reader's attention on the lines, and this "poetry inside a poem" brings the work back together in a way that contrasts with the way it was initially torn apart.

Shakespeare, however, did not just come up with a system of line rhymes. Shakespeare uses the word "state" three times throughout the poem, each time referring to a distinct idea, as Frank explains in his article. The Speaker's condition is described in line 2, his attitude is described in line 10, and the third "state" is described as that of a king or kingdom (line 14). Several sources also address the problem of the repeated b-rhyme. Others argue that "the double use of 'state' as a rhyme may be justified, in order to bring out the stark contrast between the Speaker's apparently outcast state and the state of joy described in the third quatrain," according to Hilip McGuire, who writes in his article that some consider this to be a "serious technical blemish".

Themes

One of the sonnets from William Shakespeare's Fair Youth cycle is sonnet number 29. The speaker's early sadness, sense of helplessness, and unhappiness in life are the main themes of the poem, as well as how happier ideas of love helped him or her to recover. The poem begins with self-pity and unfavourable thoughts as the author harbours jealousy for successful people in the world. In the beginning of the sonnet he yearns for the existence enjoyed by them. The poet has his own set of possessions, but he does not consider them satisfactory. It becomes clear that the speaker's discontent originates from the fact that he is not with the friend he loves. Hence, loneliness is the primary cause of the low mood. Later, the tone of speaker begins to shift. Thoughts of the man he loves are the root cause for the shift. It is irrelevant to ask who Shakespeare was in love with. He first experiences joy, which develops into sentiments of hope. Around lines 12–13, Shakespeare is able to employ a minor amount of personification. With the phrase "From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate," the poet is personifying heaven by giving it a human sound and leaving it alone to hear his screams of discontentment over what he now has. The speaker's conclusion is that even if he feels lonely since his friend is away, just thinking about him makes him feel better. He even goes so far as to imply that he would not alter a single aspect of his existence, saying "I scorn to change my state with kings" despite the fact that he is wealthier than those "states."

Sonnet 29 addresses anyone who has feels ignored and overshadowed by someone they consider to be superior, but who may get over these negative emotions by remembering a loved one.

Symbols

The Speaker's rebirth into a life in which he can now sing "hymns at heaven's gate" is represented by the "lark at break of day arising" (line 11). Another contrast in the poem is produced by this. The Speaker's prayers had previously gone unheard since heaven was previously deaf, but now it can hear.

Paraphrase of stanzas

When my luck is bad and I feel like nobody cares about me, I sit by myself and cry because I'm all alone. I pray to God, but he never hears or answers my prayers. I then look at my life and curse how it's turned out, wishing I had better prospects than I do, that I were more attractive, that I had more powerful friends.

Even the things I love the most don't make me feel good; I wish I had this man's skill and that one's range of skill; Nevertheless, anytime I feel like this, practically loathing myself, I think of you and I feel like a bird rising at the crack of dawn. I would rather have your love than be king because just thinking about it makes my life seem so rich. Thus, I rise from the ground and sing songs at the pearly gates.

Analysis

The poem's opening line describes the speaker's poor social standing and how he has fallen out of favour with men. The speaker uses the literary method synecdoche in this instance by referring to whole humans as "eyes." The poem has an artistic effect because of this device. He uses the word "outcast" to further define his circumstance and dramatise his lack of social contacts. He expresses his displeasure with his current situation through the use of hyperbole.

The speaker of the poem describes his struggle to improve his situation in the third line. He claims that his cries offended the gods. Yet when he says "heaven," he calls it "deaf," and when he says "cries," he calls it "bootless". The idea of an uncaring God who does not care to hear the pleas of mankind is created by this personification of heaven. He finds them upsetting. He attributes everything to his luck in the next line.

The second quatrain describes the speaker's envy. He aspires to be a person of optimism, ability, and friend to others. He claims that he is unable to appreciate the things he used to because of his current health. He conveyed his lack of other people's possessions by using adjectives like "wealthy," "featured," and "possessed".

The poem's melancholy tone shifts after the octave. The speaker begins by adopting upbeat language and discusses his mood change. He claims that the moment beloved's notion enters his mind, his mental state radically changes. He soon starts to feel cheerful and begins to compare this transition to dawn. He compares the way his mind works to the way a lark sings in

the morning using an analogy.

The speaker of the couplet exaggerates his love and declares that he will not even accept a kingdom in exchange for the thought of his beloved. The structure and content of the two sentences are intertwined, illustrating the relationship between the speaker and his sweetheart.

Questions

1. What alters the speaker's emotional state in Sonnet 29?
2. What literary devices does Sonnet 29 use?
3. What serves as Sonnet 29's central theme?

1.4.3 Sonnet 73

Introduction

One of William Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, Sonnet 73, is among his most well-known and addresses the subject of ageing. The Fair Youth is mentioned in the sonnet. The metaphors used in the three quatrains are autumn, the passage of time, and the extinguishing of a fire. Each metaphor suggests a possible interpretation of the poem by the young person.

Style

An English or Shakespearean sonnet is Sonnet 73. The final rhyming couplet follows three quatrains in the English sonnet. It uses the English sonnet form's ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme pattern. It is written in iambic pentameter, a poetry form with five feet per line and two emphasised weak then strong syllables in each foot.

Themes

In Sonnet 73, the poet laments the loss of his youth and manliness and expresses his impending death. He laments fully considers the day when he will lose his manly strength and vigor. After spring has ended, he will then deteriorate to the same level of ugliness as nature. He imagines his own body as the dying hearth and the advancing dusk with regret. The poet's awareness of his friend's devotion, which will undoubtedly grow as his body continues to deteriorate, lifts him out of his sad attitude.

Paraphrasing of stanzas

When you see me at that time of year
without many or any fall leaves
trembling against the cold on branches
or like a disused monastery where monks once sang.

You can see the dawn in me.
the westward setting sun
and eventually turning into the night's blackness,
which, like death, brings everything to rest.
You perceive the glow of a dying fire in me.
where are the remains of my youth
like my deathbed, where it must perish, devoured by what it consumed
You see how this strengthens your love for me because you must leave me shortly.

Analysis

The speaker compares himself to a tree losing its leaves in the autumn in the first quatrain. The speaker compares himself to a setting sun in the twilight in the second quatrain. The speaker compares himself to a fire that is burning out in the third quatrain. The speaker shifts the focus to the person he loves in the last couplet, which makes the reader realise that the sonnet is essentially a love poem.

Questions

1. What is the subject of Sonnet 73 by William Shakespeare?
2. What does Sonnet 73's speaker compare himself to? What features do all of these comparisons share?
3. What does Shakespeare have to say about autumn?

1.4.4 Sonnet 108

Introduction

One of William Shakespeare's 154 sonnets is titled "Sonnet 108," popularly known as "What's in the brain that ink may character." It is a part of a collection of sonnets dedicated to the Fair Youth, a young man Shakespeare's speaker fell in love with. The identity of the Fair Youth has been the subject of numerous theories from academics, but no one identity has ever been proven. Much of the appeal of these sonnets is the enigma surrounding the nature of the relationship.

Style

Shakespeare's Sonnet 108 is a fourteen-line sonnet that follows the standard Shakespearean format. It is composed in iambic pentameter and consistently rhymes with ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The latter speaks about the beats per line and the placement of the stresses. Each line in this instance consists of five metrical feet, or groups of two beats. The first is not emphasised, whereas the second is. It resembles the sound da-DUM, da-DUM. Iambic

pentameter was used extensively throughout Shakespeare's writing, from his plays to his poems.

Themes

The sonnet has an intrinsic beauty as a literary form that depends on the harmony of symmetrical and asymmetrical structure and melody. And throughout history, love has been a major theme in sonnets. Shakespeare highlights his message about his beloved and their gorgeous appearance as a result by using the sonnet form.

Paraphrasing

What else could I have said that I haven't previously shared with you about who I really am?

What new information could I write to express my love or your wonderful virtue even more fully?

Nothing, lovely kid, but I have to repeat my daily prayers over and over again without becoming tired of them (Song of Solomon 2:16 "My beloved is mine, and I am his")

When I first dedicated your name, I understood that eternal love never ages, disregards the effects of time, doesn't worry about wrinkles, but makes age its page (a young boy), and discovers love as it was in its conception, blind to natural deterioration and death.

Analysis

The poet is speaking to the fair lord and asking him, "What's in the brain that ink may character?" so that he might demonstrate to him the sincerity and fidelity of the poet's soul, "Which has not figured to thee my true spirit?" What new concepts or words can he think of, "What's fresh to speak, what now to register," that can better communicate his love and be more valuable, "That may express my love or thy dear merit?"

He addresses the fair youth as "sweet boy," saying that nothing is impossible but still resembles divine prayers. He must say the same thing every day, "I must each day say o'er the very same," and he counts nothing as old because it is both his and the fair youth's, "Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine."

Even like when I first sanctified thy fair name," he says while honouring the young man's name for the first time. and that the young love endured "So that eternal love in love's fresh case" and did not weigh the dust and hurt of age, nor did it give place to required wrinkles, nor did it care about the wrinkles on each other's faces. But when they were young, he was always moved to show his love in the same way, writing, "But creates antiquity for aye his page."

And now, even though their external appearances may suggest that there is no love at all and that it has worn out with time "where time and outward form would reveal it dead," he recognises the gaze he initially noticed when they first met.

1.4.5 Sonnet 116

Introduction

The first edition of William Shakespeare's sonnet 116 came out in 1609. Its format and organisation are characteristic of a Shakespearean sonnet.

The poet declares in the opening line that he does not object to the "marriage of true minds," but he insists that true love should not alter over time; it should remain constant despite challenges. The poet alludes to the nautical theme in the seventh line by comparing love to a sailor's north star. Like the polar star, true love is "ever-fixed." Even though it changes physical beauty, love is "not Time's fool."

It begins unmoving, remote, and independent; later, it becomes "less remote, more tactile, and earthbound"; and the final couplet gives the impression that it is "coming back down to earth." Shakespeare comes to the conclusion in the last couplet of the sonnet that either he is right in his assessment of love or that no man has ever genuinely loved. Perfect love is kept constant throughout the sonnet.

Style

The final rhyming couplet follows three quatrains in the English sonnet. It is written in iambic pentameter, a sort of poetry metre based on five pairs of metrically weak/strong syllabic places, and follows the traditional rhyme pattern of the form abab cdcd efef gg.

Themes

Marriage, fixed points, wandering, ideal love, enduring love, and constant love.

Symbols

Love serves as both the subject of the poem and a metaphor for the perfect partnership. Because the perfect love poet depicts can only ever exist in the abstract, it serves as a symbol.

The star represents assurance. The North Star is the only fixed object in a shifting sea, hence it is utilised here in a nautical context where sailors can use it to determine their course by looking up. The poem uses this analogy to illustrate love.

An example of a ship is a bark. It stands for the journey of life, with all the ambiguities and difficulties that it entails. Only love can give the sailors aboard this ship direction and clarity.

Paraphrasing

There are no barriers in the union of honest minds. Even when one changes or is away, love does not still exist.

No, it is a fixed location that is stormproof.

Every ship uses it as its Pole Star; its value is unknown, but its degree (position) is known.

Even though time has a way of destroying beauty, love is not fooled by it.

Love endures till the Day of Judgment and does not change with the flow of time.

If I'm incorrect about this, no guy has ever loved, and I've never written.

Analysis

Shakespeare makes use of the directive Let me not begin his persuasive techniques, and he goes on to use negation, using the tiny word not four times in all. It seems like he's unsure of this idea of love and wants to define what it is NOT in order to make his case.

So even if the environment changes, love does not alter or change. If there is a change in the body, mind, or soul, love remains unwavering and sincere.

Love is there to guide us, like a lighthouse with a fixed beam, guiding us safely home if life is a journey, if we are all at sea, if our boat is shaken by a strong storm we can't control. Or, to use a metaphor, love is a fixed star that can guide us if we stray.

Love, in contrast to beauty, is not victimised by or vulnerable to the effects of time. Love defies time, including hours, weeks, and measurements, all the way up until the final judgement. What use are the words, and what good is the human experience of falling in love, if the reader doesn't believe the writer's case?

Questions

1. Is the poem's interpretation of love a practical one or just an idealistic fantasy?
2. Do you share the poet's belief that love is unchanging and eternal?

Note:

Students will study Shakespeare and the Elizabethan period.

M.A. (English)

MAEM23101T: Poetry-I (Chaucer To Renaissance)

Section-D

UNIT I : John Donne

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction to John Donne

1.2 Introduction to Renaissance Period

1.3 Historical Background

1.4 Analysis of Poems, Theme, Style, Symbols & Questions

1.4.1 The Good Morrow

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1.4.4 The Flea

1.4.5 Batter My Heart

1.5 Suggested Readings

1.0 Objectives

- To acquaint the students with the literary trends of metaphysical school of poetry
- To highlight the salient features of metaphysical poetry
- To familiarize the students with the details of John Donne's life as biographical details shed light on the works of an author
- To interpret and analyze the poems by John Donne

John Donne

1.1 Introduction to the poet

John Donne, English poet, scholar, soldier and Secretary, was raised in a recusant household. He was eventually ordained as a priest in the Church of England. He was appointed Dean of London's St. Paul's Cathedral with royal support (1621–1631). He pioneers metaphysical poetry. His poetical creations, which include sonnets, love poems, religious poetry, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, lullabies, and satires, are known for their figurative and sensual style. He is renowned for his sermons as well.

The abrupt openings, myriad paradoxes, ironies, and dislocations in Donne's poetry define his style. These characteristics were a reaction against the smoothness of traditional Elizabethan poetry as well as an adaptation of European baroque and mannerist techniques into English. Along with his numerous dramatic or daily speech rhythms, his tense syntax, and his rough eloquence, Donne's early poems were characterized by a deep understanding of English

life. The concept of true religion, on which Donne spent a lot of time reflecting and frequently theorized, is another significant theme in his poetry. Along with sexual and romantic lyrics, he also penned secular poems. His mastery of metaphysical conceits has earned him particular notoriety.

Donne spent several years in poverty while mainly relying on his affluent acquaintances, despite having a brilliant education and literary genius. He spent a large portion of the inheritance he received during and after his studies on womanizing, reading, leisure activities, and travel. Donne had twelve children with Anne More, whom he secretly married in 1601. He received Anglican ordination in 1615 as a deacon and then as a priest, despite the fact that he was only forced to do so by the King. In 1601 and 1614, he was a Member of Parliament.

1.2 Introduction to Renaissance Period

Literature from Europe that was affected by the intellectual and cultural trends of the Renaissance is referred to as Renaissance literature. The Renaissance as a whole, which began in Italy in the 14th century and persisted until the 16th century while spreading to the rest of the western world, was the context in which the Renaissance literature was created. It is defined by the resurgence of classical Antiquity and the embrace of a humanist philosophy. The development of printing in the latter half of the 15th century was advantageous to it.

Greco-Roman culture served as a source of inspiration for Renaissance writers, who employed both Greco-Roman themes and literary genres in their works. Anthropocentricity was used to frame how the world was perceived. Christianity benefited from the revival of Platonic ideals. The ideological landscape of the time was completed by the pursuit of sensory delights and a critical and rational mentality. Both new metrical forms like the Spenserian stanza and new literary genres like the essay (as popularised by Montaigne) first appeared.

Different nations on the continent saw the effects of the Renaissance differently depending on whether their populations were largely Catholic or Protestant. It had less of an impact in countries where the Eastern Orthodox Church dominated culturally and in regions of Europe ruled by Islam. The emphasis during this time was on self-actualization and the capacity to accept one's circumstances.

The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 1440s encouraged authors to write in their regional vernacular rather than the ancient Greek or Latin, expanding the reading public and fostering the dissemination of Renaissance ideas.

1.3 Historical Background

Renaissance thought, rooted in classical education and emphasising all things human, such as art, literature, culture, and politics, expanded from Italy throughout Europe starting in the

14th century. Fortunately for today's English literature enthusiasts, the Renaissance's arrival in England sparked a flourishing of exquisite works throughout the 15th and 16th centuries that readers still esteem and relish reading today.

The Early Modern Period, or Renaissance, in England, which runs roughly from 1485 to 1660, is replete with renowned authors. The Renaissance Writer Roll of Honor includes the likes of Spenser, Marlowe, Jonson, Milton, Donne, and the matchless William Shakespeare, to name just a few.

1.4 Analysis of Poems, Theme, Style, Symbols & Questions

1.4.1 The Good Morrow

Introduction

John Donne's posthumous collection of Songs and Sonnets, which included "The Good-Morrow," was released in 1633. The sonnet "The Good-Morrow" by John Donne portrays the state of ideal love that the speaker and his sweetheart share.

The speaker of the poem notes at the outset of the poem that neither his life nor the life of his sweetheart truly began until they met. They were like babies sucking from their mothers' breasts before they came together. Any pleasure he previously experienced was unreal, he now realizes. The only genuine love he has ever known is the one he is currently experiencing.

The next stanza recounts how their love dominates everything he sees and that there is no chance for it to fail. He does not have any reason to want anything outside of their cramped bedroom because it drives his entire existence. The speaker of the poem declares in its epilogue that their love is balanced like a sound body. Nothing can go wrong since their mental and bodily states are so closely linked.

Style

The poem is typically regarded as one of Donne's earliest. Despite having twenty-one lines rather than the customary fourteen, it has also been classified as a sonnet. The poem is broken up into three groups of seven lines each that rhyme with ababccc.

This rhyming scheme is incredibly original, and the shifting metre pattern further adds to its intrigue. The majority of the lines are ten syllables long; however the final line of each stanza is twelve syllables long. This change was probably made to keep readers interested in both the story and the text itself.

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Themes

The profundity of love is the overarching subject that permeates 'The Good Morrow'. The poet discusses characteristics of love such as :

The benefits of romance

The completeness or totality of a couple's love

Love's uniting quality

Macrocosms and Microcosms

"And makes one little room an everywhere" is the sentence. Donne makes it apparent in line 11 how the larger macrocosm of the world or universe and the smaller microcosm of the lover's room are related. They are referred to collectively in the poetic voice. It's noteworthy that "an everywhere" rather than "everywhere" is used. Donne suggests that there might be more than one "everywhere" but that it does not matter by choosing this precise phrase.

Symbols

Childhood

Childhood is often used as a symbol for the time before meeting your soul mate. The speaker compares himself to an infant and a child and seems not to recall the time before he met his sweetheart. Thus, childhood represents immaturity—not merely of the physical self, but also of the soul.

Greetings

The poem is named after the adage "good-morrow," which translates to "good morning," and represents a fresh start. The speaker of the poem is literally waking up next to the person they love and wishing them a good day. But the strengthening of their love also marks a fresh start (as indicated by the fact that the past seems so unimportant to them).

Maps

Maps represent different possibilities. The world and the yearning to encounter other lives are two concepts that Donne famously employs this symbol to convey throughout his poetry.

Paraphrasing Of Stanzas

What did you and I do before falling in love, even? Were we still nursing our babies? Did we only appreciate simple, innocent things? Or did we pass out alongside the Seven Sleepers? It is real. But this is all just a dream of pleasure. If I've ever desired and acquired something lovely, it was just in my dreams thanks to you.

Good morning to our souls, which are just waking up right now? They don't keep an eye on one another out of dread. Jealousy is unnecessary since love makes it possible for us to focus

solely on one another. And it enlarges a tiny room to the size of the entire planet. Allow travelers to explore new realms beyond the ocean. Let others map out the universe, planet after world. Let's have simply one planet because each of us has one because we are each worlds.

You see my face in your eye, and I see your face in mine. The truth of our hearts is also evident in the way we look. Where can we find two finer globes that are free from the polar cold and the darkness brought on by the westward setting sun? When anything dies, it does so because the components were improperly blended. However, because of how well suited our loves are to one another, neither our love nor our lives will end.

Critical Analysis of the poem

The speaker starts the opening verse of "The Good-Morrow" with three queries. They all enquire about the circumstances of his and his lover's lives before to meeting. He asks his sweetheart, "by my troth" (or "what in the world"), what they did before falling in love. This and the questions that come after it are rhetorical. He is not expecting a sincere response.

He queries whether they were "not weaned until then" in the following paragraph. Since they were kept apart from their mother's milk until they met, he does not think the two were fully adults. It wasn't until they gave up "rural pleasures" that their lives truly began. They developed more complex tastes and became less reliant on innocent pleasures.

He queries whether they were dozing off like the "Seven Sleepers" in the fourth line. This alludes to a legend about seven kids who were buried alive by a Roman ruler. They slept during their lengthy entombment rather than passing away, and were discovered approximately 200 years later. It sounds like the speaker has his sweetheart in stasis until the right moment to unearth him or her and reunite them.

The stanza's final three lines provide the answers to his earlier queries. He responds by saying that everything he said was true, of course. Before meeting his current partner, he had no actual experiences.

The first four lines of the second stanza's structure introduce the reader to a different facet of the connection. He talks about how they will live happily ever after in the "wonderful tomorrow." It won't be necessary to "watch...one another out of fear." Their partnership is ideal.

The speaker is demonstrating in the lines that follow that any temptation from elsewhere is useless. Love controls his sight, and as a result, everything he sees is changed by his adoration. He describes the earth as being contained in a little room. He has no need to leave the bedroom that he and his lover occupy.

The repeat of the first word "Let" in the next three lines is an example of anaphora. The speaker is expressing to his girlfriend that now that they are together, the outside world has no

meaning. The explorers are free to explore and claim whatever they like. He'll be content to "own one planet" where they are all together.

The speaker of "The Good-Morrow" starts the final verse by gazing into the eyes of his sweetheart. He can see his own face there, and he is aware that he can also see her face in his eyes. Their genuine connection is visible in their expressions.

The following lines keep referring to their bodies, and Donne employs conceit, one of the literary devices for which he is most known. He is equating their faces to two hemispheres in this instance. Their facial hemispheres are flawless, unlike the hemispheres of the real world. In the cosmos, there is no concept of "two better". There is no "declining west" or "sharp north." The speaker in Donne's poem believes that he and his beloved are soul mates and each other's missing halves.

The final three lines discuss how an imbalance might result in death. This is perhaps a reference to the medieval science of humors, which held that a balanced mixture of blood, bile, defined one's health. He illustrates with this metaphor how physically and emotionally equal parts of their love exist. Simply having the other there creates the right equilibrium between them. Their interconnected emotions are what hold them together.

Questions

1. What literary devices does Donne employ in "The Good-Morrow"?
2. What are "The Good-Morrow's" main themes?
3. What notion is Donne trying to express when he writes, "...snorted we in the seven sleepers' den"?

1.4.2 The Sun Rising

Introduction to poem

The English poet John Donne is the author of "The Sun Rising". Throughout his lifetime, Donne produced a wide spectrum of social satire, sermons, elegies, holy sonnets, and love poems. However, he is perhaps most remembered for the similarities between his sensual poetry and his religious poetry. After his death, the 1633 collection *Songs and Sonnets*, which included a large portion of his writings, including "The Sun Rising," was released. The speaker in "The Sun Rising" instructs the sun to warm his bed so that he and his beloved can spend the entire day there instead of getting out of bed to go to work. The poem's whimsical linguistic use and extensive metaphor are typical of Donne's manner in all of his writing, whether it be sensual or religious.

Style

The poem "The Sun Rising" has three stanzas and thirty lines. A stanza consists of ten lines. It is a poetic piece. The poem is composed of two quatrains in each verse. The couplet EE and the quatrains' rhyme schemes are ABBA and CDCD.

It is an aubade, the poetry (a poem greeting the dawn, often involving lovers reluctant to separate). It shows a realistic representation of the sun. The sun is occupied performing his duties after getting out of bed. But the couple declines to go after him. The poet debates the sun on how love has the ability to transcend time and place.

Themes

Love

Love is the main theme of John Donne's well-known poem "the Sun Rising." Here, the poet demonstrates how his love is exclusive. He chastises the sun for interfering with their moment of love. He claims that his mistress is more strong and superior to the sun in this passage. Even he commands the sun to set. Additionally, he believes that his mistress and his love are more significant than ordinary people like schoolchildren, court hunters, and farmers. He, therefore, gives the sun the instruction to call and annoy them. He creates an image in which his mistress is likened to all the states of all the kingdoms in the entire world in order to emphasise the significance of their love.

Community

The poem's central theme is community. It demonstrates how a community and nature are both a part of us. Individual living is impossible. Here, the poet wishes to enjoy their love alone with their partner, but the sun intrudes on their romance. The poet expresses his irritation with the sun's meddling in the poem. Even after telling the sun that their love is not covered by the sun's timetable, the poet is powerless to flee from it.

Disappointment

Although love is the poem's primary focus, it also highlights the poet's lover's dissatisfaction. So that he might spend more time with his mistress, the lover warns the sun to leave him alone. With the dawn rising, he does not want to rejoin the world. Actually, he seeks to halt the sun's motion. He does not wish for the sun to rise as the night comes to an end. It's not possible, though. Therefore, the poem also conveys the disappointment of the poet lover.

Symbols

Sun

Donne makes several diverse uses of the sun. It is the passing of time in the opening stanza. The sun serves as a timekeeper and a season change indicator. Additionally, his love is

harmful by the passing of time. He wishes he could linger in this passionate moment for all time. The sun also stands for strength, authority, and power. It serves as a signal to wake up and start working.

Cosmology

A lot of intriguing things happened throughout the 17th century. They lacked all of this cutting-edge technology. They did not have a detailed plan for everything. They were always learning and making discoveries. Like many of Donne's poems, this one draws on widely held scientific theories and advancements, some of which were quite recent and some of which date back to the Middle Ages.

Paraphrase of Stanzas

The speaker criticizes the sun for invading his or her privacy and claims that love is not a slave to time or daily routines.

The speaker, who is helplessly in love with his mistress/wife, insults the sun by implying that his bed is the best place to be.

The speaker, who ultimately invites the sun to join the entire, claims that the bed and the lovers represent a microcosm of the universe.

Critical Analysis of Poem

Metaphysical love poetry with beautiful imagery, "The Sun Rising" is a pleasure to read. The poem also eloquently conveys the strength of love and the feelings of a lover, love being unconstrained by any laws or rules. Even the omnipotent sun is subject to hours, months, and seasons, making love the most divine of all things because it does not follow the laws of time.

Questions

1. What aspects of "The Sun Rising's" metaphysical poetry should be discussed?
2. Identify the figures of speech in John Donne's "The Sun Rising."
3. Explain the use of hyperbole in the phrase "She's all states, and all princes, I" from "The Sun Rising."

1.4.3 The Flea

Introduction to the poem

English poet John Donne wrote a poem titled "The Flea," most likely in the 1590s. In "The Flea", the speaker uses an unexpected (and possibly disgusting) extended metaphor to entice his mistress: because both he and she were bitten by the same flea, their individual blood has mixed inside the flea's body. The speaker contends that having sex is no different and is not any more dishonorable. Therefore, his mistress must submit to him. The speaker infuses the

poem with theological overtones despite the metaphor being purposefully quite basic, possibly even juvenile: the union of speaker and mistress in the flea is like the Holy Trinity. In this way, the poem combines seriousness with humor, elegance with vulgarity. The endeavor to woo the mistress is equally as much a show of wit and sophistication.

Style

Iambic tetrameter and pentameter lines alternate in this poem's meter, with two lines in pentameter concluding each stanza in a 4-5 stress pattern. Consequently, each of the nine-line stanzas' stress patterns is 454545455. Each stanza has a consistent couplet-based rhyme pattern, with the final line rhyming with the final couplet: AABBCDDDD.

Themes

Sex

A recurring motif in "The Flea" is sex and the longing for sex. The flea "sucked me first, and now sucks thee," the speaker tells the woman, before it "swells with one blood made of two / And this, sadly, is more than we would do." The terms "sucking" and "swelling" make quite suggestive sexual implications.

The entire poem is motivated by the speaker's yearning for sex.

Carpe Diem

The Latin expression *carpe diem*, which means "seize the day," is a popular theme in philosophical poetry. *Carpe diem* is a philosophy that emphasizes living in the moment rather than thinking about the future.

By attempting to persuade the woman that the mixing of bodily fluids is not evil but rather something to be relished, the speaker invokes this spirit. He says, "Thou know'st that this cannot be said / A sin, nor disgrace, nor loss of maidenhead," in reference to their blood combining inside the flea. He is alluding to the woman's virginity when he says "maidenhead".

Symbols

The Flea

The union of the speaker and his beloved is represented by the flea in John Donne's poem "The Flea". The speaker claims that since the blood of the speaker and his beloved is already united, there is no good reason why they should not also merge in the act of making love. The small thing has both of their blood inside of it.

Paraphrasing of Stanzas

The speaker justifies having sexual relations with the young woman by claiming that a flea hopped from him to her. He claims that because their blood is mixed together in the flea, they are already one in the flea's body. In addition, the flea didn't need to court her; it simply

punctured her and obtained what it wanted. Why should their love-making be viewed as sinful yet the flea's bite and the mixing of their bloods is not?

The speaker tries to stop the woman from killing the flea in the second stanza. She would have committed suicide and a triple homicide by killing the flea, he claims, because it contains the "life" of both herself and the speaker.

As evidenced by the third verse, wherein she uses a fingernail to kill the flea, the woman in issue is plainly not persuaded. The speaker then flips this around to emphasise that, even if the flea that housed a part of each person's life is now dead, neither person is any weaker as a result. Why does she hesitate to engage in physical intimacy with him if this mixing of physiological fluids can have no permanent effects? After all, her honour will remain unaffected in the same way

Critical Analysis

The poem "The Flea" transports the reader right into the centre of a private setting. A man and a woman are seated here, presumably on a bed, and the man is pointing out a flea, which was relatively frequent in the middle of the 16th century during the Renaissance. The male uses this chance to make a case to the lady for sexual union based on the behaviors of the now swollen flea, which has lately sucked blood from them both as is their instinct.

The process of the flea sucking is entirely natural; there is no sin, shame, or loss of virginity involved. Since the term "maidenhead" truly refers to the hymen, we can infer that the woman is a virgin. Their blood is mixed, making the flea's successful deed one that requires no courtship, seduction, or promises (to woo). If only they could mix their own blood, or have sex, like the flea does.

The man stops the woman from killing the flea before she can. Oh, stay. He claims that killing a flea would be sacrilegious since it is sacred and represents marriage. She disregards him. She does not appreciate the religious allegory or exaggeration. It is fascinating to see that she holds all the power despite remaining mute throughout the poem. She uses her nail to kill the flea. Little action, big results. The woman has basically put an end to the argument by eliminating the parasite; the man virtually says the same thing, "thou triumph'st," leaving them both on the bed as equals.

However, there appears to be a twist in the final three sentences. The man acknowledges that she may be correct—"Tis true"—but in a final effort to win her over, he claims that just her honour would be compromised—a little thing, similar to killing a flea.

Questions

1. What is "The Flea's" paradox?
2. Talk about "The Flea's" elements of metaphysical poetry.
3. What is the formal structure and rhyme scheme of "The Flea"?

1.4.4 The Ecstasy

Introduction to poem

One of John Donne's most well-known poems, *The Ecstasy*, conveys his original and outlandish views on love. It expounds the notion that pure, spiritual or real love may exist solely in the link of souls made by the bodies. According to Donne, true love can only exist when a person's body and soul are inseparably linked. Donne condemns the platonic lover who places more emphasis on the soul than the body.

Style

John Donne, a well-known English poet, wrote the metaphysical poem "The Ecstasy". The poem's original title, "The Extasie," is the one that is most frequently used to refer to it. It has 76 lines, which are occasionally divided into 19 stanzas. Iambic tetrameter is used for each line.

Themes

The Value of Love in Its Spiritual and Physical Aspects

Donne addresses the notion that love affects both the body and the soul. The speaker of the poem and his sweetheart first engage in a soul-intertwining.

Symbols

Violet

The speaker equates the violet that appears along the bank alongside the lovers to their souls blending in love, making it the most prominent symbol in "The Ecstasy". Due to its links with the Virgin Mary and ancient Greek mythology, the violet has long been seen as a symbol of modesty. Donne uses these associations as a springboard to illustrate the sublime power of love. He uses the metaphor of "A single violet transplant" (37) to show how love gives life to two souls, transforming them into one superior soul. It begins "poor and scarce" (39) but "Redoubles still, and multiplies" (40).

Critical Analysis

The poem "The Ecstasy" is one of Donne's most well-known love poems and is a surprisingly delicate piece of writing. Its term is appropriate and ominous. The Greek word *Ekstasis*, which meaning to stand out (EK = out and Sta = stand), is the source of the English

word ecstasy. The poet's and his beloved's souls stand forth from their respective bodies in "The Ecstasy" and speak. According to ideas from the medieval and mystical times, ecstasy is a trance-like experience in which the soul departs from the body, emerges, and engages in communion with the Divine, the Supreme, or the Over-Mind of the Universe. Additionally, in "The Ecstasy," the lover and the beloved's souls emerge from the body, conversing not with God but rather with one another in order to highlight the fundamentally sensual and physical foundation of spiritual love. Donne has so combined theological and philosophical beliefs to describe the physical and the material in his typical unique style.

Questions

1. What kind of flower does the poem feature?
2. What kind of poem is exemplified by The Ecstasy?
3. What is the poem's meter?

1.4.5 Batter my Heart

Introduction

'Batter my Heart' uses powerfully spiritual and physically compelling visuals to convey the lyrical voice's plea for God to take hold of him. The three main topics of the poem are violence, religion, and love.

Style

John Donne uses the conventional Italian sonnet format for his poetry in Holy Sonnets. Petrarch invented this traditional form and style, which comprises of an octet and a sestet. However, there are some changes that result from the impact of the Shakespearean sonnet form, such as rhythm and structural patterns. As a result, Holy Sonnet XIV uses iambic pentameter and rhymes with ABBAABBACDCDEE. Despite being written in one long block, the poem adheres to the Italian sonnet's structure and style.

Themes

The simplest approach to comprehend Donne's religious poetry is to think of each poem as a progression of a man who is depraved by sin but who depends on the grace of '16, in her numbering, which can be broken down into three contemplative sequences.

Symbols

The Siege of the Town

The Unhappy Relationship/Engagement with God

Marriage to God

Paraphrasing

God, you have so far merely politely knocked, gently breathed, lightly shined, and patiently worked to fix me. Break down the boundaries to fully rule my heart.

However, You will need to utterly dominate me if I'm ever going to develop into a mature disciple. You will need to use all of Your enormous might, not simply to knock on the door but also to smash it down, to breathe but also to blow loudly, to shine a light but also to burn with fire, and not just to fix me but also to completely transform me.

I am like a town that is being unfairly dominated by someone else's power and that owes everything it has to someone else.

I make an effort to let you in by opening the entrance to my city, but I am unable to overthrow the unjust government, thus nothing is altered. I'm still being dominated by someone or something other than You.

Even though my mind and the truth should be able to protect me from error, they are captive to my failing health. Therefore, reason itself stumbles or even fails, and I remain a captive of sin.

I would happily be consumed by Your love to the fullest extent possible, but I have pledged my deepest love to You.

My most important duty, though, is to your enemy, the person I'm trying to run away from. My association with the liar must end.

Either gently separate me from him or, as you did when you first pulled me to You, simply sever the knot in one swift motion. Then take me along. Become my prisoner. Because if you don't — if you don't fascinate me — I'll never be rid of this foe, free from sin. I won't be free till I'm in Your prison.

I'm in a terrible situation because I know that unless you infringe on my freedom and make me Yours, I won't be pure and innocent.

Critical Analysis

Holy Sonnet 14 (Batter My Heart), by John Donne, describes the speaker's own spiritual difficulty.

The speaker believes that the devil has his soul. He does, however, want to return to the holy path. He therefore begs God to slam into and seize his heart.

The speaker creates a multitude of metaphors to highlight his desire to sever his ties to Satan and join forces with God instead.

Questions

1. Why are there so many inconsistencies and jarring contrasts?

2. Does the speaker believe that God is all-powerful or omnipotent?
3. Why doesn't our speaker just stick with the fortress town, instead using other analogies like a wedding engagement?

1.5 Suggested Readings

1. *Holy Sonnets*
2. *The Love poems of John Donne*
3. *Selected Poems*