



**INSTITUTE  
OF DISTANCE  
EDUCATION** **IDE**  
Rajiv Gandhi University



MAENG-404  
**Fiction-I**

**MA ENGLISH**  
1st Semester

**Rajiv Gandhi University**

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# Fiction I

MAENG404  
I SEMESTER



**RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY**

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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## About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

## About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education. Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14.

The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

### **Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:**

(i) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counselling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counselling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counselling Coordinators are engaged from the

Departments of the University, The Counselling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counselling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

## **SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE**

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### **Syllabi**

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**UNIT I: History of English Fiction from Beginning to the Twentieth Century**

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**UNIT II: *Moll Flanders* by Daniel Defoe**

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**UNIT III: *Emma* by Jane Austen**

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**UNIT IV: *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens Victorian Poetry**

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**UNIT V: *The Return to the Native* by Thomas Hardy**

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# UNIT 1 FROM BEGINNING TO THE 20TH CENTURY

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*From Beginning to the  
20th Century*

## NOTES

### Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Old and Middle English (600–1485)
  - 1.2.1 Personal and Religious Voices
  - 1.2.2 French Influence and English Affirmation
  - 1.2.3 Works of the Old English Period
- 1.3 The Renaissance (1485–1660)
  - 1.3.1 Renaissance Prose
  - 1.3.2 Translations of the Bible
- 1.4 Restoration to Romanticism (1660–1789)
  - 1.4.1 The Novel
- 1.5 The Romantic Period (1789–1832)
- 1.6 The Nineteenth Century (1832–1900)
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Key Terms
- 1.9 Answers to 'Check your Progress'
- 1.10 Questions and Exercises
- 1.11 Further Reading

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Old English came into existence sometimes around the fourth and the fifth centuries. England, at that point of time, was also known as Angleland i.e., land of the Angles. The Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes were the first to invade Britain and occupy it. The original inhabitants of England went to Wales after being driven out by the invaders. That is how they came to be known as the Welsh. This phase of Old English period was identified as the Dark Ages or The Age of Savages by the Romans. It was around this time that after coming in contact with the Old English people, the Romans introduced the concept of Noble Savage (though savage yet they had something which was 'noble' that could be imitated by decadent Rome).

Rome was the home of Christianity during the Old English period. England was Christianized in 597 after the arrival of Augustine and other monks to Kent. The King of Kent, Ethelburg, was the first to be Christianized. The Pre-Christian era is synonymous with the Pagan/Heathenic civilization. The practice of writing or record-keeping began only after the process of Christianization began.

Bede, also referred to as Saint Bede or the Venerable Bede, composed the *Ecclesiastical History of Britain* in the ninth century. King Alfred was the first patron of English prose. Old English poetry was written in single meter. It was a four stress line and contained a caesura (a distinct pause within a line) between the second and the third stress. The alliteration links the two halves of the line. Old English was not static, and its usage covered a period of approximately 700 years, from the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain in the fifth century to the late eleventh century, sometime

## NOTES

after the Norman invasion. The oldest surviving text of Old English literature is Cædmon's *Hymn*, composed between 658 and 680.

The history of Old English can be sub-divided into:

- (a) Prehistoric Old English (c. 450 to 650)
- (b) Early Old English (c. 650 to 900), the period of the oldest manuscript traditions, with authors such as Cædmon, Bede, Cynewulf and Aldhelm.
- (c) Late Old English (c. 900 to 1066), the final stage of the language leading up to the Norman Conquest of England and the subsequent transition to Early Middle English.

The Old English period is followed by Middle English (twelfth to fifteenth century), Early Modern English (c. 1480 to 1650) and finally Modern English (after 1650).

In this unit, you will learn about the development of the language and the resultant literature in English. You will also learn about the various trends, styles of writing and the genres that emerged and became popular, up till the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the writings from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, till the 15<sup>th</sup> century
- Trace the styles and genres of writing in the Renaissance era from 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- Discuss the novel writing styles of the period
- Identify the writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth century

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### 1.2 OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH (600–1485)

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The extant 30,000 lines of Anglo-Saxon poetry have survived in four manuscripts. These are:

- (i) MS Cotton Vitellius, in the British Museum. It contains the epic poem *Beowulf* and *Judith* along with three prose works and is dated c. 1000.
- (ii) The Junius Manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It contains the so-called Caedmonian poems *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*.
- (iii) The Exeter Book donated by Bishop Leofric to Exeter Cathedral circa 1050. It contains two poems with Cynewulf's runic signature and *Christ*, *Juliana*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Widsith*, *Deor* and also other short poems.
- (iv) The Vercelli Book in the Cathedral Library at Vercelli near Milan. It contains *Andreas*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Address of the Soul to the Body*, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Elene*. *Elene* contains Cynewulf's runic signature. It contains works on exclusively religious themes

These extracts from before the Norman Conquest in 1066 form a substantial body of work. Since the monks and nuns in the monasteries were the only ones who could



read and write, they became the guardians of culture. It is interesting that most of the native English culture they preserved is not in Latin, the language of the church, but in Old English, the language of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes (the Anglo-Saxons). In fact it is through the texts preserved by the Church over time that we can trace the development of language towards Early Middle English in the thirteenth century.

## NOTES

### 1.2.1 Personal and Religious Voices

The first fragment of literature is *Caedmon's Hymn* from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. Caedmon is said to have been a lay worker in the monastery at Whitby. One day God's voice came to him and he began composing hymns. *Caedmon's Hymn* is the first song of praise in English culture, and the first Christian religious poem in English. It is the overtly religious piece of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

*The Seafarer* describes the day-to-day life of a seafarer. *Deor's Lament* recounts the day-to-day trials of life, naming several heroes of Germanic origin and their sufferings, with the repeated chorus, 'That evil ended. So also may this!' After this recounting, the poet moves to his own troubles: he was a successful bard, or minstrel, who sang for an important family, but now another bard has taken his place. He believes that just as the sufferings of the heroes of antiquity ended so will his one day: everything passes. *The Wanderer*, like the other two poems, is also an elegiac poem of solitude, exile, and suffering. The poem deals with the suffering of an outcast who has lost the protection of his noble lord. In this poem too, memory plays a significant part in the speaker's thoughts. *The Dream of the Rood*, found on the Ruthwell Cross, written at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century is in Old English. It deals with suffering and redemption and the sense of being alone and the need of spiritual support from the cross. Like other texts of the time, it has many references to Latin hymns and liturgy. Though Anglo-Saxon poetry primarily focuses on martial prowess, one can find some type of love poetry during the age. Poems like *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer* could be said to belong to this genre.

Cynewulf is the only other poet known to us. He probably lived in the eighth or ninth century. He is credited with the authorship of four poems: two in *The Exeter Book* and two in *The Vercelli Book*. His poems include stories of saints, *The Fates of the Apostles*, and Christ's Ascension.

The church preserved a variety of texts in various genres. The focus was on works with a religious element. It is thought that works with a predominantly pagan element were either Christianized and preserved or were saved inadvertently by the monks. Historical works like Bede's Latin *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* were some of the works the Church fathers created and preserved. Other genres that the church writers focused on and preserved were devotional works like *Ancrene Rewle* (12<sup>th</sup> century). The philosophical writings of Alcuin and Saint Anselm also fall in this category. These mark the beginnings of a philosophical tradition. Parts of the Bible, especially the Book of Genesis were translated. One version was translated from Saxon into Old English. This attempt to familiarize the population with the Christian story reflects the desire of the Church to strengthen the Christian faith throughout the island and to assert a local linguistic and cultural identity.

## NOTES

### 1.2.2 French Influence and English Affirmation

The Norman Conquest in 1066 was a game changer in the history of English literature. It led to the introduction of French language and culture to England. For the next two centuries the two languages, French and English, struggled to integrate. French became the language of the court and was widely used from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. The transition to English as a court language began only after 1204 when the Norman aristocracy started developing an English identity. More French words started entering the English language. Rising lay literacy meant that more books were produced for consumption. By this time London had been established as the capital city and its dialect, which was influenced by the Midlands, became the dialect of the country. However it was only in 1415 that King Henry V finally rejected French and declared English the official language of the country. This in turn paved the way for the construction of an English identity and the creation of a uniquely English literature.

The first major author of the English affirmation is Layamon. He is the first voice in Middle English. He wrote *Brut*, in the early thirteenth century. Layamon's *Brut* is the first national epic in English. It draws tales from the Dark Ages and goes up to the arrival of Saint Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, in 597. King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table also figure here. His immediate source is the 12<sup>th</sup> century French work by Wace. This in turn is based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's history and traces Britain's foundation back to Brutus, Aeneas' great grandson. This search for classical roots reveals a desire for historical continuity and for an element of political myth-making. In this epic, one can see the desire to subsume the dominating French influences into an essentially dominant English culture. In other words, it is an attempt to create and define Englishness in the face of French influences.

In Provence in the south-east of France, poets called 'troubadours' gave voice to the concept of courtly love. For these poets love was akin to religious passion, and the greatest love was that which remained unfulfilled. This gave rise to the concept of ideal love which was chaste but passionate. This love often took on a religious note and explains the worship of the Virgin Mary that began to spread in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. The Crusades, the fight for the Holy Land against the infidel Muslims, began around this time as well. This meant that warriors were absent from their homes and away from their women for long periods. The women were expected to wait at home embodying patience, beauty and ideal virtue. This in turn gave rise to the romantic notion of fidelity embodied in the cult of the rose. *Le Roman de la Rose* (The Romance of the Rose) is the most influential text of the early Middle English period. Imported from France, it established a code of behaviour which placed great value on chastity and placed women in a subordinate role vis-a-vis men. Within this framework, the rose symbolized the lady's love. *Le Roman* is not a treatise on love and is full of sexuality. In fact it is a multi-faceted examination of the nature of love in all its forms, from the idealized to the earthy, from a male point of view. This type of love poetry romanticized love but did not allow it to become anarchic and subvert the order of things. While this courtly love tradition was developing under French influence, a local tradition of songs and ballads was also growing. While the lyric celebrated the seasons and had a happy ending; the ballad generally told a story based on a character and ended tragically. The ballad of *Lord Randal* is an example.

## NOTES

The Old English period lasted till the Norman Conquest in 1066 and was followed by a period of French influence. The Middle English period began in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and ended in 1485. Language was in flux and writers wrote not only in English but also in French and Latin. Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* derived from a French source is a verse treatise on the Ten Commandments and the Seven Deadly Sins. John Gower also wrote *Confessio Amantis* in English. *Vox Clamantis* is in Latin while *Mirour de l'Omme* is in French. English received a fillip later. Chaucer wrote exclusively in English, though he drew inspiration from his works from other European sources like Latin and Italian.

This period saw the consolidation of the London dialect as the preferred language of artistic expression. The foundation of the university cities of Oxford and Cambridge in the 13<sup>th</sup> century further cemented this position. London finally became the centre of court, law, trade and literature. While Chaucer and Langland used this dialect, literature was written in other dialects as well. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Patience*, *Pearl* and *Cleanness* are some examples. Anonymous works like *Winner and Waster*, *Pearl*, and *Patience* are part of the Alliterative Revival (1350 to early 15<sup>th</sup> century) and recall the earlier Anglo-Saxon use of alliteration. *Pearl* is a forerunner of utopian writing about a perfect world and also examines human limitations and knowledge. Nevertheless as the use of English became more pronounced the writers developed a more colloquial and familiar style, using idioms and proverbs to bring their writing closer to the reader. This in turn is indicative of the increasing assertion of a national linguistic identity despite centuries of Latin (the language of religion) and French (the language of the conquerors) hegemony.

### 1.2.3 Works of the Old English Period

*The Owl and the Nightingale* (1225) is a debate (*conflictus*) to show differing attitudes and values, and uses the English countryside as a setting. The debate between the serious (the owl) and the light-hearted (the nightingale) reflects the period's concerns between religious issues and the new thoughts of love. *Winner and Waster* (1360) is a more serious debate contrasting a miserly and carefree approach to money. *King Horn* (1225) is the earliest surviving verse romance in English. It is a tale of love, betrayal, and adventure. A study of the text reveals that the characteristics of French courtly stories have been assimilated and adapted by the British to a local setting.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* takes the fantasy element to new heights. Sir Gawain is one of the Knights of the Round Table. The poem operates under the ideal of courtly love. However, this tradition is subverted when the Green Knight offers the severing of his head if he gets the opportunity to strike a return blow one year later. In other words, the value of heroism and historical myths is questioned.

Mandeville's *Travels* (published 1356-67) is one of the first travel books which introduce Europeans to the Orient. It is a guide to the Holy Land, Tartary, Persia, India and Egypt. It is a highly entertaining book which inter-mingles scientific details with marvels and fantasy.

## NOTES

### Chaucer

Chaucer was a professional courtier, a kind of civil servant. He wrote in English. It was the extensive range and variety of his English that helped establish it as the national language. Chaucer also contributed much to the formation of standard English based on the dialect of the East Midlands region which was basically the dialect of London which he himself spoke. He visited France and Italy during the course of his work and met Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

#### His Works

His first work, *The Book of the Duchess* (1368) is a dream-poem written on the occasion of the death of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, and wife of John of Gaunt. It is a consolation poem and has a simplicity and directness of emotion. *The House of Fame* (c.1374–85) too is a dream poem and reveals the influence of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. In this poem Chaucer is an active participant and visits Ovid's 'house of fame' to learn about love. *Troilus and Criseyde* draws inspiration from Boccaccio. It brings together the classical Trojan war story, the Italian poetic version of that story, and the sixth-century philosophical work of Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. It has been called 'the first modern novel' and draws attention to the poet's descriptive capacity. As part of this he uses the reader's ability to recognize and identify with what is being described. *The Legend of Good Women* also deals with the theme of joy and pain that love brings. A salient feature of this poem is that assumes a primarily female audience. It is also the first poem to use heroic couplets.

Chaucer's fame rests on *The Canterbury Tales* probably written between 1387 and his death in 1400. He uses the idea of *The Legend of Good Women*; i.e. the use of a series of linked stories. A major innovation is the use of the 'here and now': the London area and English society of the time. The *Tales* comprise a series of stories told by the pilgrims as they journey from Southwark to Canterbury. These two places are used because they connect the religious and the secular. The inn at Southwark represents the city while Canterbury is the site of the martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket in 1170. The stories reveal the new social order, apart from the aristocracy and the lower peasants that are arising due to changing social situations. Even though Chaucer individualizes the various characters, the reader is aware that they are also stereotypical characters. The poet merely presents the characters and does not pass any kind of judgment on them. Through the simple storytelling framework, Chaucer gives a view of the 14<sup>th</sup> century world and its people and its literary, historical, religious, social, and moral concerns.

#### Characteristics of his works

1. Though Chaucer wrote in English we find words of French or Latin via French origin in his works. There is extensive use of everyday colloquial speech which contains Old English-derived words.
2. Even though his characters are presented realistically, a tone of irony permeates this description.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. In which language is most of the native English culture in the monasteries preserved?
2. What was the role of Norman Conquest in English literature?

### NOTES

## 1.3 THE RENAISSANCE (1485–1660)

The 15<sup>th</sup> century was marked by radical changes. The War of Roses ended and the Tudors assumed the throne, Columbus discovered the new world and Caxton published Mallory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. These brought new ideas and learning and acted as the precursors to the Renaissance.

In his desire for a son, Henry VIII wanted to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Since the Catholic Church refused to allow this he took the drastic step of breaking from it and established himself as the head of the church and the state. This is the Reformation. Its impact was drastic. The King became the 'Defender of the Faith' and was the closest human being to God; England became Protestant and its political and religious identity were redefined; Protestantism became the official national religion and the King became the head of the church. In response to the Reformation, England reaffirmed its identity historically in two ways: conquest of the Empire, and the domination of the seas.

Erasmus' and Martin Luther's beliefs played an important role in this break. Erasmus' enthusiasm for classical literature was influential in the revival of classical learning. He decried narrow Catholic monasticism, found its rituals unnecessary and the sale of pardons and relics reprehensible. Though he criticized the Catholic Church he wanted to reform it and not break away from it. Luther's reaction was more extreme in his total rejection of the Catholic Church. In fact many historians consider 1517, when he pinned his *95 Theses against the Sale of Papal Indulgences*, the start of Reformation and the birth of Protestantism. Though he was excommunicated it did not stop the spread of the idea of religious individualism in Northern Europe. Jean Calvin further developed Luther's ideas. He considered the Bible the literal word of God and followed it strictly. As a result an austere lifestyle was promoted in Geneva, his centre. Drama was censored, adultery punished severely and patriarchy strengthened. These ideas influenced and triumphed in Cromwell's Puritan Commonwealth.

The Reformation led to a reevaluation of man's relationship to God, and of man's place in the world. When Columbus discovered the new world and Copernicus and Galileo proved that the earth was not the centre of the universe they only furthered this exploration. In light of this, Erasmus' humanistic thinking becomes extremely important.

## NOTES

### Characteristics of the Reformation

1. Individual expression and meaning, and not the church ethos, became the ordering principle of life. This explains the increasing influence of Greece with its ideals of harmony of the universe and the perfectibility of mankind.
2. A questioning and reevaluation of held mores occurred on all fronts. This is reflected in the experimentation with form and genre, modes of expression and linguistic and literary innovations.
3. Reason became the driving force in the search for rules to govern human existence. The marvelous ceased to matter and the focus shifted to man's ability to use his powers, capability and free will. In many ways it was a project to redefine what it meant to be human.

The impact of the Reformation was massive. It gave a cultural, philosophical and ideological impetus to English Renaissance writing. Since old beliefs no longer applied, the search for a new order resulted in the birth of modern science, mathematics and astronomy. The Copernican system replaced Aristotle's view of the universe, Harvey discovered the flow of blood in the body, and clocks, telescopes and thermometers etc. were designed to study the visible and invisible world. It the field of literature it led to a new religious, social and moral identity.

Elizabeth's reign though prosperous was also an unsettled time. The Catholic dissent (the Counter-Reformation) culminated in the Gunpowder Plot, Catholic persecution was common and the Puritan threat was constant. Despite these disruptions her reign is marked by a sense of national stability and triumph which was further cemented by the victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588. This increasing prosperity and importance of England lay the foundation of theatre. In fact the first public theatre was built in 1576.

#### 1.3.1 Renaissance Prose

Classical influences are reflected in prose as well. John Lyly's *Euphues* (1578–80) is an example. Bacon's essays (*The Advancement of Learning* and more importantly his *Essays*) modeled on Montaigne's French essays perfected the form in English. He wrote on aspects of law, science, history, government, politics, ethics, religion and colonialism, as well as gardens, parents, children and health. He considered the pursuit of knowledge useful for the individual and society. Richard Hooker wrote *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Policie* (published in 1593 and 1597). It is a defense of Anglicanism against Puritanism, advocates intellectual liberty and opposes dogma. While Bacon criticizes traditional beliefs, Hooker affirms a new outlook. The Marprelate tracts were published anonymously in 1588–89 using the name Martin Marprelate. They are an exceptional piece of satirical writing. Books on manners were also written in this period. *The Courtyer* (1561) described how young gentlemen of style should behave. How to books were also published: *The Book Named the Governour* (1531) by Sir Thomas Elyot and *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609) by Thomas Dekker. The large number of sermons, religious tracts, and versions of the Bible show the use of prose for argumentative and descriptive purposes. Travel writing also spread. It began with Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), written in Latin. Richard Hakluyt was a master in this format. Most of his writing focuses on Drake, but he

also highlighted the discoveries of other navigators. *A Discourse Concerning the Western Planting* (1584) reflects his support to Raleigh's plan to colonize Virginia. Samuel Purchas, his assistant also wrote travel books about China and Japan. Raleigh, the archetypal man of the Renaissance wrote *History of the World* (1614). Nash is credited for having 'invented' modern narrative, particularly with *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). It is a mixture of genres and styles from picaresque to mock-historical, from parody to character comedy. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) was a profoundly important analysis of human states of mind – a kind of early philosophical/psychological study. He sees 'melancholy' as part of the human condition, especially love melancholy and religious melancholy. Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) also had a medical thrust. Browne's *Urn Burial* (also known as *Hydriotaphia*, 1658) is an early work of archaeology. It uses the idea of the fragility of monuments to underscore the affirmation of faith.

## NOTES

### 1.3.2 Translations of the Bible

King James I commissioned the authorized or King James Version of the Bible, in 1604. It can be seen as confirmation of the domination of English language in England. Bible translation has a long tradition in England: it began with Aelfric in the Anglo-Saxon era and continued to Wycliffe's Lollard Bible (late 14<sup>th</sup> century). Both these translations were from the Latin Vulgate. In the Renaissance translations took a new turn. Tyndale translated the New Testament from Erasmus Greek text and the Old Testament from a Hebrew text. The Miles Coverdale Bible (called Geneva Bible) was produced after the formation of the Anglican Church. The Bishop's Bible (1568) was translated from the Latin Vulgate and tried to counterbalance the Calvinist Geneva Bible. The King James Version was largely based on the Bishop's and Geneva Bibles. It can be seen as affirmation of Protestant England and a celebration of its freedom from Rome.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. What were the subjects of Bacon's essays?
4. What differences did Renaissance bring about in translation of the Bible?

### 1.4 RESTORATION TO ROMANTICISM (1660–1789)

The monarchy was restored in 1660 when Charles II was crowned king. However, in reality monarchical power was replaced by a parliamentary system with two parties—the Tories and the Whigs. Both parties benefited from a system which encouraged social stability rather than opposition. The Age relied on reason and facts rather than on speculation. Flights of fancy and risk taking were abhorred. A society, Puritan, middle class and unthreatened by any repetition of the huge and traumatic upheavals of the first part of the seventeenth century emerged. This explains why James II's overthrow in 1688 is called the 'Glorious' or 'Bloodless' Revolution. The focus of society was on commerce, respectability and institutions. This idea is best reflected in Hobbes' *Leviathan*. The Royal Society represents the trend towards the

## NOTES

institutionalization of scientific investigation and research in this period. The other highly significant institution, one which was to have considerably more importance in the future, was the Bank of England, founded in 1694. There was also a return to religion and traditional religious beliefs. Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* need to be seen in this context.

Some characteristics of the age are:

1. Growth of a city-based middle-class economy
2. The rise of the novel as a popular if critically unprestigious genre;
3. The growth of journalism and magazines, with a corresponding growth in professional authorship;
4. A noticeable increase in literary criticism, leading to the establishment of what was critically acceptable and what was not;
5. A decline in the reputation of contemporary drama, while the theatre attracted increasing support;
6. A reaction to Augustan neoclassicism in poetry, with moves towards the funereal mode, or the rediscovery of simpler values;
7. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, an attraction for the fantastic, the exotic and the primitive.

### Journalism

The rising middle classes increased the readership of journal and newspapers. Richard Steele found *The Tatler* (ran from April 1709 to January 1711). He, together with Joseph Addison, began *The Spectator* which ran till 1714. The latter became the journal of a gentleman's club. Its spokesperson Sir Roger de Coverley was a fictional character through whom issues like the relation of the city and the country between social classes etc. were discussed. This established the tradition of the witty observation of and comment on life. There was no direct engagement with the issues of the time and a conscious distance was maintained and this in turn perpetrated class values. *The Gentleman's Journal*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Grub Street Journal* and *The Monthly Review* were other journals published during the time. They established London as the cultural capital of the country.

Many journals did grapple with the controversial issues of their time. Daniel Defoe's *The Review* was one such. He later went on to edit the trade journal *The Mercator* before becoming a novelist. His strong opinions often put him on the wrong side of libel laws. Like him Dr. Johnson also practiced journalism before launching his literary career.

### Scottish Enlightenment, Diarists and Gibbon

The Scottish Enlightenment occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Its aim was 'improvement' based on philosophical enquiry and its practical applications. Its effect can be seen in Thomas Reid's *Nature* which gives the cause and effect of man's relationship with God using the 'common-sense' approach. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) revolutionized concepts of trade and foretold the rise of America.



Writing for private consumption increased. This explains the rise in diary and letter writing in the new literate middle class. The *Diary of Samuel Pepys* is one example and gives an essentially private and highly personal insight into his life. It also gives an account of the Great Plague (1664–65) and the Great Fire of London (1666). These are also found in John Evelyn's *Diary* (or *Memoirs*). The best known letters are Lord Chesterfield's to his son, from 1737 until the son's death in 1768. When they were published in 1773 they became a kind of handbook of good behaviour, a vivid manual of how society saw itself, and an indication of how appearance and 'manners maketh the man'. The rise of publishing gave spurt to historical writing and *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published between 1776 and 1788.

## NOTES

### 1.4.1 The Novel

The Augustan concern with experience meant that the novel and fiction became the dominant forms. The genre built up on travel accounts from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century after it was subsumed into an English middle-class way of thinking. In the picaresque novels therefore, the experience was within recognizable bounds. The readership was largely female and upper or upper-middle class. In many novels a new morality covering relationships between the sexes and figures of authority is seen. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* deals with slavery. She wrote this 'novel' 30 years before Defoe, who is credited with writing the first proper novel. She was politically active and spoke for women's rights and sexual freedom. She was accused of lewdness and of plagiarism. Delarivier Manley wrote *The New Atalantis* (1709), a political allegory dealing with rape, incest and homosexuality. Her work was also considered immoral and anti-government. *The Secret History of Queen Zarah* (1705) is a refined political satire on contemporary politics. It is clear that scandalous novels – one which dealt with sexual themes, asked difficult questions regarding the religious or political situation were deemed unacceptable and muzzled. Propriety became a key concept in literature, and was directly related to the critical concerns of the Augustan, or neoclassical age.

Daniel Defoe's novels reflect the thinking of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *A Journal of the Plague Year* is a quasi-factual journalistic account of London between 1664 and 1665. *Robinson Crusoe* is his most famous work. This novel shows the working out of Hobbes's belief that life is 'brutish' and that it is important to establish and accept authority. This is what Crusoe, a colonizer, does on the island. He is the first capitalist hero who overcomes extreme difficulties to reach economic security. Similarly, Moll Flanders, his famous heroine in the novel by the same name may spend her life as a prostitute and incestuous wife; but she does it only after she has been accepted back into society and has improved her behaviour. The novel is also a social comment on the distinction between the haves and have-nots of society. These novels reflect the triumph of the middle-class ethos, where money is the driving force.

Jonathan Swift criticized authority figures with increasing venom in his work. *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is seen as a children's tale. But it is a severe attack on the political parties of the time, the pointlessness of religious controversies between different denominations within Christianity (through the debate between the Big-endians or Little-endians), the scientific institutions of the time and the preference to reason over emotion (through the contrast between the yahoos and the Houyhnhnms). He also wrote *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), on corruption in religion and learning and *The Grand Question Debated*, in 1729.

## NOTES

Samuel Richardson made his money as a writer and printer. He first published a version of *Aesop's Fables* and a manual of letter-writing. He turned this into the epistolary novel, *Pamela* (1740). The novel traces Pamela's journey till her marriage to Mr. B. The novel established the prototype of male domination with its implied sensuality and female submission with its implication of restraint, submission and virtue. Fielding parodied this novel in his *Shamela*.

Richardson's next epistolary novel, *Clarissa* (1747-48), has four letter writers and marks a major step forward. This allows for greater detailing of character. In his work the novelist is concerned with male and female roles and identities, and the interplay of his characters' psychology. Further, the epistolary form allows the correspondents to present multiple points of views, and through this creates the impression of diversity leading to consensus.

Fielding began his career with *Shamela*. His next work *Joseph Andrews* (1742) was also intended as a parody until it took on a life of its own. With an omniscient narrator it is a humorous and ironic tale. His focus is on male characters and manners. In contrast to the chaste Joseph Andrews, his next hero Tom, in *Tom Jones* (1749), is a foundling enjoying his freedom. Both these novels are picaresque journeys from innocence to experience, from freedom to responsibility. The hero undergoes a personal crusade until he gains respectability in the end. A difference in mores with respect to sex is seen: while a woman 'falls' if she indulges in carnal relations, for a man it is a matter of pleasure and enjoyment. *Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) presents one of the first real anti-heroes in English literature. It is an epistolary novel with a satiric strain to reveal the hypocrisy and double dealing of the times. The novel shows how the criminal Jonathan escapes Newgate. A contrast between the two novelists reveals that while Richardson wrote what could be called a psychological novel; Fielding's novels were more social and comic in tone.

Eliza Haywood was a female writer who wrote *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and ran the periodical *The Female Spectator*, one of the first magazines intended specifically for a female readership. *Betsy Thoughtless* is a 'quest' novel. Oliver Goldsmith published *The Vicar of Wakefield*, pastoral parable in 1766. It is inspired from *Don Quixote*.

### Johnson

Dr Samuel Johnson was a journalist and is remembered for his *Dictionary*, the *Rasselas* (1759), and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). He also wrote *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81) which blends biography with literary criticism. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, published in 1791, carries on Johnson's own contribution to the growing art of biography, and consolidates Johnson's position as a major literary figure, who, although a poet and a novelist, is remembered more for his academic and critical achievement than for his creative writings.

### Sterne, Smollett and Scottish Voices

The rationalism of the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century gave way to humour and expression of emotion in the middle of the century. The novel form took on greater range and diversity to become the dominant art form.

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* can be seen as the originator of the 'stream of consciousness' movement. The novel parodies the conventions of the novel as a

genre as practices in his time and points out the absurdity of relating time, space, reality, and relationships in a linear form. He breaks the traditional order of a beginning, middle, and end in the structure of the novel. While Fielding's omniscient author/narrator establishes a direct relationship with the reader, Sterne's narrator addresses the reader directly. He rambles on wherever his thoughts take him. His *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1767) is a parody of the travel journal.

Scottish writing played an important role in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The major figures are the novelists Tobias Smollett and Henry Mackenzie, and the poets Robert Fergusson, Ossian and Robert Burns. Smollett's novel *Humphry Clinker* (1771) underlines the differences rather than unity in the United Kingdom, created by the Union of the Parliaments in 1707. Smollett was a journalist whose work is marked by anger. He also wrote picaresque novels which reflected his interests and experiences. His characters (Roderick Random, Ferdinand Count Fathom, Sir Lancelot Graves, and Humphry Clinker) come from all levels of society and undergo a variety of experiences. *Roderick Random* (1748) was a defense of homosexuality. *Complete History of England* (1757–58) and *The Present State of All Nations* (1768–69) are non-fictional works. Smollett keeps alive the tradition of bawdiness of English Literature. He uses rude wordplay for social observation and criticism.

*The Man of Feeling* by Henry Mackenzie also typifies the opposing tendency towards 'sensitivity.' It has a new type of hero: the man who cries. Harley is an innocent and represents the acceptance of the 'feminine' elements in the masculine hero. This type of hero continues the exploration of sexual roles in contemporary society. The novel takes the form of the mutilated manuscript from which whole sections have been lost.

James Macpherson wrote *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763), which purported to be translations of Gaelic epics by Ossian in the same form. He went to Gaelic roots not just for sentimental reasons but also to prove that the roots of British literature lay in a Northern culture. Primitive here meant simple and natural values as opposed to the city values of a sophisticated society. To a certain extent, this was also a reaction against neoclassical theory and practice, a return to a time of innocence and goodness.

### The Gothic and the Sublime

There is a shift to 'the sublime' in the poetry of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757–59) Burke explains this concept. The sublime goes beyond natural beauty. The link between the sublime and terror is most clearly seen in the imaginative exaggeration of the Gothic novel—a form which concentrated on the fantastic, the macabre and the supernatural. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is the first novel of this genre. Ann Radcliffe was an accomplished writer of gothic novels. Her *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is her most famous work. Other novels are Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777) and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or the Moor* (1806). A fashion for exotic locales and action, closely related to the Gothic, led to such outrageous works as *Vathek* (1786) by William Beckford.

### NOTES

## NOTES

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. What was the aim of Scottish Enlightenment?
6. What is the specialty of the epistolary form?
7. Which work marks the beginning of the 'stream of consciousness' style of writing?

## 1.5 THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (1789–1832)

The period begins with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 and ends in 1832 when the First Reform Bill was passed. It was an age of political and social revolution. The country changed from an agricultural to an industrial one. Power passed from the landed aristocracy to the mercantile class. The enclosure system was introduced to increase efficiency and led to the displacement of many farmers. They migrated to the city and became the new laborers or the working class concentrated in cities. Increased mechanization in cities resulted in unemployment and pollution. This prompted Disraeli to say that the country had 'two nations.' American independence in 1778 and the French Revolution in 1789 influenced the intellectual climate in Britain. Debate in England was polarized between the radical beliefs espoused by Tom Paine in *Rights of Man* (1791) and the conservative ideology of Edmund Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Godwin advocated a gradual move towards eradication of poverty and an equitable distribution of wealth. Individuals professing such beliefs were called Jacobins or radicals. As the French Revolution developed, support for it in Britain declined. The violence and bloodshed of the aristocracy eroded support for the Revolution in England. This feeling of dismay is evident in Wordsworth's changing responses from ecstasy to a feeling of lost opportunity. England's defeat of France resulted in social unrest when soldiers came home and found themselves unemployed. To suppress them the ruling classes adopted harsh methods culminating in the 'Peterloo Massacre' of 1819 when soldiers charged on a group of workers. This event is described by Samuel Bamford in *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1884).

The Preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* is a poetic manifesto. The move towards greater freedom in political affairs is reflected in the creation of a new poetic order: poets would now use 'the real language of men.' Romantic temperament prefers feelings and intuition. The Romantics believe that since the child is close to God he is innocent and pure and can only be corrupted by civilization. For them the child is the source of all natural and spontaneous feeling. Another important aspect of this poetry is that it is inward looking into the life of the imagination. For this reason the irrational, mystical and supernatural world assumes importance. Since this poetry celebrates the individual, it is critical of society and its injustices. The rising middle classes colluded with the working classes and the liberals (the Whigs) to pressurize the Tories to pass the First Reform Bill to extend the electorate.

The highlight of the Romantic age was a reaction against the ideals of Enlightenment and the evils of Industrialization. It was an intellectual movement that

informed the literary, artistic, cultural and philosophical modes of the eighteenth century. In contrast to the austerity and scientific rationalization of the age of Enlightenment, Romanticism was in favour of uninhibited, untamed expression of strong emotions and indulging in the richness and sublimity of aesthetic experience. The predominant theme of literature written during this age was treatment of nature. While even earlier in the works of writers such as Cowper, Gray, Crabbe etc., nature was abundantly used as a literary theme; their manner of treating the same was very different from how the writers of the Romantic Age perceived nature. As Edward Albert says,

In the work of Cowper, Crabbe and Gray, the treatment is principally the simple chronicle and sympathetic observations of natural features. In the new race of poets, the observation becomes more matured and intimate. Notably in the case of Wordsworth, the feeling for nature rises to a passionate veneration that is love and religion too. To Wordsworth, nature is not only procession of seasons and seasonal fruition: it is the eye of all things, natural and supernatural, into which the observant soul can peer and behold the spirit that inhabits all things. Nature is thus amplified and glorified; it is to be sought, not only in the flowers and the fields, but also in the light of the setting suns,

*And the round ocean and the living air,*

*And the blue sky, and in the mind of man*

Broadly speaking, the term Romanticism is used to connote the ideals and works of certain writers, artists, as well as philosophical and social thinkers who were deeply influenced by the ideologies of the French Revolution. The most discerning aspect of the Romantic Age is its pervasive theme of return to nature. Disillusioned by the inhuman conditions that prevailed with the onset of Industrial Revolution, intellectuals all over Europe pinned their hopes upon the French Revolution. The Revolution was seen as the harbinger of a new era with its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Wordsworth, in particular, was deeply influenced by the ideals that informed the French Revolution and much of his early writings are infused with the spirit of liberty that defined the French Revolution. However, as the fervour of French Revolution declined and its ideals turned to dust, disappointment, dejection, despair and disillusionment took precedence. This is especially true of Wordsworth's later writings, which are expressive of his feelings of discontent and sorrow at the hollowness of the ideals of the French Revolution.

### The Novels

Sir Walter Scott gave up writing poetry in 1814. The same year he produced *Waverley*; it was published anonymously. This was followed by *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, *The Black Dwarf*, *Old Mortality*, *The Bride of Lammermoor* and other novels. These novels deal with scenes of Scotland. He also wrote *Ivanhoe* set in Plantagenet England; and *The Monastery* and *The Abbot* which are again set in Scotland. His last works are *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous* and reflect his bodily and mental anguish. Most of his novels were composed hurriedly to pay debts, so they are haphazard in composition, are hurriedly developed and carelessly finished. He uses an ornate style but because of a lack of rhythm the sentences are shapeless. Scott's greatest contribution is that he brought to life the historical novel. He was also instrumental in developing the domestic novel through the *Waverley* series. His

### NOTES

## NOTES

characterization leaves much to be desired: the villains are melodramatic and the hero and heroine are wooden and dull. Though his style lacks suppleness it is powerful. The use of the Scottish vernacular gives it a naturalness it would otherwise not have had.

Jane Austen is quite different from any novelist before her, and an important part of the difference is that for many years she was not consciously writing for publication. What Jane Austen did – and no author before her had attempted it so successfully – was to apply the techniques of the novel to the acute observation of society in microcosm. She deliberately avoids effect, exaggeration and excess. Her novels do not have a didactic, moral or satiric purpose. They are simply representations of universal patterns of behaviour and documents of an aspect of the provincial society of her time. Her achievement was to create in each novel a fully realized and populated world, strictly limited in scope, such that the reader can observe – without being made to judge – a group of characters whose emotions are recognizable, whose faults are human, whose traits are familiar. The ‘issues’ may seem small-scale, when compared to the wars being waged outside the limits of the village; but it is precisely the universality of the characters’ preoccupations that makes these issues, and their expression, attractive in a lasting way to a great many readers. Her major novels are *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. *Northanger Abbey* begins as a burlesque of the Radcliffian horror.

*Frankenstein* is a Gothic horror story in the tradition established in the late eighteenth century by Ann Radcliffe, William Beckford and Horace Walpole. They continue a tradition which challenges the emphasis on reason, control and order which characterizes early eighteenth-century literature. Gothic novels such as *Frankenstein* explore the deepest recesses of human psychology, always stressing the macabre, the unusual and the fantastic and preferring the realities of the subjective imagination. *Frankenstein* underlines a shift in sensibility and a movement towards the uncanny, the marvelous, the rationally uncontrollable and the psychologically disjunctive. Such a shift also has political repercussions in that the worlds depicted represent a clear challenge to the existing order and to rational modes of thought and of social organization.

## 1.6 THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1832–1900)

The Victorian age began when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1832. This was a period of economic expansion and development. Britain became the centre of trade and industrial inventions. It was an age of optimism, but ‘The Victorian compromise’ wherein national success went hand in hand with the exploitation of lower classes. It was a compromise between philanthropy and repression. The First Reform Bill excluded the working classes from suffrage and caused dissent. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was the high point of Victorian faith in itself. It was badly shaken by the Crimean War and the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*.

### Dickens

Charles Dickens is the dominant figure of the Victorian Age and started out as a journalist. His novels were serialized. His *Sketches of Boz* (1836) are humorous

sketches. *Pickwick Papers*, with their use of class and dialect difference are also written in the same vein. *A Christmas Carol* has a clash of wealth and poverty but nevertheless has a happy ending. A more serious study of social problems is seen *Oliver Twist* onwards. This novel highlights the condition of the poor children in workhouses. *Nicholas Nickelby* also deals with the exploitation of children in the schools of Yorkshire. Though these novels of the 1840s are realistic, Dickens remains optimistic as is evident in the happy ending of *David Copperfield*. His novels of the 1850s expand beyond the individual to examine society: *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations* fall in this category. *Hard Times* too examines the dehumanizing impact of industrialization.

Harison Ainsworth combined history with gothic elements. He was primarily an entertainer who capitalized on the Victorian liking for historical fantasy. He, along with Lytton, also wrote on fictional criminal subjects. Charles Reade was a 'reforming' novelist who wrote of prison life. Carlyle was a major influence of Dickens. He had strong views on leadership, which novelists translated into heroic behavior. Such actions were important in an unheroic age. He also influenced George Eliot. Macaulay was another historian who wrote during the time. Marx's *Das Kapital* was the most influential work of the age. In it he is critical of private property and advocates a class war. The Oxford Movement, when Anglicans moved to Catholicism, occurred during this time. Cardinal Newman's autobiography deals with this issue. Religious debate begins again.

Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a glut of self-improvement handbooks. Smiles' *Self-Help* is an example. Disraeli wrote political novels and wanted to influence political opinion through them. He wrote the trilogy *Coningsby*, *Sybil* and *Tancred*. Thackeray was a journalist. *Vanity Fair* is written in the perspective of the Napoleonic War. The lives of his heroes are a 'series of defeats' to be overcome and not the simple Victorian progression to prosperity. He also wrote *The Virginians* and *The Newcomes*.

The provincial novel developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Ireland and Scotland. Trollope was a novelist whose novels earned him fame. His novels give insight into Victorian 'progress.' He wrote the Bassetshire and Palliser series of novels. These novels are marked with many complications. Meredith wrote novels of discovery and self-discovery.

George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and the Bronte sisters are some of the female authors of the time. They adopted acronyms so that they would be taken seriously. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is a *bildungsroman*. It shows the victory of the good character after it has undergone suffering. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a cyclical novel which moves from harmony to violence to harmony again. Anne Bronte wrote *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. It depicts a woman's departure from an unhappy marriage in search for happiness. These works are novels of psychological exploration and offer a new way of portraying women.

George Eliot's novels focus on social and philosophical concerns and moral commitment. In novels like *Daniel Deronda* and *Middlemarch* she touches the concerns of her age. She also wrote *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner* and *Mill on the Floss*. These show her concern for the outsider in society.

## NOTES

## NOTES

Mrs. Gaskell, Samuel Butler, George Gissing and George Moore are late Victorian novelists. Mrs. Gaskell wrote social novels on the Manchester scene. Butler satirized the Victorian ideal of family life with the father as the moral centre. Gissing was a naturalist writer whose work shows a sympathy for the poor. Moore wrote realistic novels on a variety of themes. He presented social realism in his 'seduction novels.' Arthur Morrison wrote 'proletarian' novels depicting the condition of the working poor. W. E. Tirebuck wrote industrial novels on the 'Two Nations' theme.

### Victorian Fantasy

As the Victorian world became unpalatable there was a rise of the fantasy novel: science fiction, detective stories, ghost stories, utopian writing and children's books. Lewis Carroll wrote fantasies, like *Alice in Wonderland*. Wilkie Collins wrote detective fiction. Sheridan Le Fau wrote stories with a gothic strain. William Morris wrote utopian fantasies. The rise of the middle class meant that there was an increasing demand for 'wholesome' children's literature. This was found in the works of Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes and Charlotte M. Young. R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* also belongs to this category.

### Wilde and Aestheticism

The Aesthetic Movement insisted on the idea of 'Art for Art's sake.' The Victorian search for absolutes in an ever changing world meant that even abstract ideas like art and beauty were given absolute values. John Ruskin and Walter Pater were involved in the re-evaluation of art. Ruskin is the first art critic who preserved architecture in the face of industrialization. Pater was an academic whose study of Italian Renaissance painting influenced Wilde. Wilde was a dandy. Therefore when he was tried and sentenced for homosexuality, the dichotomy of his personal life versus his public persona can be taken to be indicative of the crises of Victorian morals. The divergence between Victorian assumptions and values is seen in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Critics read the story as a criticism of the Aesthetic movement.

### Hardy and James

Hardy's work shows the exploration of moral issues and responsibility. His protagonists are individuals whose natures make them outsiders even as they fall victim to the changing economic, social and sexual mores. This is seen in the novels *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Woodlanders*. He wrote tragedies showing that ironies govern life. His novels are episodic and show the disruption caused to rural communities by mechanization. The 1890s marked the end of the 'triple decker.' Soon shorter novels were being written which people could buy and keep at home. This sounded the death knell for the lending libraries.

### The pre-Raphaelites

They stressed their admiration for the Italian art during the High Renaissance. They favored medieval simplicity, closeness to nature in representational clarity and moral seriousness of intent. The main figures of the movement are the Rossetti brothers. Their view of nature is mystical. They influenced the visual arts more than writing. Swinburne, William Morris and Ernest Dowson were influenced by them.



In Hopkins' work Victorian despair reaches its apotheosis. He carries Victorian doubt into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His major poem is *Wreck of the Deutschland*.

*From Beginning to the  
20th Century*

### Victorian Drama

Dramatists couldn't compete with the novel form. Realistic drama began in the 1860s. Robertson wrote plays like *Society, Caste, and School*. He was the first playwright to insist on a realistic setting and gave rise to the 'cup and saucer drama.' Shaw's and Wilde's plays indicate the flood of new ideas that were coming. Wilde staged epigrammatic comedies.

### NOTES

### The Modern Age (1900 to the Present)

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most people in England lived in cities. The idea of local communities had given way to the anonymous existence of cities. The 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the Empire being challenged and its eventual break up. The rise of literacy is another feature. This led to a large reading public and the growth of a low brow culture which was perpetually in opposition to the esoteric avant-garde. The century is also marked by the death of all certitudes and the democratization of institutions. The drama form revived and there were experiments in other art forms.

### The novel – 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Together with the increase in objectivity given by outsiders, who permitted a different view of English society – or, in Conrad, Kipling, and Forster, a clearer depiction of colonialism and its effects – there can also be found a greater degree of subjectivity in the novels of writers whose concern was more with the inner life of characters. The early years of the century produced the novels of Hardy and Gissing, Wilde and George Moore, as well as the realism of Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy, and the new 'great tradition' of writers such as James, Conrad, Lawrence, Joyce and Woolf. The definite shape of a novel's *plot*, which organizes characters and events, gave way to less logical and sequential modes of organization. There was a stress on the individual's sense of what is valid in experience, and techniques of subjectivity were evolved to represent this. The whole nature of what made a fictional hero or heroine was also questioned. The individual could no longer be a *model* for behavior. The 'stream of consciousness' technique was developed in various ways by writers in order to render directly and in depth, the experience of individual characters. Time was not a series of separate chronological moments, and consciousness was seen as a continuous flow, with past and present merging. Under the general influence of work by psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, writers came to believe that we are our memories, that the present is the sum of our past and that the form and style of the novel have to capture this understanding. One result was that the novel concentrated less on a social, public world and more on the inner world of unique and isolated individuals or the shapeless, unstructured sensations of life. In all, the novel became a less rigid, plotted and naturalistic form. Henry James was concerned with the study of how characters reacted in unfamiliar situations. He was obsessed with technique as is apparent from the reworking of his earlier novels. His novels focus on the charm of the Old World on the American outsider and the adjustment needed to live here. Conrad was a sailor and his novels are set in exotic surroundings. He reveals

## NOTES

character in flashes so that a composite picture is created when the novel ends. Hough had a profound sense of the tragedy of life he was not bitter about it. He was influenced by Flaubert and Maupassant. He presents the story in an easygoing manner through a narrator. H.G. Wells wrote scientific romances, the most famous being *Time Machine*. His novels reflect his concern with contemporary issues especially the problems individuals face in conforming to social rules and expectations. He supported women's education and political equality.

D. H. Lawrence's novels present the reader with a personal interpretation of life. He is concerned with the basic problems of human existence and with man's relationship with others and the larger universe around him. His novels reflect a hatred of the mechanized world and a love of the primitive. James Joyce presents his narrative in a straightforward manner. His subject is human relationships. In *Finnegan's Wake* Joyce used a 'private' style of broken narratives and abrupt transitions. Virginia Woolf reacts against the novel of social manners and uses the 'stream of consciousness' method in her novels. Aldus Huxley also wrote during this time.

The uncertainty of the second world war is reflected in the novels of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novels deal with a disintegration of society, a lack of positivism and sadism. The novels are a mixture of realism, cynicism and dark comedy. American fiction flooded England during this time. The major writer in England was Graham Greene who presents actions as being fundamentally right or fundamentally wrong in his work. Charles Snow gives an insight into the 1920s society. Evelyn Waugh's work is great satire. He criticizes the world for valuing nothing more than money. His main characters are snobs whose cardinal sin is vulgarity. One feature of the modern novel which takes on great importance is the use of dialogue and conversation, especially when presented with very little narratorial intervention. This gives the reader the challenge of filling out the 'script' - it is minimalism of quite a different kind from the interior monologue mode. Novelists as different as Evelyn Waugh in the 1920s and 1930s and Iris Murdoch in the 1960s and 1970s have experimented with this kind of speech presentation. William Cooper and Kingsley Amis are also late 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists. Cooper may be considered the original angry young man. Kingsley Amis deals with the anti-hero infiltrating society only to be disillusioned by it.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. What is the focus of George Eliot's novels?
9. What is generally the theme of D.H. Lawrence's novels?

### 1.7 SUMMARY

- Old English came into existence sometimes around the fourth and the fifth centuries. England, at that point of time, was also known as Angleland i.e, land of the Angles. The Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes were the first to invade Britain and occupy it. The original inhabitants of England went to Wales after being driven out by the invaders. That is how they came to be known as the

Welsh. This phase of Old English period was identified as the Dark Ages or The Age of Savages by the Romans.

*From Beginning to the  
20th Century*

## NOTES

- The first fragment of literature is *Caedmon's Hymn* from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. Caedmon is said to have been a lay worker in the monastery at Whitby. One day God's voice came to him and he began composing hymns. *Caedmon's Hymn* is the first song of praise in English culture, and the first Christian religious poem in English. It is the overtly religious piece of Anglo-Saxon poetry.
- *Beowulf* is the best-known epic Anglo-Saxon poem and recalls a shared heroic past in the general consciousness of the audience. The people and the setting are Germanic. The poem details his victory over Grendel, the years of his reign and ultimately his death. The epic concerns itself with time and what it can do to man.
- The Norman Conquest in 1066 was a game changer in the history of English literature. It led to the introduction of French language and culture to England. For the next two centuries the two languages, French and English, struggled to integrate. French became the language of the court and was widely used from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- *The Owl and the Nightingale* (1225) is a debate (*conflictus*) to show differing attitudes and values, and uses the English countryside as a setting. The debate between the serious (the owl) and the light-hearted (the nightingale) reflects the period's concerns between religious issues and the new thoughts of love. *Winner and Waster* (1360) is a more serious debate contrasting a miserly and carefree approach to money.
- The origin of English theatre is religious. The earliest church drama was aimed at presenting biblical stories to a wider audience, thus liturgies were born. The first liturgies were Christ's miracles, the mysteries of the nativity and the resurrection, heaven and hell.
- Renaissance drama drew inspiration from many sources. The early comedies are derived from the plays of Terence and Plautus while the tragedies are from Seneca. The mediaeval miracle and mystery plays and the interludes were also influential. Native influences are apparent in the humour, use of ballad, poetry, dance and music and tendency towards allegory and symbolism.
- King James I commissioned the authorized or King James Version of the Bible, in 1604. It can be seen as confirmation of the domination of English language in England. Bible translation has a long tradition in England: it began with Aelfric in the Anglo-Saxon era and continued to Wycliffe's Lollard Bible (late 14<sup>th</sup> century).
- In the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the distinction between comedy and tragedy became clearer. Comedy became the more localized city comedy based on London and its people; and tragedy focused on a world of corruption, perversion, blood and passion. The atmosphere of sexual and moral corruption is central to Jacobean tragedy. Major dramatists, beside Shakespeare and Jonson, are Thomas Middleton, John Webster, Thomas Dekker, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher (usually in collaboration), Thomas Heywood, and Philip Massinger.

## NOTES

- Drama saw a decline from 1707 to 1737 not only due to Collier's attacks but also because the increasing middle class was turning to journals, newspapers and the newly developing form of the novel. In such an environment farce and musicals were successful. John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) was one such.
- The Augustan concern with experience meant that the novel and fiction became the dominant forms. The genre builds up on travel accounts from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century after it was subsumed into an English middle-class way of thinking. In the picaresque novels therefore the experience was within recognizable bounds. The readership was largely female and upper or upper-middle class.
- The Romantic period begins with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 and ends in 1832 when the First Reform Bill was passed. It was an age of political and social revolution. The country changed from an agricultural to an industrial one. Power passed from the landed aristocracy to the mercantile class. The enclosure system was introduced to increase efficiency and led to the displacement of many farmers.
- Jane Austen is quite different from any novelist before her, and an important part of the difference is that for many years she was not consciously writing for publication. What Jane Austen did – and no author before her had attempted it so successfully – was to apply the techniques of the novel to the acute observation of society in microcosm. She deliberately avoids effect, exaggeration and excess. Her novels do not have a didactic, moral or satiric purpose. They are simply representations of universal patterns of behaviour and documents of an aspect of the provincial society of her time.
- The Victorian age began when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1832. This was a period of economic expansion and development. Britain became the centre of centre of trade and industrial inventions. It was an age of optimism, but 'The Victorian compromise' wherein national success went hand in hand with the exploitation of lower classes. It was a compromise between philanthropy and repression.
- Tennyson is the major figure of the Victorian age. *In Memoriam* is an elegy to his friend. Its melancholic tone became the keynote of the late Victorian period. In his poetry he also recorded social reality (*Locksly Hall*). There is a sense of doubt and loss in his poetry. His best poems are dramatic monologues. Kipling wrote patriotic pieces, e.g. *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

## 1.8 KEY TERMS

- **Noble Savage:** individuals though savage yet they had something which was 'noble' that could be imitated by decadent Rome
- **Normal Conquest:** The invasion and settlement of England by the Normans following the battle of Hastings (1066) battle of Hastings. Hastings was the decisive battle in which William the Conqueror (duke of Normandy) defeated the Saxons under Harold II (1066) and thus left England open for the Norman Conquest

- **Troubadours:** One of a class of lyric poets and poet-musicians often of knightly rank who flourished from the 11th to the end of the 13th century chiefly in the south of France and the north of Italy and whose major theme was courtly love.
- **Alliteration:** The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.
- **Reformation:** In his desire for a son, Henry VIII wanted to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Since the Catholic Church refused to allow this he took the drastic step of breaking from it and established himself as the head of the church and the state. This is known as Reformation.
- **Sonnets:** A sonnet is fundamentally a dialectical construct which allows the poet to examine the nature and ramifications of two usually contrastive ideas, emotions, states of mind, beliefs, actions, events, images, etc., by juxtaposing the two against each other, and possibly resolving or just revealing the tensions created and operative between the two.
- **Masques:** Masques were private performances held for the king and his court. They were generally held in royal halls and were an expensive proposition with lavish costumes, elaborate stage designs and machinery and spectacular effects.

## NOTES

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### 1.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. It is interesting that most of the native English culture they preserved is not in Latin, the language of the church, but in Old English, the language of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes (the Anglo-Saxons). In fact it is through the texts preserved by the Church over time that we can trace the development of language towards Early Middle English in the thirteenth century.
2. The Norman Conquest led to the introduction of French Language and culture to England.
3. He wrote on aspects of law, science, history, government, politics, ethics, religion and colonialism, as well as gardens, parents, children and health.
4. In the Renaissance period, translations took a new turn. Tyndale translated the New Testament from Erasmus Greek text and the Old Testament from a Hebrew text.
5. The aim of the Scottish Enlightenment was 'improvement' based on philosophical enquiry and its practical applications.
6. The epistolary form allows the correspondents to present multiple points of views, and through this create the impression of diversity leading to consensus.
7. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* can be seen as the originator of the 'stream of consciousness' movement. The novel parodies the conventions of the novel as a genre as practices in his time and points out the absurdity of relating time, space, reality, and relationships in a linear form.
8. George Eliot's novels focus on social and philosophical concerns and moral commitment. In novels like *Daniel Deronda* and *Middlemarch* she touches the concerns of her age. She also wrote *Adam Bede*, *Silas Manor* and *Mill on the Floss*. These show her concern for the outsider in society.

NOTES

9. D. H. Lawrence's novels present the reader with a personal interpretation of life. He is concerned with the basic problems of human existence and with man's relationship with others and the larger universe around him. His novels reflect a hatred of the mechanized world and a love of the primitive.

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## 1.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. What were some of the religious writings in old English? What was the role of the church in these writings?
2. What was the English Affirmation? Write about some authors associated with this period.
3. Write a short note on the writing of Charles Dickens.
4. Why did the novel gain popularity in the 19th century?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. What were the characteristics of Chaucer's works? Explain with examples.
2. List the characteristics and impact of Reformation.
3. State the characteristics of the Romantic age.

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## 1.11 FURTHER READING

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- Sanders, Andrew; *Short Oxford History of English Literature*, Oxford University Press, London, 2004.
- Deacon, Terrence W.; *The Origin of Language*, Penguin Publications, London, 1997.
- Courthope, William John; *A History of English Poetry*, Macmillan and Company, California, 1904.
- Beum, Robert and Shapiro, Karl; *The Prosody Handbook: A Guide to Poetic Form*, Dover Publications, London, 2006.

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## UNIT 2 EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FICTION

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Eighteenth Century  
Fiction

### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Literary History of Augustan Age
- 2.3 Daniel Defoe: *Moll Flanders*
- 2.4 Jane Austen: *Emma*
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Key Terms
- 2.7 Answers to 'Check your Progress'
- 2.8 Questions and Exercises
- 2.9 Further Reading

### NOTES

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## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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The English novel became the most popular and prolific literary form in the 18th century due to an increase in the middle class reading public. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe was one of the major early works in this genre. Most of the 18th century novels were said to be loosely structured and their plots were based on the themes of love, marriage, quarrelling, reconciliation, gain or loss of money and social status.

The seventeenth century writers devised a technique of psychological portrayal of characters. This technique was available to Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. They created the popular characters of Sir Roger de Coverley and Sir Andrew Freeport in *The Spectator* with the help of this technique. In addition to this, the narrative style used by John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* provided the background for the emergence of the English novel.

Some of the popular English novels of the 18th century were:

- *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe (1719)
- *Love in Excess* by Eliza Haywood (1719)
- *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson (1740)
- *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding (1749)
- *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne (1759–1767)
- *Evelina* by Frances Burney (1778)
- *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe (1794)
- *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* by Mary Hays (1796)
- *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis (1796)

This unit critically discusses two novels in detail—*Moll Flanders* by Daniel Defoe and *Emma* by Jane Austen.

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## 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the growth of the English novel in the Augustan age
- Discuss the life and important works of Daniel Defoe, including *Moll Flanders*
- Discuss the life and important works of Jane Austen, including *Emma*

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## 2.2 LITERARY HISTORY OF THE AUGUSTAN AGE

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The English literature in the eighteenth century is termed as the Age of Reason, the Neoclassical Age and the Augustan Age. The Augustan Age, which started after the Restoration era, was one of the most illustrious periods in Latin literary history, from approximately 43 BC to AD 18. Virgil, Horace and Ovid were the remarkable writers of this period whose work and style were copied by a several writers. Other important writers of this period were Pope and John Dryden for poetry while Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison were the chief prose writers.

John Dryden's writings forged a connection between the Augustan and Restoration literature, though his writings in the Restoration age were mainly ribald comedies. His satirical verses were sought after by many poets who copied his style but his literary writing style was in a neoclassical genre.

Though Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe had a lasting influence on the Augustan Age, it was Alexander Pope whose name is deeply connected with this Age. This was partly because most of the early prose narrative prevalent widely during this time did not fit into a literary era which was at that time predominantly neoclassic. The literary work of this age conformed to Pope's aesthetic style and values, which thereby qualified to be 'Augustan' and is very eminent by its precision, harmony and its sophistication. It is also known for its reproduction of classic works by Cicero, Virgil, Homer and Horace.

In this period, the heroic tense verse was commonly used for free verse while satire was mainly used for the prose essay. The first half of the eighteenth century had only the neoclassic style of literature and any definition given for this period would be highly misleading. The representatives of the neoclassic period were very important and had influential voices in the literary circle. Therefore, some characteristics of 'neoclassicism' were used to depict this era.

### Neoclassicism

Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) and Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) are most important documents of the neoclassical age which display qualities of clarity, order and stylish politesse as presented by the literary works of Pope, Swift, Dryden, John Gay, Addison and many of the contemporaries. The major works by these writers, which formed the basis for modern English literature criticism, insist that 'nature' is the true model and standard for writing. The 'nature' was derived from the classical theory and not the spiritual and wild nature that was later idolized by the romantic Augustan poets. It was a comprehensive and rational moral order of the universe



which demonstrated the fortunate design of God. Homer was accepted as the best and most excellent ancient poet who excelled in his description of nature. Therefore, the literary circle around Pope concluded that any writer who 'imitates' Homer is writing and describing nature. In *Essay on Criticism*, Pope has put forth the rules based on the classics in the following words

*'Those rules of old discovered, not devised,  
Are natures still, but nature methodized?'*

*The Tatler* (1709–11) by Joseph Addison and *The Spectator* (1711–12) by Richard Steele were the two most influential periodicals published in the literary circles of the early eighteenth century. Addison and Steele were instrumental in raising the cultural levels of the middle class of England and were known as the minor masters of the prose style in English literature.

Steele was a dedicated crusader for morality and represented the typical mood of the post-Restoration period and his purpose as stated in *The Tatler* was 'to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality'. Addison used *The Spectator* to further his purpose of introducing the middle-class English public to new and recent developments in literature and philosophy, and in a way further educate their tastes. The gossip was written often in a highly refined and ironic manner while the essays were based on discussions of current events and literature.

The philosophy of John Locke and the literary reputation of John Milton was promoted and popularized by Addison and Steele, among others. Addison and Steele had enormous influence on their contemporaries and their essays popularized the ideas by circulating them among the intellectuals of that period, even though their publication ran for two years only. It is easy to say that the literary circle around Addison, Swift, Steele and Pope was able to dictate the accepted taste in literary works during the Age of Augustan with the wide-spread reach and influence of their publications. Addison in one of his essays written for *The Spectator* criticized all the metaphysical poets for their lack of clear ideas and ambiguities propagated by them, and this critical stance continued to influence the literary circles till the twentieth century. These writers were criticized often by the literary circle who sought to justify their criticism using classical precedents.

The classical forms like mock epic, imitation and translation formed the base of the adaptations of important genres of work of that period. Most of Pope's work belongs to the imitation category and this shows the artificiality of the period of neoclassicism more than any other literary form of that period.

Pope addressed George II very satirically as 'Augustus' and used the style of Horace's informal conversational tone and candour in his verse epistles and satires. He also applied the standards used in the original Augustan Age to his own time. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was translated by Pope, and after concluding this enormous and demanding task, he started work on his most sarcastic literary satire named *The Dunciad* (1728).

*The Dunciad* is a satire in the form of a mock epic in which the commonplace subjects are described in the elevated, heroic style of classical epic. Pope uses parody and deliberately misuses the heroic language and conventions of literature to highlight

## NOTES

## NOTES

the triviality of the subject, and this is clearly measured against the human potential of the highest standards. Apart from *The Dunciad*, John Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* (1682) and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) are also the most well known mock epic poems of that period.

*The Rape of the Lock* is generally considered to be one of the greatest contributions to the genre of the mock epic poetry. Although the heroic action is maintained in this the mock epic poetry, the scale is greatly reduced. In this poem, the preparation for combat by the hero is transposed to a very fashionable ride on the boat up the Thames and the battle which follows is a card game. When the heroine is pouring coffee, the hero steals the titular lock of hair.

Besides poetry, the influence of the mock epic mode was also found in dramas, the most notable of which was the famous work of John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). *The Beggar's Opera* is a satire on Sir Robert Walpole, who was the prime minister of England at that time, and it ludicrously combines the elements of Italian opera and ballad. The characters used were prostitutes and criminals while the vehicle was opera. Gay's magnificent opera was an unprecedented stage success and centuries later, inspired the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht to pen his most successful and best-known work *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Three Penny Opera*, 1928).

Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books* (1704) is one of the better known mock epic works in prose form from that period and depicts the old battle between the ancient and modern writers which is fought out in a library between The Bee and The Spider.

### The Rise of the Novel

Daniel Defoe was the most important lasting literary influence of that period, unquestionably. His work brought about a difference in the Augustan period, despite being a writer of satire and social criticism before turning to write novels. Pope and his contemporaries ruled the literary establishment of that period whereas Defoe was a complete stranger and outsider from such a literary establishment. Defoe did not belong to the established literary world and hence was ridiculed by them and his works went completely unnoticed. For example, Swift in 1709 referred to Defoe as 'the Fellow that was Pilloryed, I have forgot his name'.

Defoe is remembered mainly for his works of fiction like *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). These works belong less to the refined impulse and the satirical style mainly used by the Augustan tradition, and more to an opposing tradition of early prose narrative used by prominent women writers like Aphra Behn, Mary Delariviere Manley and Jane Barker. Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), an influential study, has made the literary historians come to an opinion that Defoe was one of the prime originators of down-to-earth fiction writing in the eighteenth century and Defoe's first successful English novel was *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe would have not attempted writing prose narrative if his female predecessors had not created an audience for it, and for this, he was always grateful and thankful to them.

The women writers had already anticipated the usage of psychological realism and consistent narrative voice as elements of narration and all these elements of the modern novel were attributed to Defoe. The main contribution of Defoe was putting

all these elements together and bringing out sustained prose narrations using physical and psychological realism. Defoe in his major works, like *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* (1724), portrayed his characters facing difficulties to survive in a world of ever changing modern economic forces.

Given his capitalist philosophy, it is not surprising that most of Defoe's protagonists are resourceful and self-reliant individuals who freely express Defoe's middle-class values. Defoe wanted to balance economic realism and individualism and a belief in providence of God. Therefore, he created multi-faceted protagonists who could ask forgiveness and repentance for past sins and misdeeds, and at the same time are able to celebrate their power of being able to survive in a modern hostile environment. The intellectual literary circle mainly represented by Pope and Swift looked down on Defoe and his female contemporaries.

However, the later developments in the literary history have shown that it is Defoe and his female contemporaries who have defined the new age literature and not the Augustan writers. The novel remains the most popular and dominant literary form in the twentieth century, while mock epic is an element constituent used occasionally in comedy. *The Rape of the Lock* finds a mention in history books while *Moll Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe* are being read universally even in this century. In spite of Jonathan Swift penning the brilliant and lasting classic *Gulliver's Travels*, Daniel Defoe always saw writing as 'a considerable branch of the English commerce' (*Essay upon Literature*, 1726), and is considered by the literary circle as the Father of the English novel.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name three important epic poems of Augustan Age.
2. What was Defoe's writing style?

### 2.3 DANIEL DEFOE: MOLL FLANDERS

Daniel Defoe's birth year is not clearly recorded and he was believed to have been born sometime between 1659 and 1661. Daniel Defoe was one of the precursors of the modern novel. His original name was Daniel Foe. He added 'De' to his name to claim lineage of the aristocratic family of De Beau Faux. He wrote a number of articles, biographies, ghost stories, journals, memoirs, satires, and essays on religion, projects, reform and trade. All these forms were written in picturesque style with minutest of details. The details used in these writings made them look like true chronicles. A critic commenting on realistic *Journal of the Plague Year* and *Memoirs of a Cavalier* says 'Defoe wrote history, but invented the "facts"'. Another says that 'the one little art of which Defoe was past master was the art of forging a story and imposing it on the world as truth.' Defoe lacked creative imagination and a sense of structure yet he had the 'ability to lie like the truth'. That is why he is called 'the father of English novel'.

#### NOTES

## NOTES

He was born in a family of Presbyterian dissenters probably in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate in London. The children of dissenters were barred from Oxford and Cambridge universities. So, he was educated in a dissenting academy at Newington Green which was run by Charles Morton. Though a Christian, Defoe decided not to become a dissenting minister. Instead he entered the world of trade as a general merchant. He traded in a wide range of goods including stockings, wine, tobacco, and oysters. He was so interested in trade and economics that he wrote a number of essays and pamphlets on economic theories, which were ahead of their times.

He was up in arms against Catholic King James II. He had to flee to London to escape the gallows. When the King was deposed, he volunteered to become a guard of honour and escorted King William of Orange and Mary. He faced bankruptcy in 1692 and fled to debtors' sanctuary in Bristol. He won King William's favour and was appointed as a commissioner of the Glass Duty. Gradually, he became the King's confidante and advisor. Once he had to go into hiding to save himself when he offended the church and state sensibilities by attacking them in the satire *The Shortest Way*. The satire revealed how these two institutions dealt with the dissenters. He was betrayed and put on trial for seditious libel against the church. He was later jailed and had to suffer humiliation. He was granted pardon but he landed himself into debtor's prison where a timely grant saved him.



Fig. 2.1 Daniel Defoe

Published in 1697, Defoe's first distinguished publication was *An Essay upon Projects*, a series of proposals for improvement in the social and economic sphere. Defoe also witnessed the Great Storm of 1703 which caused severe damage to London and Bristol. The event became the subject of Defoe's *The Storm* (1704). It included the witness accounts of the storm. Many people consider these accounts as one of the world's first exemplars of modern journalism.

After the death of Queen Anne, Defoe worked for the Whig government and wrote 'Tory' pamphlets that destabilized the Tory viewpoint. Some of the popular essays written by Defoe are as follows:

- Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe (1720)
- The Complete English Tradesman
- An Essay Upon Projects
- An Essay Upon Literature (1726)
- Mere Nature Delineated (1726)
- Conjugal Lewdness (1727)
- A Plan of the English Commerce (1728)

Defoe also wrote a number of novels. Some of the novels written by Defoe are:

*Robinson Crusoe*- The novel was first published in 1719. It is a fictional autobiography of the protagonist—Robinson Crusoe. He is a castaway and spends 28 years on a tropical island near Trinidad. He encounters captives, cannibals and mutineers on the island. Before the end of 1719, four editions of the novel had been published. The book became so popular that it was translated into a number of languages. The popularity of the book encouraged Defoe to write its sequel *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. Later, he also wrote *Serious Reflections during the Life & Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

*Captain Singleton*- Published in 1720, the novel describes the life of an Englishman who was stolen from a rich family as a child and was reared by gypsies. The Englishman named Singleton makes his way to seas. The first half of the novel describes how he crosses Africa and the latter part of the novel deals with his life as a pirate in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.

*Roxana* (1724) - The novel deals with the story of an unnamed 'fallen woman' who takes on various pseudonyms including 'Roxana'. The novel explains her fall from being a rich woman to a prostitute after her husband who is a 'fool' abandons her. After being abandoned, she accumulates wealth from an ersatz marriage to a jeweller, by secretly courting a prince and from a Dutch merchant who proposes to her.

*Colonel Jack*- The novel was published in 1722. It is the story of an orphan boy who rises to colonial prosperity after spending his life in poverty and crime.

*Moll Flanders* is also considered to be one of the interesting novels by Daniel Defoe. Let us discuss this novel in detail, from its various aspects.

### **Narrative Technique in *Moll Flanders***

In his preface, Daniel Defoe asserts that *Moll Flanders* is not a work of fiction but a 'private history'. The book was published in 1722, when the novel as a literary genre was still a fledgling. The statement that '...the world is so taken up of late with Novels and Romances' can only refer to his own *Robinson Crusoe* and *Captain Singleton*. Both the texts were fictional narratives masquerading as true autobiographical accounts. Clearly, Defoe wanted his readers to accept *Moll Flanders* as genuine, while acknowledging that he must be content '...to leave the reader to pass his own opinion...and take it just as he pleases' at the same time. Moreover, he goes to great lengths to give the work an internal consistency and the hallmarks of an autobiographical confession.

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

### Factual Narrative

The story of *Moll Flanders* is narrated by a seventy year old woman, a reformed criminal, looking back on her life and commenting on her youthful self from the vantage point of maturity and repentance. Thus, the narrator is simultaneously the rebellious girl who moves at breathtaking pace through a sequence of picaresque adventures and the mature woman unfolding her story to the reader with mingled understanding and regret. This alone would be sufficient to account for the novel's duality, but there is a deeper ambivalence behind this. The story is fictitious and is a product of the author's own invention, though it is based on his actual observations of life. The situations are so aptly presented in the life of the protagonist that it looks lively through the autobiographical narrative. It is noteworthy that in subsequent novels, the episodic narrative technique is used between different first person narratives.

In the geographical and chronological details of *Moll Flanders*, its time scheme, its references to actual people and places and its overall air of veracity of the novel is one of Defoe's most convincing and satisfying productions. R. Hammond, in *A Defoe Companion*, points out that the creative powers of Defoe are so superior that readers have to constantly remind themselves that they are dealing with a work of fiction. To elaborate this point, let us take into consideration specific instances from the novel. Moll, newly married and putting up at an inn, glances out of the window and to her distress locates her former husband:

'...I say there was no room to question the Truth of it, I knew his Clothes, I knew his Horse and I knew his Face'.

Unquestionably, this has the feel of reality. The reader would have to make the conscious effort to understand that neither Moll, nor her husband, had any solidity and existence outside the novel. However, Defoe, in a single paragraph, has etched the scene indelibly before us. The narrator's assertion of its actuality is very convincing.

Another example of the technique occurs when Moll is first tempted into an act of theft:

'...I dress'd me, for I still had pretty good clothes...whither I was going or what I did...pass'd by an Apothecary's shop in Laden-hall street, where I saw Lye on a stool just before the counter, a little Bundle wrapt in a white cloath...this was the Bait...I put my hand behind me and took the Bundle, and went off with it...'

The entire description has the vividness of a Pre-Raphaelite painting. As it usually happens in Defoe's fiction, the actual theft is prefaced by an assertion of its randomness. This is followed by exact details of the location, the name of the street, the details of the shop, and a detailed description of the interior of the shop. The details have the nuances and specificities of a stage direction making the whole shop appear as precise as a photograph. Readers are also told where the apprentice and the maid are standing, and the direction towards which they are facing. When Moll hears the voice over her shoulder, '...take the Bundle, be quick; do it this Moment,' it is as if the readers also hear the voice and share her moment of temptation. The theft is immediately followed by flight and remorse.

The entire episode of the stealing and the panic-stricken journey poses many touches we have come to identify with Daniel Defoe's writings; precise details of time and location, pictorial clarity of the events taking place, a powerful sense of immediacy and involvement and an overriding impression of reality. In addition to this is an impression into the narrator's thought and motive, which is engaging in its frankness. It is as if Moll is anxious to conceal nothing and be completely honest with her reader, even at the risk of incrimination:

'...I am very sure I had no manner of Design in my Head, when I went out...'

The style seems so plain and straight-forward that it is easy to miss the authorial presence. This is an illusion, because behind each episode is a controlling and guiding intelligence.

### Relationship between the Narrator and the Reader

In the novel, we can find an intimate relationship between the reader and the narrator, a bond reminding one of that achieved by Dickens in *David Copperfield*. Moll shows the tendency of addressing her reader conversationally. For example she uses words like, '...It is enough to tell you...', '...so you may give me leave to speak to myself...', etc. As the novel is in the first person narrative, it makes the reader feel that Moll is talking to the reader directly, establishing a close bond between the reader and text which strengthens the illusion of reality.

A writer, we all know, is influenced by the society in which he lives and in turn a conscious writer influences society. Needless to say, the reforms that took place in Newgate prison after the publication of this novel only substantiates the authenticity of facts produced in the novel. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had witnessed such an impact which played a seminal role in abolition of slavery.

Moll Flanders succeeds in engaging our sympathy and understanding largely because we identify with her struggle to bring life under control and master her own destiny. Defoe was also aware that he had to maintain a degree of psychological insight into the character and first person narrative offered that scope.

The strength of the autobiographical narration is in the charged feelings that can be created in several episodes. For instance, when Moll discovers she has committed incest, the narrative depicts heightened feelings. Again, when she is pushed into Newgate, everything crystallizes around her and reveals the agony of an entire generation of criminals who languish from minor thefts.

Though Daniel Defoe was a master of the autobiographical form, its limitation is that the readers see the narration from only one point of view. There is no perspective except Moll's own (the only exception being the preface, where there is an attempt to summarize her life and behavior from the standpoint of a judicious observer). The consequence is that Moll is her own accuser. She evaluates her action and passes moral judgment on her own lapses, but we do not see her from the outside. Had Defoe chosen to tell her story in a third person it would be interesting to see her from a different perspective, for example, that of her first lover or one of her husbands. She is both jury as well as the central figure in a long and diverse narrative seen from a single focus.

## NOTES

## NOTES

Another weak point of the novel is that there is very little distance between the author and the narrator. Having a woman as a central character who is preoccupied with accumulation of wealth, Defoe is simply commending himself as an exceptional writer. Ian Watt, author of the influential *The Rise of the Novel*, launches a powerful attack when he asserts that in spite of individual instances of patent and conscious irony, nothing in the fiction itself clearly indicates that Defoe viewed either his central character or his purported theme differently from Moll.

Due to the use of first person narrative, the entire sequence of events have to be treated in flashback and consequently, the voice of the adult Moll clashes with that of the adolescent Moll. When the elder brother seduces Moll, she describes her experience as follows:

'My colour came, and went, at the sight of the purse, and with the fire of his proposal...thus I finish'd my own Destruction at once.'

The older Moll's description of events leading to the seduction reveals the qualities of her mind that she mastered to perfection later in life. With the passage of time, Moll's extraordinary mind learnt to approach each experience as a network of possibilities, which is in stark contrast to the innocent young mind which rushed in to the act quite spontaneously.

There is a larger scheme of irony that is used by Daniel Defoe often where the autobiographical narrative betrays the inner turmoil within Moll. For instance, after Moll had been reunited with her American son, who proved to be affectionate and unsuspecting, gifted her with a 'deerskin bag' and 'five and fifty Spanish pistoles in it'. During her subsequent visit, she presents him with a gold watch. Moll is anxious to assure her readers that she has not cheated her son in terms of money and the watch she gave him was valued twice as much in the colonies as in London. However, she has ridiculed him by passing a mischievous verbal fiction on him. His kissing a stolen watch, believing that it was of great sentimental value to his mother, makes Humphrey look ridiculous to a reader. The irony here is clearly against Moll.

The most significant problem is created because of rapid shifts from the convention of criminal biography with that of the novel narrative. Moll seems to be forever alternating between later stages of life and repenting for earlier actions. As a result the reader is often confused and the narrative snags. The circumstantial method is to be found in all of Daniel Defoe's fictitious narratives. It is the way he thinks a story should be told, as a means of giving fiction the appearance of truth. However, it works quite well and the cumulative effect is overwhelming.

It must be remembered that at this point of time, Defoe was experimenting with a recent generic form. The autobiographical narration is primarily used to satisfy the audience of the eighteenth century's desire for authenticity. However, the conflicting demand of criminal biography and informative literature creates a split within the narrative. Thus, both advantage and disadvantage of an autobiographical narrative exist in *Moll Flanders*.

### ***Moll Flanders* as a Picaresque Novel**

Picaresque was a narrative form that was popularized during the early half of the eighteenth century. It originated in Spain and France, where its origin was associated



with the satirical reaction against the pastoral and heroic romances. The first picaresque novel *Gil Blas* was published by Le Sage in 1715, and by the year 1720, it was a rage all over the continent. It derives its etymology from the Spanish word 'picaro', signifying a criminal or a rogue.

Structurally, a picaresque novel is divided into a number of episodes that trace the adventures of the hero from different shifts in social strata. A humble character, usually employed as a servant and possibly driven to petty cheating or thieving by the narrowness of his circumstances was given a place of importance in the story; where as in a romance such a position was always sanctioned to a man of high degree and heroic character. The picaresque romance mostly concerned itself with the petty and often ridiculous doings of a servant. Ridicule was cast not only on the rogue/servant but also on his master or succession of masters. The tone was gaily satirical rather than sober and sympathetic. Although, the rogue might be a victim to some extent, he was usually depicted glorifying in his roguery. The reader could find pleasure in his tricks to cheat others without sympathizing with him personally. The satiric thirst is one of the principal features of the picaresque novelists. As R.S Craine points out 'the picaresque novel is predominately a novel of incident that could be linked with the eighteenth century vogue for social satire.' In Le Sage's work, the social mobility and class behavior were important factor in organizing the narrative.

Daniel Defoe was closer to the spirit of the criminal biographies of his day than to the ironical and socially motivated novels of the France and Spain. The picaresque novel, though it often fell to pandering in the gross desire for sensation, showed, in its finer manifestations, a more intellectual attitude. It had a relish of experience and a sense of maturity which came from a detached contemplation of a man's frailty and folly, rather than the almost exclusive absorption in the affair of the moment which is characteristic of Defoe. Moll, a sympathetic figure, never appears as ridiculous. She tells her story soberly and earnestly, not in the mocking manner of picaresque hero. She does not wantonly rejoice in her rogueries. Her creator concentrates so intently upon his subject that the atmosphere of his story seems almost painfully unrelaxed as compared with the genial mood and episodic manner of picaresque novel.

The relationship of *Moll Flanders* with the picaresque tradition is ambiguous. Defoe was well conversant with *Gil Blas* and it has been argued especially by Macmillan that both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* are picaresque in their traditions. Let us consider the number of picaresque motifs that the novel uses. Moll was a five-times-wife, a whore and finally a thief. The novel concentrates on its depiction of the London underworld, where the episodic structure is connected by the personality of Moll. In fact, a considerable degree of social satire is invoked and the tradition of criminal biography to which the picaresque owed its origin is undeniable.

Another major picaresque theme that Defoe invokes is the exploration into the contemporary class dynamics. The five marriages of *Moll Flanders* depict the entire gamut of social strata in contemporary England. Daniel Defoe is actually conscious of the rise of the merchants of the middle class, bank clerks and the highwaymen who existed on the margins of society. One crucial difference exists—the amalgamation of Moll within the landed gentry in Virginia is not a solution that can be stressed in picaresque novels but to turn the novel as picaresque as an absolute would be misnomer. The depiction of a mediocre life in London no doubt follows the tradition but Defoe's

## NOTES

## NOTES

analysis of the way in which the underworld functions is comprehensive. The London underworld is revealed to function almost as a syndicate with the figure of governess providing both a shelter and outlet for Moll. The other important agent that Defoe is more concerned about is about the penal system of London. Newgate prison is elevated to the mythical equivalent of inferno and from a mere satire, Defoe's novel becomes an agent for reform.

There is also the presence of a consistent ideology in *Moll Flanders* that segregates it from the picaresque. The ideology is one of mercantile capitalism. Moll always retains a resourceful nature, which a life of crime seems to sharpen rather than dull. When in Newgate prison, she says of herself, that she became thoroughly degenerated because of the horrible influences of the place. In reality, however, her enterprising nature is displayed with all her accustomed zeal when she discovers that one of her earlier husbands is also an inmate of the prison. Not only Moll but the entire population seems to share an acquisitive tendency.

*Moll Flanders* goes beyond the picaresque to invoke a number of generic features. It uses the autobiographical form and the ideology of colonization is also significant. Moll's quest is always for settlement through property and Defoe's suggestion seems to be that England could be rid of its criminal population by exporting them to America. Moll's colonial enterprise finally witnesses her settlement and prosperity. Therefore, the character of Moll is similar to Robinson Crusoe. Defoe's portrayal of the colonial settler, turning barren land into profitable returns, depicts that when Moll returns to England, she brings not only moral capital in shape of a reformed criminal but also substantial material wealth that helps in the prosperity of England. A picaresque novel definitely lacks such ideological insight.

However, the most important factor that denies *Moll Flanders* its picaresque categorization is its moralizing content. Defoe is careful to balance the genre of criminal narrative with the narrative of Christian repentance. As a matter of fact, Robert Allan Denavan suggests that the two generic demands creates two different Moll Flanders, one who is constantly in search of money and stability, and the other who is constantly in search for spiritual stability. Moll herself tells us that her decision to tell the story of her life in such detail has a didactic intention. The amassing of possessions becomes an end in itself, justifying theft, duplicity and immortality in its pursuit. Moll is always willing to justify her actions. Considerable critical debate has focused on the genuineness of Moll's reformation. There can be no doubt that she convinces herself of the reality of her transformation, but whether the readers share her conviction is uncertain.

The quality of the narrative is severely disturbed by the alternate generic signals. It seems to pick up its tempo each time Moll describes one of her escapes. Defoe, like Le Sage, captures dramatic tension and unlawful acts, but almost immediately the narrative is punctured by Christian passages and the linear narrative of the picaresque is disturbed. One must remember that picaresque was a narrative to be enjoyed. Moll Flanders could also work as a guide book to women of the time. Defoe was catering to a readership which he felt he had to educate. *Moll Flanders* is one of the earliest narratives that experiments with the picaresque form. It adopts its episodic structure, its depiction of unlawfulness and its representation of social vices, but it is also a

novel which also has significant didactic content. It is a novel marked by ideology towards mercantile society. *Moll Flanders* shares many features of the picaresque, though it would not be adequate to simply label it as a picaresque novel.

### Episodic Structure and Thematic Unity of *Moll Flanders*

The flat episodic nature of the narrative in *Moll Flanders* leaves Moll as the only immediately noticeable principle of unity in the book. Moll relentlessly tells us about her seventy years of life in a collective matter of fact tone without formal pauses and without breaking her story into any chapters or sections.

The purpose in examining *Moll Flanders* is to suggest that the episodes themselves afford a unity which complements the unity supplied by the novel's female protagonist. All aspects of the novel's unity, of course, involve Moll herself as the principal actor, but in conjunction with the natural psychological progression in the book, there exists a formal pattern of circumstances shaped consistently by the episodes which structure Moll's experience.

In the second part of the book, Moll introduces to the readers her career as a thief. This leads to her arrest, her reunion with Jemmy in Newgate, and finally, her return to America. These adventures connect Moll's earlier life with her later one, which is clear even from a cursory glance at the plot. However, if we examine the details of the theft, we find that the second part of the novel operates as an attempt to win back the relative security which manifests itself in the first part. Moll's desire for economic security manifests itself in a series of adventures which testify to the quality of these desires by falling into a significant episodic pattern.

Moll begins her career of thievery at the age of fifty, after five unsuccessful marriages. With the devil prompting her, she first takes a bundle from a manservant and steals a necklace from a child. After this, she breaks a window and steals two rings, one diamond and the other, gold. Shortly afterwards, she steals a watch from a pregnant woman.

The significant patterns of the thefts begin to take suggestive shape. Moll steals several watches because the current trend gave an opportunity for their theft. Moll only steals real objects that come her way, begging for her attention. She begins to steal on impulse, not a predestined plan. Her early thefts are uncharacteristic actions, lacking in shrewdness and conscious design. Initially, Moll had no way to discard the stolen goods. She was threatened with economic stagnation, a grave threat to capitalist world in itself. The pattern of these impulsive thefts suggests her to get back to her reliable 'goods' that have departed. This may also be synonymous to her fertility and the accompanying sexual attractiveness of the younger days. She steals baby clothes, necklaces, wedding rings, etc. Moll is suddenly struck with a love for marriage and children. We know that Moll never approved of children despite her repeated lectures on maternal duty, saying that they were a nuisance in her life. At this juncture of her life, Moll wanted to get back her lost powers. In order to survive in such a competitive world one had to produce or be capable of producing. Thus, Moll steals a lot of watches, as it depicted stealing back time and capturing the symbolic essence of the business oriented clockwork around her.

### NOTES

NOTES

The emphasis on subjective and internal details of Moll's retreat after the initial theft renders external reality dubious and uncertain. A sense of indirection and a feeling of being lost within the realms of survival methods are perceived. When Moll fully embarks on her stealing career, she only steals selected articles. However, she steals even when she has enough money to maintain her upkeep. Her stealing appears to compensate the economic independence she had longed for in her younger days. At the behest of her 'governess' she dresses like a man and works with a male confederate, sleeping with him 'four or five times' without him knowing her true sex. This is obviously a false manner of return to sexuality. However, when the police catch hold of her and her friend, she escapes by changing into a woman's clothes.

The incident where Moll rushes hopefully to a fire only to have a feather bed thrown upon her from an upper window only serves as comic prelude to her affair with the anonymous gentleman whom she meets in Bartholomew Fair. In this first sexual encounter since the death of her banker husband, it is the role of a thief which leads her to the gentleman's bed. She was neither interested in the love-making, nor was she bothered by moral scruples. This was the first time that she brought sex and theft together. She was aware that she indeed looked younger than her actual age though not young enough to be mistaken for a girl. The adventure, as Moll puts it was 'indeed unlooked for,' nonetheless; she continues it 'for about a year.' In this whole year and almost three months after, she did not indulge in stealing, as the gentleman provided her with sufficient money to get back to her old trade.

The affair is an 'interval' in which she has been forced to adopt the disguise of a youth by using 'paint' for the first and only time. She again turns to thievery. However, this time her mode of theft takes an aspect of caricature. Without knowing why and feeling uneasy in her disguise, Moll dresses as a beggar in coarse and despicable rags, walking around 'peering and peeping into every door and window.' She steals a horse and abandons it as it was of no use. She is even invited to join a gang of counterfeiters, but Moll refuses to disguise money. As if rehearsing for a voyage, she steals a portmanteau during a tour of theft that included Cambridge, Ipswich and Harwich. It is this journey that leads her back to Colchester, to the place where she had had a sexual affair with the elder brother. Moll realizes everything had changed and to continue surviving, she needed to go back to London.

Stealing from a private house brings Moll back to Newgate. The novel's large narrative movement to regain the past and the promise it once held for Moll is now completed, for Moll, sixty years of age, is literally back to where she began. Her disguised return as a man had proven false. Her return to sexual activities, sufficient while it lasted, had proven unproductive. However, her return to Colchester, for practical purposes, had proved futile. Thus, Moll makes the great return, to the place of her birth, a place of 'hellish noise', which she dreads and from where she expects 'no redemption but by an infamous death.'

Daniel Defoe employs a variation on the not uncommon conception of Newgate as a kind of hell. As a 'mere Newgate bird' Moll undergoes a psychic metamorphosis. She becomes one of the 'hell hounds', part of the total 'emblem of hell', that is Newgate. When Moll's Lancashire husband, Jemmy, is brought to Newgate, she is 'overwhelmed with grief for him.' The 'for him' in this sentence is significant. She reproaches herself

'on his account', for once not thinking exclusively and primarily for her own self. She undergoes a second metamorphosis, the apparent beginning of a new reform:

'... in a word, I was perfectly changed, and became another body.'

However, there is a comic boldness in this double transformation. It has allowed Moll to change back to herself. Her new resumption of identity has a definite meaning for both past and present lives; now Jemmy can know her. From this point onwards, the novel moves towards revelation and not disguise.

Faced with a death sentence, Moll repents under the gentle spiritual pressure of the minister. She recapitulates her life history and chooses heaven rather than hell, redemption (which she did not accept out of Newgate) rather than damnation. Her reprieve rather creates a third alternative which she prefers to heaven or hell. In keeping with her character and her economic motivation throughout sixty years of her life, Moll prefers secular redemption. She is reborn to a natural not supernatural life. 'Really ...not so solicitous' about heaven now, she must placate the genuinely concerned minister, who would be successful in sending her to heaven.

After her rebirth, Moll reveals her identity to Jemmy. Jemmy also recounts his career to her. From prison, converted from an entrance into hell to an obvious new-gate, they go to America to be 'new people in a new world.'

Terence Martin in *The Unity of Moll Flanders* suggests that the structure of the novel makes it necessary for Moll to undertake a second voyage to America. Her initial tour had left her with two identities, that of a wife and a sister, and also introduced Moll to her mother. The final trip is with her 'new' husband (as Moll addresses Jemmy), theft being the means to reintroduce Moll to her old life. Though the necessary self-revelation threatens grave social embarrassment which gives her pause, she cannot resist the desire to make herself known, a desire burning out of her curiosity to decipher how much money her mother had bequeathed to her. The human desire to establish identity is laced neatly within an economic motive.

In America, she meets her 'one and only child'. At an advanced age and after eight years in America, Moll returns to England, at last equipped to live as a gentlewoman, having expressed gratitude to providence for material success.

The unity of *Moll Flanders* lies with its protagonist and involves a definable and coherent structural pattern, circumstances resulting from Moll's different attempt to reach the same goal. Contributing to the unity of the novel are the manner in which Moll speaks of theft and the significance of her passion for watches, both of which relate to her middle class Puritan manner of conceiving reality. Defoe's characterization of Moll is efficiently increased by the modes and patterns of her conduct. She does not achieve a neat combination of elements in her life. At one point of time, she seriously considers that it was a bad decision to bring along Jemmy with her. In America, she still practices her secret economy of personal prudence by not telling Jemmy about all her money, which is a middle class habit. At the end of the novel, Moll has no financial secret, and even if she has, it is hidden from Jemmy as well as from us. It has taken Moll a biblical amount of time to achieve her goal.

There should have been a more sophisticated structural unity involving theme, character and tone. Moll is always, in a sense, talking about herself and dispersing the

## NOTES

NOTES

reality of those around her into countable units, undercutting the autonomy of everyone but herself. In its way, this is a feat of the narrative, although, we may see that its outcome is to prelude the achievement of a more twisted and complex kind of novelistic unity. However, within the range of determinacy established by the narrative, Defoe sets forth in *Moll Flanders* a novel coherent in episode, unified in and by circumstances.

***Moll Flanders: Summary***

The title of *Moll Flanders* summarizes the plot of the novel: 'The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, Etc. Who was born in Newgate, and during a life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest and died a Penitent. Written from her own Memorandums.'

In the beginning of the novel, Moll Flanders' mother is shown to have been convicted at the Newgate Prison in London. Soon after her birth, her mother is taken to America. Moll Flanders is brought up until adolescence by a godly foster mother. The kind lady teaches her mannerisms of a lady and the art of needlework. Moll Flanders grows up into a beautiful girl. She gets attached to a household as a servant where both sons of the house fall in love with her. The elder son persuades her to 'act like they were married' in bed. Later he refuses to marry her and convinces her to marry his younger brother. His younger brother also dies after a few years.

Widowed, she leaves her children in the care of her in-laws. She then starts perfecting the skill of passing herself off as a rich widow to attract a man who will marry her. She marries a draper who becomes insolvent and runs away to the Continent, leaving her alone. Once again, she marries a kind-hearted man who takes her to Virginia and introduces her to his mother. After giving birth to three children (one dies), Moll Flanders comes to know that her mother-in-law is her biological mother. On this revelation, she dissolves her marriage with her half-brother. She leaves her two children to the care of her mother and half-brother, and goes back to England. She starts living in Bath to look for a new husband. She develops a relationship with a man in Bath whose wife is confined due to insanity. Initially, their relationship remains platonic but eventually Moll becomes his mistress and gives birth to three children and two of them die. After a severe disease the man repents, breaks off the arrangement, and goes back to his wife. Then, a banker whose wife has been 'disloyal' to him, proposes to her. She gets ready to marry him provided he divorces his wife. In the meantime, she marries a 'rich' man in Lancashire. Later on, she comes to know that the man lied to her about his wealth and he is as poor as she is. After this revelation, she leaves him as well and goes back to the banker. She comes to know that the banker has divorced his wife. Although pregnant at that time, she convinces the banker that she is available and is expecting him to return. She gives birth to her child and leaves the infant to be reared by a countrywoman in exchange of £5 a year. She then marries the banker and they live in happiness for five years. After that, he becomes insolvent and dies of misery.

After spending a few years as a poor woman, she begins a 'career' of clever thievery. She uses her intelligence, beauty, femininity, as well as her callousness and

wickedness in this 'career'. She feels that she is quite talented at this 'trade' and soon becomes a rich expert thief. In due course, she is imprisoned. In prison, she reunites with her Lancashire husband, who has also been imprisoned. Moll convinces a minister of the prison of her remorse, and is sent to the Colonies along with her Lancashire husband in order to avoid hanging. They live happily there.

In the colonies, she comes to know that her mother has left a plantation for her and that her son (by her brother) as well as her brother/husband is alive. Moll introduces herself to her brother and their son. With the help of a Quaker and her son, she finds a farm with 50 servants in Maryland. Moll then discloses her identity to her son who hands over her mother's inheritance (a farm) to her. She makes her son her steward in the farm and asks him to give her an income of £100 a year. She also makes him her heir and gifts him a (stolen) gold watch. When her brother/husband dies, Moll tells her Lancashire husband the entire story about her marriage with her half-brother. He 'understands' her and both of them go back to England to spend their life 'in sincere penitence for the wicked lives' they have lived.

### ***Moll Flanders: Themes***

The theme of repentance is recurring in *Moll Flanders*. Moll Flanders constantly entertains the desire to repent. Lacking true moral persuasion, these repentances are, until the end, halfhearted and insincere. She lacks moral strength; her 'moral fiber' is quickly defeated on several occasions by the slightest pressures or inducements. Her will at times seems to be completely enslaved.

Her first repentance comes when Robin asks her to marry him: 'I was now in a dreadful condition indeed, and now I repented heartily my easiness with the eldest brother; not from any reflection of conscience, for I was a stranger to those things, but I could not think of being a whore to one brother and a wife to the other.'

Actually, Moll's repentance seems more like regret for she feels that she has underestimated her chances for a better arrangement. It is evident as the book unfolds that Moll has not been 'led astray.' She has shrewdly calculated the course of her life. Throughout the story, Moll considers or reflects on the path of her life. The occasion of Robin's marriage proposal causes Moll to say to the elder brother, 'Upon serious consideration, for indeed now I began to consider things very seriously and never till now had I resolved to tell him of it.' Again, Moll considers what to do when she realizes she is not as bad as the people living in the Mint. She says, 'I was not wicked enough for such fellows as these yet. On the contrary, I began to consider here very seriously what I had to do; how things stood with me, and what course I ought to take.'

When the gentleman at Bath rejects any further contact with Moll, she reports 'I cast about innumerable ways for my future state of life, and began to consider very seriously what I should do, but nothing offered.' After her Lancashire husband leaves and Moll is back in London alone she says that 'here being perfectly alone, I had leisure to sit down and reflect seriously upon the last seven months' ramble I had made . . .'

When she receives a letter from the banker saying he wants to see her again Moll says she is 'exceedingly surprised at the news, and began now seriously to

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

reflect on my present circumstances . . .' She appears to reproach herself just before she marries him: 'Then it occurred to me, 'What an abominable creature am I! And how is this innocent gentleman going to be abused by me!' How little does he think, that having divorced a whore, he is throwing himself into the arms of another!'

Nevertheless, she marries him and after his death begins her criminal 'career'. As can be noted, many of her partial repentances dissipate into further scheming. Ironically, Moll's energies are too consumed in maneuvering herself out of a bad situation to worry seriously about saving her soul.

When Moll first comes to Newgate, she makes the following statement: 'Then I repented heartily of all my life past, but that repentance yielded me no satisfaction, no peace, no, not in the least, because, as I said to myself, it was repenting after the power of further sinning was taken away. I seemed not to mourn that I had committed such crimes, and for the fact, as it was an offense against God and my neighbour, but that I was to be punished for it. I was penitent, as I thought, not that I had sinned, but that I was to suffer and this took away all the comforts of my repentance in my own thoughts.' This passage clearly shows another shallow repentance by Moll. She fears not for her spiritual state but for her physical being.

Even during her stay in Newgate, Moll does not appear to really repent until quite some time after her talk with the pastor. And perhaps even then Moll is really worried about being hanged. The fact that she insists on securing her inheritance shows how the possession of earthly goods has deeper meaning for Moll than the acquisition of spiritual well-being. In fact, we see a meaningful contrast between Moll's character and that of the governess, a former crook who seemingly has truly repented.

The tears Moll sheds from time to time are merely an emotional release rather than a sign of true repentance, for even after shedding tears, her heart quickly hardens against her victims and she continues their victimization. This is shown when she steals the bundle from the burning house. Whatever regret Moll has is weak indeed: 'With all my sense of its being cruel and inhuman, I could never find in my heart to make any restitution.'

Vanity is another important theme of *Moll Flanders*. It prevails prominently in the first half of the story. It is the controlling idiom in the marriages and love life of Moll. Moll becomes a victim of her vanity when the elder brother seduces her. In a way, vanity is reflected in all her actions and behaviour. Another significant feature in Moll's attitude is her irrepressible greed, which impels her to go into prostitution, thievery, and moral disintegration. Moll considers people as commodities and her relationship with them is equivalent to business dealings. She is in love with the eldest brother but had no qualms in asking for money to marry his younger brother, Robin. When the eldest brother dies she says, 'I had preserved the elder brother's bonds to me to pay me £500, which he offered me for my consent to marry his brother; and this, with what I saved of the money he formerly gave me and about as much more by my husband, left me a widow with about £1200 in my pocket.'

She feels lucky to leave her children to the care of their grandparents and says, 'My two children were, indeed, taken happily off of my hands by my husband's father



and mother . . .’ She ‘selects’ husbands for herself after considering their wealth and their social class. She indulges herself in prostitution and steals money.

It seems that Defoe wants his readers to believe that Moll Flanders is a greedy person. He explains her first criminal transaction by saying ‘. . . I found there was a suit of child bed linen in it, very good and almost new, the lace very fine; there was a silvery porringer of a pint, a small silver mug and six spoons, with some other linen, a good smock, and three silk handkerchiefs, and in the mug, in a paper, 18s. 6d. in money.’ Many critics believe that Defoe did not try to explain Moll’s interior life. In this regard, Kenneth Rexroth says, ‘Moll Flanders has no interior life at all, and the material facts with which her character is constructed do not increase her individuality. They are chosen as facets of her typicality.’

Though in the Preface of the book, Defoe says that he is writing this book to ‘give the history of a moral life repented....’ yet the characterization of Moll is not in tandem with the statement. Moll seems to prosper in her life of crime, therefore, the message one gets from the book is that of using all possible ways to survive. This book is written in the context of capitalistically oriented England wherein spending life like a genteel woman might have meant poverty for Moll. Here Moll Flanders can be a representative of criminals of that time who were forced into criminal life due to their social conditions, as they were in the constant battle for survival which society imposed on the poor people.

### ***Moll Flanders: Characters***

#### **Moll Flanders**

She is the narrator as well as the central character of the novel. She is given this name by her criminal public when she leads her life as an expert thief. She is an orphan but her character portrayal shows that she lives an exciting life. She marries a number of times and spends her life as a highly successful thief before she takes ‘retirement’ from this work and repents her past actions.

#### **Moll’s Mother**

She is arrested for her criminal acts. When Moll marries her half-brother unknowingly, she meets her as her mother-in-law during the couple’s trip to Virginia. She also leaves an inheritance for Moll when she dies. The inheritance is claimed by Moll towards the end of the novel.

#### **The Elder Brother**

He loves Moll and Moll becomes his mistress under the impression that he intends to marry her.

#### **Robert**

He is the younger brother of ‘the elder brother’. He falls in love with Moll and marries her even though his family is not happy about their union. He dies after five years of marrying Moll.

## **NOTES**

NOTES

**The Draper**

The Draper is a tradesman and Moll's second husband. Due to his carelessness, he loses a lot of money and escapes to France as a fugitive.

**The Plantation Owner**

He marries Moll thinking that she is a wealthy woman. Both of them move to Virginia where he has his plantations. In Virginia, she comes to know that he is her half-brother. After this revelation, she leaves him and returns to England.

**The Gentleman**

He is a rich man whose wife is insane. Initially, he befriends Moll and later makes her his mistress. He keeps Moll for six years and leaves Moll after a religious experience.

**The Banker**

He is also a wealthy man and Moll agrees to marry him on a condition that he divorces his disloyal wife. Moll and the banker live happily but he dies after a few years.

**Jemy**

He is also called James and Moll refers to him as 'my Lancashire husband'. He is the only man whom Moll really loves. They marry each other under a mutual deception and then part ways. Eventually they meet again in prison and start a new life together in America.

**Humphrey**

He is Moll's son by the husband who was Moll's brother as well. She meets him with affection when she returns to America and he too helps her in settling down in America.

**Critical Analysis of *Moll Flanders***

*Moll Flanders* was written by Defoe during a period when there was still little precedent for the novel as a genre, which accordingly compelled him to his book by presenting it as a true story. He presents the novel as a journey of a person who, even though fictional, is an amalgam of real people who have experienced actual events in London during Defoe's time. He used the reputable norms of the rogue biography—a genre that portrayed the lives and adventures of real criminals in a semi-fictionalized, amusing and interesting ways. The novel represents the everyday necessities of a woman who does not have any long-term social foothold or financial security. It covers every factual detail which stands as an evidence to the truthfulness of the writing.

Defoe's language, which is represented through Moll throughout the novel, is simple and not literary. The prose is not allusive, decorative or rhetorical; rather, it is dependent on the combination of journalistic precision and a strong personal voice to articulate authentic effects.

In the Preface to the *Moll Flanders*, Defoe highlights that the novel is intended to communicate a serious moral, despite the fact that it talks in detail about the protagonist, Moll's immoral sexual and criminal adventures. Therefore, we see that moralizing is kept to a minimum, especially traditional Christian moralizing. Moll's

immoral actions do not have any actual consequences and her behaviour seems to be excused by the narrative as it refers to it as a material necessity. According to E.M. Forster, the book was 'a masterpiece of characterization'. It is also seen as an indication of the psychological shades and liveliness of her character, which makes the readers like Moll more than criticizing her.

Defoe is successful in making the reader develop an endless interest in Moll's character, despite her unethical lifestyle, which is clearly revealed. Through his vision, the reader can identify the personal qualities of self-dependence and perseverance, and also honours human labour, even when it takes the form of crime.

However, we see that Defoe's own attitude towards Moll's character and her adventures are not very clear. This is evident in his final judgment on the questions and conflicts which are raised by life story. Defoe's fascination with moral uncertainty and with the solitary life of an individual is strongly evident in the novel. Through her characterization, Moll Flanders bravely represents the kinds of intentions that come up to the surface in life due to hardship and compulsion. It also portrays her honesty and openness, which helps her discuss her own intentions. Therefore, the novel is successful in creating a conflict between absolute Christian moralities on the one hand and the conditional ethics of measurement and pragmatism that govern the business world, as well as the human struggle for survival, on the other.

While writing *Moll Flanders*, Defoe was conscious that he was writing within the twin framework of criminal biography and the autobiographical narrative. He had to condemn Moll's actions for moral purposes.

Moll is a victim of the society, showing the workings of social and economic compulsions, an unfortunate adventuress showing the workings of chance and random circumstances, a cool exponent of self interest, systematically trying to figure profit and loss in business, love and crime. Though an outcast from the middle-class, she carries many of its standards with her.

Defoe was also conscious of the process of exploitation that a single woman was subjected to in the early-half of the eighteenth century. Moll is neither a born criminal nor a whore, but is progressively transformed into one due to acute poverty. J.R. Hammod, in *A Defoe Companion*, argues that Defoe's attitude towards his female protagonist ultimately remains dubious, thus making the end seem unresolved. Through the various levels of life that Moll undergoes, her attitude seems totally utilitarian. She seems least bothered about the persons she frauds. It remains unclear whether Defoe actually approves or disapproves of such actions of her protagonist and how he expects his readers to react to such a character. It is definitely true that Moll possesses certain traits which are immediately identified by readers and many may admire them. She is tough, resourceful, a woman of spirit and full of determination. Yet, simultaneously, she possesses qualities which are less desirable. She is obsessed with money and status and is self-centered to the extent that she is concerned only with herself. One of the major setbacks for the novel is the small distance between the author and the narrator, that in having a woman preoccupied with accumulation of wealth as his central character, Defoe was simply extolling attitudes that he himself thought were exceptional. Moll is an extremely unattractive character. She is by her own admission, a liar, a thief, a petty criminal and a whore. Yet, Defoe vividly imbues

## NOTES

NOTES

her with life that the reader identifies as her quest for happiness, admiring her toughness and intelligence in the face of all misfortunes. The most remarkable feature of the novel is Defoe's ability to reach inside her mind, to see her emotions and thought process and convey these to the readers in a totally convincing way. The novel is dominated by her personality, her resourcefulness and resilience through the journey of life.

The gusto of Defoe's characterization of Moll indicates his mixed feelings about her. In a way, he was quite fond of her. He did not consider her truly evil like Jonathan Wilde, the corrupter of others. What triggers her repentance in Newgate is her mistaken notion that she has been responsible for her Lancashire husband's turning into a highwayman. Moll does not execute unnecessary harm, she is good-natured, and above all, unlike Roxana, she does not lose control of herself, except towards the end of her criminal character, when she cannot stop herself from stealing. For that lapse, Defoe punishes her severely with incarceration in Newgate.

Daniel Defoe's worries about Moll's reformation, along with his fondness for her, his feeling of superiority over his readers and dissatisfaction about his medium would account for curious ambivalence of the ending of *Moll Flanders*. It is as if with one hand he was giving what convention was required by his own consciousness, but on the other, he was secretly taking it away. By the sanction of his readers, he expects Moll to possess good fortune. Defoe is, in effect, implicating them as accomplices in his own secret hoax, a pretence that will not produce explicit action among readers but will deceive them from his financial gain and private amusement. He does not want his contemporary readers to recognize that the face of respectability, sufficient to win the approval of society, enables most of us rogues to conceal the feral nature of our instinctual drives behind abstractions like 'penitence', 'modernization' or 'sobriety'.

Moll has sympathetic consideration towards what society makes of orphans and her potent attack on criminal justice. Real eighteenth century criminals were indeed products of vicious circumstances and partly produced by the states' indifference to child welfare. As Moll's mother is transported to Virginia, her prospects are quite dreary. Newgate seems to be a place that haunts her throughout life. Defoe suggests that reformation in both these areas is absolutely necessary, making Moll his vehicle for articulate social criticism. For Defoe, Moll is not just a character; she is an embodiment of the early spirit of mercantile capitalism in England. She undertakes her second trip to America with Jemmy. Though the necessary self-revelation threatens grave social embarrassment, she cannot resist the desire to make herself known, a desire burning out of her curiosity to decipher how much money her mother had left for her. The human desire to establish identity is laced neatly within an economic motive. In Virginia, Moll establishes her own plantation, manages it and looks after Jemmy. Moll's hunt for respectability, her ability to translate every action into opportunity and her entrepreneurial skills make her a perfect embodiment of mercantile spirit of the eighteenth century. As Moll is both a character as well as an embodiment of an attitude, Defoe, at times forgets that she is a woman.

Daniel Defoe cannot rectify Moll's immoral actions and a certain degree of irony is directed towards her. At the same time, Defoe sympathetically brings out the psychological and social motivation for her slipping into a life of crime and prostitution,

but beyond that, she remains an embodiment of colonialism and capitalism in the contemporary world. On the other hand, it can be argued that critical debate concerning authorial intention regarding Moll Flanders is finally irrelevant and that Defoe is content simply to present a detailed account of the realities of a particular life, leaving his readers to formulate their own conclusions.

*Moll Flanders* is a moral fable, a parable on the theme of degeneration and redemption, or it has no moral and is simply an attempt to present a specimen human life. In the book, Moll arrives at her second career, thievery, after being dejected by the first (that of a wife). Very little is known about women's position in the eighteenth century society, but the general outlines are clear. Even Ian Watt, in his *The Rise of the Novel*, has notably contributed in drawing our attention to many problems existing in the contemporary society. All the evidence points to the conclusion that Moll is right that to be a maidservant in that period meant the end of any possibility that could conceivably be considered under the words of 'freedom' or 'independence'. Given Daniel Defoe's gift for reaching inside the personalities of his central character and his intention to present a human life in all its variety, it is difficult to see how else he could have told the story. What mattered was the panorama of Moll's life, her journey through innocence, maturity, degeneration and redemption, as well as the lessons she learnt from her experiences. He is drawing our attention when he writes in the Preface that:

'It is to be hoped that such readers will be much more pleased with the Moral, than the Fable; with the Application, than with the Relation, and with the End of the Writer, than with the life of the person written of.'

One can only applaud the heroism of Defoe's endeavor to depict a vibrant central figure, who embodies the competing tensions and contradictions of his age.

#### Significance of Newgate in *Moll Flanders*

Before 27 January 1722, there was probably no considerable literary work in the world which was based on an intelligent and sympathetic understanding of an unprotected woman in contemporary society. Vice and crime were not for scorn or mirth but for sympathetic concern to Defoe, who always perceived human experience with a social historian. Often, it was society itself which caused the original crime, even in an attempt to correct other wrongs. Moll Flanders, born in Newgate, is allowed to speak on behalf of the author who created her:

'...there are more thieves and rogues made by that one prison of Newgate than by all the clubs and societies of villains in the nation.'

On 20 May 1703, due to several political reasons, Daniel Defoe was arrested and taken to prison. His experience as a prisoner in Newgate almost entirely made a deep and lasting impression. His keen interest in the lives and minds of rogues and criminals develops from this period. Therefore, he could describe the feelings of Moll Flanders quite vividly when she is sent to Newgate.

In *Moll Flanders*, Newgate prison has great significance. Moll's greatest test and perhaps the most interesting sequence in the book is the Newgate episode. Throughout the crime sequence, Moll has said that Newgate is the dread alternative to crime, and when she is actually confronted with it, she writes her most impassioned paragraph:

## NOTES

NOTES

'...and I was carried to Newgate; that horrid Place! My very blood chills at the mention of its Name...the place that had so long expected me, and which with so much Art and Success I had so long avoided.'

This paragraph raises once more the question of literary personality and our perception of it as readers. Moll's fear of Newgate is perfectly plausible, if somewhat melodramatically rendered. One can already talk about its sources at the deepest levels of behavior. Infantile tantrum cooperates with and intensifies adult experience. However, such pathology is invoked at this moment by Moll's rhetoric rather than being sustained by action. We are asked as readers to imagine at this particular moment what Moll is confronted with. The reality of Newgate with such limitations is a means towards structural end rather than an end in itself. This emotional moment establishes a personal depth to Moll's fears which is parallel to the structural depth of experience at Newgate in relation to other experiences in the book. Moll's fear is an indicator and an intensifier of the central structural opposition of the book, which emerges here at its clearest. Newgate is simply pure compulsive circumstance, a place where the self is so restricted and oppressed that it loses all independence and becomes habituated to an environment which embodies personal destruction. It is not only that Newgate is 'an Emblem of Hell itself,' its inhabitants are changed to part of the prison. The most horrible implication of all is that they are brought to the point of accepting death. Moll's defeat lies in her unprecedented transformation by these oppressive circumstances into something that she does not wish to be:

'I was become a mere Newgate bird ...'

Such a clear and coldly abstract emphasis on metamorphosis and a kind of thorough amnesia of the self does not serve probability. The radical break with the past may be a deliberate violation of the psychological continuity. This episode originally invoked power and meaning.

The prison is a concrete embodiment of social restrictions, unlike anything Moll has had to deal with in its effective concreteness, its real and effective exemplification of control that the society aspires to exercise over the self. Yet, even Newgate can hardly be graphically rendered. Dickens' prisons and confining houses along with Defoe's Newgate are barely presented as real places. Defoe's austere style and almost abstract imagination are interested primarily in relationships rather than images. What matters about Newgate is not its concrete existence as a wretched habitation but its power to suppress and transfer self. Therefore, Newgate is primarily an irresistible social fact and distilled a compulsion that escaped Moll by instinct and luck as a child in Colchester, and which now gathers its forces for one great assault on her extraordinary freedom. Newgate violates the dialectic we have seen operating in the narrative by resisting the energies of the self. If Newgate did not appear in this dehumanizing form, it would become imperative for the storyteller to invent it.

Moll's recovery is a matter of re-establishing contact with the world outside the prison. It is about re-entering relationships in which she can exercise her being in all its craft and power. The sincerity of Moll's repentance in Newgate need not be debated. It is an effective means for restoring her consciousness and underlining the gravity of her situation. It proves the perspective that is otherwise fatally lacking in Newgate.

Three things are evident from the Newgate episode. First, Moll's progress is not simply from fear to moral stupidity to repentance. Such a bold moral summary neglects the actual strategy of the narrative, the implication of Moll's language (a mixture of jargon of repentance and the familiar means of self-analytical summarizing that is her means of self-assertion and the context of her career. Moll's progress is from total helplessness to relative freedom. Secondly, that progress is a matter of re-entering relationships with Jemmy and the governess. The self can only be aware of itself as such when it sees itself operating upon others, and Moll's narrative revives her by granting her responsibility of sorts for Jemmy's career and responsibility for her governess' frantic spasms of repentance. With those relationships in hand, Moll is powerful and secret once more. The third implication of the Newgate sequence is the result of the former two. The entire episode is the clearest example in the story regarding the manner in which Moll Flanders enacts the novelistic solution for the problem of individual consciousness. The relative freedom that Moll achieves by virtue of her narrative arrangements in the face of the ultimate compulsion of the prison and death represents, in dramatic terms, a solution to the problem of survival in a dramatic society. *Moll Flanders* is part of the century's expanding literature of privacy. From the real journals to fictional memoirs of private life, the problem that the writers of the period face repeatedly is the alignment of the self and the world. What can clearly be asserted is that *Moll Flanders* is clearly an effort to tell a story in which the private self, by means of various strategies, preserves itself without falsifying the destructive truth of public experience.

### Gender in *Moll Flanders*

A piece of fiction composed by a male with a female protagonist calls for a deeper look into the role of gender. Moll Flanders, during the course of her life, interacts with numerous men and each of her associations depicts her performing the role as expected by her contemporary society. Sexual differences, instead of being accepted as natural, actually form the basis of differentiation. Moll's social position as well as her gender makes her a vulnerable victim of life. Despite her humble origins and orphan existence, Moll even for once, does not lose her indomitable spirit to lead the world as she wishes. She is abused by both men and women alike, physically as well as mentally. Not even once is she allowed to forget her unequal positioning.

The eighteenth century notion of womanhood was decorated with regressive moral codes and was dictated by conduct books. Women were most often than not reserved for the sheltered domesticity and being adorned as wall flowers. Women were distanced from the outside world and never participated in the 'rational' world of men. They were associated with emotions or attitudes which were devoid of reason. Moll, due to her disadvantageous position, was not able to pitch herself for any worldly professional role. Even her limited education of needlework and lady-like conduct made her a probable marriage-worthy candidate, limiting her options for a career.

The eighteenth century society was conscious of the power of sexuality. However, sexuality was a matter of worth when it was accompanied by other aspects like class or politics. Moll is aware of her physical appeal. Her attractiveness plays a pivotal role in getting male attention, but sooner or later, she is held responsible for such unceremonious illicit alliances. Not just outsiders, but even men dub her as

## NOTES

**NOTES**

responsible for their downfall. Moll's economically backward status makes her an easy prey for the socially affluent masculine power. Yet, at the same time her use of her sexual power is triggered by her financial distress, which makes it imperative for her to earn a livelihood by any means possible. Moll tightropes between the extremes of being morally incorrect, and yet, being extremely liberated at the same time. Though Defoe expects his audience to sympathize with his female protagonist for her transgressions, one cannot deny that within these realms of sympathy he expects the readers to realize that Moll is also consciously breaking conventions in her way. Moll's actions also highlights the dichotomous position that the middle class (which was emerging recently) held in trying to earn social acceptability. Though, as we reach the end of the book, we realize that Moll is no longer the medium or symbol of change. With the passage of time, Moll seems to have acquired her desired position in the society, renouncing her radical self and accepting a life of dormancy, where she is able to project herself as a respectable lady, associating herself with the money-making middle class.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

3. Name some of the fictional works of Daniel Defoe.
4. Who takes care of Moll in her growing years?
5. Which is the most recurring theme in Moll Flanders?
6. How does Moll come to know that 'the plantation owner' is her half-brother?

**ACTIVITY**

Select any other novel by Daniel Defoe and study it. What are the comparisons you can draw with Defoe's writing of Moll Flanders?



## 2.4 JANE AUSTEN: EMMA

Jane Austen was the greatest of all novelists of manners who raised the genre of novel to a new level of art. She produced some of the greatest novels in history with her quietly penetrating vision of man, her ironic awareness of the claims of personal morality and those of social and economic propriety, her polished and controlled wit and her steady moral assessment of the nature of human relationships.

Since her childhood, she was encouraged to write and pen down her ideas. Her life in the midst of the English country provided her with the opportunity to learn about the world of social pretensions and ambition, of dance balls and visits, and speculations about marrying.

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 at the church house in Hampshire. She was the seventh child of George Austen and Cassandra. She was educated mainly at home. She was extremely close to her elder sister, Cassandra. She read extensively using her father's library and got material from there in order to write short satirical

sketches when she was a child. She had begun writing at an early age though only for her family circle. She found the raw materials for her novels in her daily routine, visits, shopping, sewing, gossip and other trivial matters. The world, which her books present to us, is essentially the 18th century world in its habits, tastes and appearances.

Sometime around Jane's pre-adolescence phase, she and Cassandra were sent to boarding school so that they could gain more concrete and formal knowledge. Unfortunately, both Jane and Cassandra fell victim to typhus, and it seemed impossible for Jane to recuperate back at that time. Post recovery, the sisters spent some more time attending school, but their education was unexpectedly terminated as the family underwent severe financial crisis. Due to this, the sisters returned home and resided with their family.

She did not gain her due as a writer during her own time. But Austen's tongue-in-cheek take on the amorous lives of the landed gentry found its due popularity only after 1869. Her stature as a writer of substance evolved more prominently in the twentieth century. Her popular novels like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park* hold great significance as they are literary classics, bringing about a seamless blending of romance and realism of the Victorian Age. The leading characters of her novels were women of fine upbringing and contemporary views. Since her novels did not conform to the Victorian and Romantic expectations that strong emotions need to be authenticated by a superfluous display of colour and sound in the writings, nineteenth century audiences and critics usually preferred the works of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens. Although her novels were re-published in England in the 1830s and remained continual sellers, they were not able to gain the privilege of becoming bestsellers.

Jane Austen was forever attracted towards stories. Her fascination for them initiated her to write in notebooks in the early stages of her writing career. During the 1790s, when Jane was in her adolescence, she composed her novel *Love and Freindship*. It was a collection of a parody of amorous letters which were written with the intention to sketch the genre of romantic fiction. This work set the tone for her later writing. It clearly displayed Jane Austen's dislike for an excessive romantic attitude or sensibility. The year after completion of *Love and Freindship*, Jane wrote *The History of England*. It was another parody which ridiculed the historical writing. This thirty-four page work also contained illustrations sketched by her sister Cassandra. These notebooks of Jane Austen, containing her short compositions, poems, novels and dramas are collectively called Jane's *Juvenilia*.

Jane's youth was spent trying to help maintain her family. She also played the piano and like a good Christian, was a regular at Church. She socialized with the people in her neighbourhood as well. She was an accomplished dancer and regularly read aloud to her family during the evening hours. In the meantime, she kept honing her writing skills and developing her distinctive style. In her youth, she wrote *Lady Susan*, a more accomplished work than her previous attempts. This was also an epistolary story which dealt with the life of a woman who knew how to manipulate situations to suit her purposes by using her charm, intelligence and sexuality. She also started composing *Elinor and Marianne*, another epistolary effort, which was later published as one of her famous masterpieces, *Sense and Sensibility*.

## NOTES

NOTES



Fig. 2.2 Jane Austen

Jane Austen's first three novels fetched her both commercial as well as critical success, which she was able to experience in her lifetime. But it was only after her demise that her brother revealed to the world that his sister was an author of high repute and immense talent by publishing her later works.

Jane Austen is definitely one of the most popular authors of our times, her novels genuinely liked and widely read by all. She has been a darling of both critics and readers alike.

Jane Austen did for the English novel precisely what the Lake poets did for English poetry. One of the ways in which Jane Austen is different from other eighteenth century novelists is that she does not share their standard picaresque form and comic epic in prose. On the contrary, she isolated herself from the elements of mock-heroic and picaresque, which were the hallmarks of the eighteenth century novel. The primacy of emotion, preference for the marriage of love, urges for adventure, attraction for the uncommon, and above all, the superiority of sensibility in the novels of Jane Austen are definitely romantic traits. All of Austen's major novels are dominated by the female protagonists and are primarily concerned with the twin themes of love and marriage.

Jane Austen stays on the middle ground between the extremes of sense and sensibility, which constitutes one of the shades on the spectrum of Romanticism. Her concern with the inner life of her characters rather than their external interests is what stands out conspicuously in her novels. Beneath the outward pursuit of marriage, security and status, the driving force in her female protagonists is always the inner, human urge for a delicate life of sense and emotion as well as peace and harmony.

In the year 2002, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) conducted a poll where she was honoured with the seventieth position on a list of '100 most famous Britons of all time'. Scholars of the 1920s have contributed immensely towards

'rediscovering' Austen as a great literary figure and re-establishing her popularity. The fans of Jane Austen prefer to call themselves 'The Janeites'. The widespread popularity of her writing in the modern period is established from the fact that her work has been adapted into films and TV programmes. In the year 2007, author David Lassman submitted various manuscripts of Jane Austen with very few modifications under a disguised name to some publishing houses. He was shocked to discover that all the manuscripts were rejected. He wrote this experience in one of his articles called 'Rejecting Jane'. This article was a tribute to the author who was an unbeatable champion of wit and humour.

In July 1809, the women of the Austen house moved back to Hampshire countryside when their brother Edward offered them a permanent home at his Chawton Estate. The place provided a perfect setting for Jane Austen to write. She stayed in this house for seven and a half years and these years turned out to be a phase of intense literary activity for her. Between 1811 and 1813, she revised *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and published them. *Mansfield Park* was published in 1814 and *Emma* in 1816 and she completed *Persuasion* (which was published together with *Northanger Abbey* in 1818, the year after her death). All her novels were said to be written 'By a Lady'. She died on 18 July 1817 when she was 41 years old. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Let us list out some of the popular novels by Jane Austen:

- *Sense and Sensibility* – Published in 1811, it was Austen's first published novel. The novel is about Eleanor and Marianne, two daughters of Mr. Dashwood, who encounter the sense and sensibility of life and love through the course of the novel.
- *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) – The novel was first published in 1813. The story follows the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet as she deals with issues of etiquettes and marriage in the society of the 19th-century England.
- *Mansfield Park* (1814) – *Mansfield Park* was written when Austen was at Chawton Cottage.
- *Northanger Abbey* (1818, posthumous) – At first, the novel was called *Susan*. It was written in 1798–99. Austen revised it in 1803 and sold it to a London bookseller for £10. The publisher decided not to publish the novel. In 1817, the bookseller sold it back to Henry Austen, Jane Austen's brother for £10 not knowing the popularity of the author at that time. The novel was further revised and was published in 1818.
- *Persuasion* (1818, posthumous) – *Persuasion* is another novel by Jane Austen that was published after her death.

**Short fiction written by Jane Austen:**

- *Lady Susan* (1794, 1805)

**Unfinished fiction written by Jane Austen:**

- *The Watsons* (1804)
- *Sanditon* (1817)

## NOTES

NOTES

**Other works by Jane Austen:**

- *Sir Charles Grandison* (adapted play) (1793, 1800)
- *Plan of a Novel* (1815)
- *Poems* (1796–1817)
- *Prayers* (1796–1817)
- *Letters* (1796–1817)

**Juvenilia — Volume the First (1787–1793)**

- *Frederic & Elfrida*
- *Jack & Alice*
- *Edgar & Emma*
- *Henry and Eliza*
- *The Adventures of Mr. Harley*
- *Sir William Mountague*
- *Memoirs of Mr. Clifford*
- *The Beautifull Cassandra*
- *Amelia Webster*
- *The Visit*
- *The Mystery*
- *The Three Sisters*
- *A beautiful description*
- *The generous Curate*
- *Ode to Pity*

**Juvenilia — Volume the Second (1787–1793)**

- *Love and Freindship*
- *Lesley Castle*
- *The History of England*
- *A Collection of Letters*
- *The Female Philosopher*
- *The First Act of a Comedy*
- *A Letter from a Young Lady*
- *A Tour through Wales*
- *A Tale*

**Juvenilia — Volume the Third (1787–1793)**

- *Evelyn*
- *Catharine, or the Bower*

Now, let us discuss *Emma* by Jane Austen in detail.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The earliest recorded use of the word 'baseball' in an English novel is in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* written in 1798-1799.

### NOTES

#### **Emma: Summary**

The twenty year old protagonist Emma is a resident of the village of Highbury. Although she is convinced that she herself will never marry, she imagines herself to be naturally endowed with the ability to conjure love matches. She is thrilled with the successful matchmaking between her governess and Mr. Weston, a widower.

Emma takes up the responsibility to find a suitable match for Harriet Smith. The parentage of Harriet is not known. However, Emma believes that Harriet deserves to be a gentleman's wife and asks her friend to consider Mr. Elton for marriage, who is the village vicar. Harriet is inclined towards Robert Martin, a well-to-do farmer, but Emma convinces Harriet to reject his marriage proposal. Due to continuous encouragement by Emma, Harriet starts to develop feelings for Mr. Elton. The situation becomes ironical when Emma fails to realize that Elton is inclined towards her and not Harriet. Emma feels shocked when she realizes that she is losing touch with the reality of life due to her obsession with matchmaking.

Mr. Knightley, Emma's brother-in-law and her good friend, critically observes Emma's matchmaking efforts. He considers Mr. Martin as a worthy match for Harriet. Mr. Knightley and Emma quarrel with each other over the latter's meddling role in Harriet's matchmaking. Mr. Knightley proves to be a wise person in this quarrel.

During a conversation with Elton, Emma's implication that Harriet is his equal offends him and he leaves for the town of Bath and immediately marries a girl there. Emma tries to comfort her friend. Emma then speculates about Mr. Weston's son, Frank Churchill, who is expected to visit Highbury. Frank is raised by his aunt and uncle in London and they have taken him as their heir as well. He has not visited his father for a long time. Mr. Knightley is suspicious towards Frank and the incident of Frank's rushing back to London just to have his haircut makes him more suspicious towards him. On the other hand, Emma finds Frank charming and feels that he is inclined towards her. She decides to discourage these charms but ends up flirting with the young man. Emma meets Jane Fairfax, another visitor to Highbury. Jane is beautiful but Emma does not like her. Mr. Knightley defends Jane saying that she deserves empathy because she does not have an independent fortune and might have to leave home to work as a governess. According to Mrs. Weston, Mr. Knightley's defence is due to his romantic feelings towards Jane but Emma opposes this opinion. Everyone feels that Frank and Emma are inclined towards each other but Emma dismisses Frank as a prospective match for her and sees him as a suitor for Harriet.

At a village ball, Knightley offers to dance with Harriet because she was humiliated by Mr. Elton and his new wife. This kindheartedness of Knightley helps him earn Emma's approval. The next day, Frank saves Harriet from Gypsy beggars. When Harriet shares with Emma that she is in love with a man who is above her social class, Emma thinks that she is talking about Frank. Knightley suspects that

## NOTES

Frank and Jane are inclined towards each other and he tries to warn Emma. Emma feels amused by Knightley's implication and laughs at him. She again flirts with Frank and insults Jane's aunt, Miss Bates, who is a kindhearted spinster. Knightley reprimands Emma for this action.

Everyone comes to know that Frank has lost his aunt. This event paves the path for the unfolding of the secret that Frank and Jane have been secretly engaged and he flirted with Emma in order to conceal his engagement with Jane. With his uncle's approval, Frank later marries Jane.

Emma feels worried about Harriet but comes to know that Harriet is in love with Knightley, not Frank. Harriet believes that Knightley also loves her. Emma feels sad with this revelation and her sadness on this revelation makes her realize that she is in love with Knightley. After this, Emma expects that Knightley would tell her that he loves Harriet but to her joy, Knightley declares his love for Emma. Robert Martin proposes to Harriet and she accepts his offer. The novel ends with the marriage of Emma and Mr. Knightley and that of Harriet and Mr. Martin.

### **Emma: Themes**

*Emma* is the story of a girl who is clever as well as rich. She genuinely desires to change the lives of her social inferiors as well as her equals. Her overconfidence and her desire to change people's lives make her go through some shocks, which later help her achieve a higher degree of self-knowledge. This self-realization helps her find her true love, Mr. Knightley, who is the brother of her elder sister's husband.

Her self-deception and haughtiness sometimes turns her into a comic figure. It is through her that the theme of self-deception is presented in the novel. In spite of this, she does not lose the sympathy of her readers. In the opening line, Austen explains: 'Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.'

There are a number of traps for Emma's vanity and self-importance throughout the novel and she falls into each one of them. She decides to protect Harriet Smith, 'the natural daughter of somebody', and decides to find a suitable match for her. In this attempt, she goes to the extent of breaking off Harriet's incipient love affair with Mr. Martin, a worthy and suitable match for her. Emma feels that Mr. Elton is a more suitable match for Harriet but Mr. Elton, a foolish young man, misunderstands Emma's behaviour and proposes to her.

In her second attempt to marry off Harriet, Emma gets involved in serious trouble. She tries to get Harriet interested in Frank Churchill. Harriet, misunderstanding Emma's elegant hints, thinks she is referring to Mr. Knightley and falls in love with him. It is a shock for Emma when Harriet makes clear that she would not allow anyone to marry Mr. Knightley but herself. The moral pattern is carefully woven and Emma's attempt to play God involves her in a variety of situations, which contribute to her self-knowledge in the end. Emma wants Frank Churchill to marry Harriet but she is also attracted to him. There is an interesting tension between her admiration for his vitality and wit and her half-realized love for Mr. Knightley 'one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse'. Mr. Knightley is a wealthy landowner,

around seventeen years older than Emma. He is generous, kind to his tenants, intolerant towards deceit and cruelty and does not have superficial gaiety like Frank Churchill.

While Emma is scheming for Frank and Harriet's match, Mr. Knightley feels that she herself is falling in love with Frank. The situation is enriched with ironies with the introduction of Jane Fairfax. Jane is a foil for Emma; she has no fortune but is equally talented and at music, even more talented than Emma. This fact perhaps raises an unconscious jealousy in Emma. Emma amuses herself by hinting and speculating about Jane's relationship with Mr. Dixon and joking about it with Frank. It appears that Frank and Emma make fun of Jane. The fun is not wholly innocent on Emma's part; there is an element of jealousy in it if not spite. Further, Jane's lack of fortune means that if she does not marry soon she will have to take up a position as a governess and the horrors and humiliation of that kind of work are made abundantly evident through Mrs. Elton's insufferably patronizing offers to help her in getting a job. Emma therefore has no moral right to laugh either at Jane or at her garrulous aunt, a character on whom Emma vents a momentary irritation and Mr. Knightley castigates Emma for this. It emerges at last that the relationship between Jane and Mr. Dixon, which Emma has conjured up and about which she has joked so often with Frank, has no basis and Jane and Frank are secretly engaged. Emma suddenly realizes that she is and has been a dupe. At every point, Emma's wit and knowingness leads to her humiliation but Mr. Knightley stands by her. The exploration of different kinds of selfishness as well as the sharply ironic character sketches of characters like the Eltons and Miss Bates gives the novel real depth underneath the surface brilliance.

The character of Emma's father, whose concern for other people is a way of implementing a profound selfishness, opens and closes the book. The novel symbolizes the ambiguities of selfishness, which is one of the themes of this novel. The moral pattern is spelled out more clearly in *Emma* than in *Pride and Prejudice*, but in other respects, it is a less sharply drawn novel, standing midway with respect to subtlety and complexity between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*.

In the early 19th century, the status of women was defined in terms of their accomplishments that would make them a suitable 'property' to get married and acceptance of marriage proposal by a person of high social status. Every mother desired to marry off their daughters in wealthy families because they saw this as the shortest and surest way to climb the social ladder. The bride's family would choose a suitable match for her on the basis of the family's reputation and their inheritance. It was the only area laid open by society for women to exercise their choice and freedom and feel the sense of empowerment on getting the right groom. The entire structure of the novel *Emma* is based on the theme of marriage.

There is a significant point raised in the novel. The ritual of marriage should be consummated between families of equal social status only then would they be successful otherwise they become void. Mr. Weston's marriage to Miss Churchill was not successful and suffered many hardships. On the other hand, his marriage to Mrs. Weston, shown in the beginning of the novel, is quite successful as both the families stand on equal footing. Mrs. Weston was a governess before marriage and was more than happy to be rescued from it. Emma's fruitless attempts to consummate the marriage of the otherwise incompatible Harriet and Mr. Elton form another point. She compels Harriet to reject her feelings for Robert Martin who would have proved

## NOTES



## NOTES

a suitable match for Harriet. Martin hails from the family of tradesmen so he would have been a suitable match for Harriet. Frank Churchill's engagement to Jane Fairfax is a relationship in question. The marriage of Emma with Mr. Knightly is successful because they have a similar social status, compatibility and temperament.

During this period, the privileges given to women were shockingly limited. If she had the freedom to go out, it was not for work but for social visits, charity visits or music and art. The limitation of social space for women hampered their development of personality. There was little room to display their intellectual abilities. Their entire energies and capabilities were directed towards fulfillment of marital aims. The only active work they could do was getting the right kind of marriage proposal, preparing for the marriage and working towards successful consummation of it. Quiet shockingly, there were characters like Jane Fairfax, who saw marriage as a route to be a woman of fortune without undergoing the drudgery of working for it. For example, Jane compared the work of governess to slave trade.

Another significant feature of the novel is the way in which it brings forth the idiosyncrasies of personal prejudices of the characters. Thus, the novel also deals with the theme of prejudices of people. Emma guides Mr. Elton in pursuing his love because she thinks that he is in love with Harriet. Meanwhile, Mr. Elton misunderstands her concern and proposes to her. Emma and Mr. Elton's personal prejudices blind them to the real situation. Both are them were oblivious to each other's feelings and desires. Emma tries to build a relationship between Harriet and Frank but it takes a turn when Harriet develops desires for Mr. Knightley. Frank's desire to use Emma as a screen for his real preference makes him believe that Emma is aware of the relationship between him and Jane. A detached narrator can see that the personal prejudices of characters create a lot of misunderstandings. It creates a lot of humour and a dramatic space for the interplay of irony.

Does that mean that interactions among the characters on various platforms of social propriety like the dance balls, music and art circles etc. should be minimized or eliminated as they give rise to a lot of misunderstanding and confusion? According to Austen, elimination is not the answer but restraint should be practiced. She says that the emphasis should be on clear communication and open expression among the interacting partners. Austen says that there should be certain codes of communication and verbal decency. The bantering of Emma is misleading because it is full of gregariousness and vanity. She hurts Miss Bates and hates Jane in an indiscreet fashion. Mr. Elton has a flimsy, ostentatious and insincere style of praising people. Frank also tells people what they want to hear. Mr. Knightley proves right in being suspicious of Frank's integrity.

### **Emma: Characters**

#### **Emma**

In the opening lines, she is described as 'handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition,' Emma 'had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.' However, the narrator also tells us that Emma possesses 'the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself.'

## NOTES

Emma's obstinacy produces many conflicts in the novel. In the novel, Emma makes three major mistakes. First, she tries to help Harriet marry a gentleman when Harriet's social position commands that the farmer, who loves her, is best suited to her. Second, she flirts with Frank Churchill even though she does not have any intention to marry him and makes unfair comments about Jane Fairfax. Third, she claims that is committed to staying single and does not realize her own feelings that she is in love with Mr. Knightley and wants to marry him. These mistakes threaten Harriet's happiness, make Emma embarrassed and create problems in Emma's path to find her true love.

Although the omniscient narrator speaks in the third person yet many events are observed through Emma's point of view. This narrative strategy forces the readers to sympathize with Emma and make ironic judgment on her behaviour. It also makes Emma a multidimensional character.

Emma is compared implicitly with other women in the novel. This allows the readers to assess her character. There are a lot of similarities between Jane and Emma but the fact that Jane is not financially independent highlights Emma's privileged nature. Mrs. Elton is independent like Emma but the former's crude behaviour and pride forces the readers to observe Emma's refined nature. Emma's sister, Isabella, is described as a stereotypical traditional woman who is tender and entirely devoted to and dependent on her family. The narrator seems to prefer Emma's independence to her sister's traditional outlook.

### **Mr. Knightley**

In the novel, Mr. Knightley is a model of good sense. Right from the beginning of the novel, we find him correcting the excesses and mistakes of people around him. He is honest but knows where to temper his honesty with diplomacy and compassion. Readers find him a trustworthy person who can provide them the accurate assessment of the other characters' behaviour. He is compassionate and protective towards women. He is considerate towards Jane, Harriet, and Miss Bates and helps them as well.

Knightley's love for Emma is the only emotion, which he is not able to handle properly. He decides that Frank is not a good person even before meeting him. Gradually, the unfolding of the events reveals that he is jealous of his 'rival'. When Knightley notices that Emma is a bit inclined towards Frank, he acts impulsively and leaves for London. When he comes back, he declares his love for Emma in an uncontrollable manner. However, this fact does not make him a failure but humanizes his character.

Knightley is also compared implicitly with various male members of his community. His brother, Mr. John Knightley is clear-sightedness but not kindhearted and tactful like him. Both Frank and Knightley are intelligent, observant, affectionate and vibrant; but Frank uses his intelligence to conceal his true emotions and please others, whereas Knightley uses his intelligence to correct the excesses and mistakes of people around him.

## NOTES

### **Frank Churchill**

Frank Churchill is known for his attractive personality. He uses Emma as a screen to hide his secret engagement with Jane. He flirts with Emma even though he does not love her. He says what people want to hear in order to please them.

### **Jane Fairfax**

Jane is a foil for Emma. The fact that she is not financially independent highlights Emma's privileged nature. She has no fortune but is equally talented and at music more talented than Emma. She sees marriage as a route to be a woman of fortune without undergoing the drudgery of a working woman. Her lack of fortune means that if she does not marry soon she will have to take up a position as a governess. She compares the work of governess to slave trade.

### **Harriet Smith**

She is Emma's friend in the novel. Emma takes the responsibility to find a match for her. In the beginning of the novel, Harriet is believed to be an illegitimate child though her parentage is not known. It is only at the end of the novel that we come to know that she is a daughter of a well-to-do tradesman. Harriet is easily led by others; for instance, she refuses to marry Robert Martin just because Emma feels that he is not a 'gentleman' and is beneath her in social status. She is a catalyst through which Emma's misguided matchmaking attempts are depicted in the novel. It is because of her attraction towards Mr. Knightley that makes Emma realize that she loves Mr. Knightley. At the end of the novel, Emma supports Harriet's desire to marry Mr. Martin.

### **Philip Elton**

He is a good-looking young vicar. Emma feels that he is a suitable match for Harriet. However, the situation becomes ironical when Emma comes to know that he is inclined towards her and not Harriet. Emma's implied remark that Harriet is his equal offends him and he quickly rushes to Bath and marries another girl there.

### **Augusta Elton**

She is Philip Elton's wife. She is wealthy but a dominant and ostentatious woman who always tries to seek people's attention. Emma does not approve of her behaviour and dislikes her. She patronizes Jane Fairfax in the novel.

### **Mrs. Anne Weston**

Formerly known as Miss Taylor, she was Emma's governess for 16 years before she marries Mr. Weston due to Emma's matchmaking attempts. She admires and adores Emma and remains her confidante throughout the novel. She also acts as her surrogate mother.

### **Mr. Weston**

He marries Miss Taylor who was Emma's governess. He is Frank Churchill's father by his first marriage. In the novel, he is shown as a cheerful man who loves socializing.

### Isabella

She is Emma's elder sister and John Knightley's wife. In the novel, she is shown as a traditional girl who spends most of the time in taking care of her house and her children.

### John Knightley

He is George Knightley's younger brother and Isabella's husband. He indulges in visits and vacations as per his family's wishes. However, he personally prefers to stay at home.

### NOTES

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Where did Austen get 'raw material' for her novels?
8. What offends Elton when he talks to Emma?
9. What is Emma's major flaw?

## 2.5 SUMMARY

- Daniel Defoe was one of the precursors of the modern novel. He wrote a number of articles, biographies, ghost stories, journals, memoirs, satires, and essays on religion, projects, reform and trade. All these forms were written in a picaresque style with minutest of details. The details given in these writings made them look like true chronicles. He was born in a family of dissenters in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, London. Initially, Defoe was a commission agent and traded in a wide range of goods including stockings, wine, tobacco, and oysters. He was so interested in trade and economics that he wrote a number of essays and pamphlets on economic theories, which were ahead for his time. He was up in arms against catholic king James II. He had to flee to London to escape gallows. Some of his popular writings include *Captain Singleton*, 1720, *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack* 1722, *Roxana*, 1724 and *Captain George Carlton*, 1728.
- *Moll Flanders* is an autobiography of a prostitute. In the beginning of the novel, Moll Flanders' mother is shown to have been convicted. Moll Flanders is reared and brought up until adolescence by a godly foster mother. She grows into a beautiful girl and a gentleman proposes to her. After some time, he abandons her and she is forced to marry his younger brother. His younger brother also dies few years later. She then marries a draper who soon flees from the country. Once again, she marries and moves to America. After some time, when she comes to know that her husband is her half-brother, she leaves him and returns to England. After leaving him, she meets a man whose wife is insane and she becomes his mistress. After a religious experience, the man leaves Moll. Then, a banker whose wife has been disloyal to him, proposes to her. She accepts his proposal on the condition that he divorce his wife. In the meantime, she marries a 'rich' man in Lancashire. Later on, she comes to know that the 'rich' man lied to her about his wealth; she leaves him and goes back to the banker. She comes

## NOTES

to know that he has divorced his wife and they marry each other. He also dies after a few years. Then, she becomes a thief and is imprisoned after some time. In prison, she reunites with her Lancashire husband, who has also been imprisoned. Both of them manage to get their sentences reduced and they move to the colonies. In colonies, they become plantation owners. In America, Moll finds her brother/husband and her son and claims the property, which her mother had left for her. At the end, she along with her Lancashire husband returns to England, prosperous and repentant.

- Jane Austen produced some of the greatest novels in history with her quietly penetrating vision of man. She was born on 16 December 1775 at the church house in Hampshire and was the seventh child of George Austen and Cassandra. Since her childhood, Jane was encouraged to write and pen down her ideas. She read extensively using her father's library and got material from there in order to write short satirical sketches when she was a child. She found the raw materials for her novels in her daily routine, visits, shopping, sewing, gossip and other trivial matters. The world, which her books present to us, is essentially the 18th century world in its habits, taste and appearances. In July 1809, the women of Austen house moved back to Hampshire countryside when their brother Edward offered them a permanent home in his Chawton Estate. The place provided a perfect setting for Jane Austen to write. She stayed in this house for seven and a half years and wrote many novels during this period. She died on 18 July 1817 when she was 41 years old.
- Emma is a resident of the village of Highbury. Although she is convinced that she herself will never marry, she imagines herself to be naturally endowed with the ability to conjure love matches. Emma takes up the responsibility to find a suitable match for Harriet Smith. Emma believes that Harriet deserves to be a gentleman's wife and asks her friend to consider Mr. Elton for marriage. Harriet is inclined towards Robert Martin but Emma convinces Harriet to reject his marriage proposal. Mr. Knightley considers Mr. Martin as a worthy match for Harriet. Mr. Knightley and Emma quarrel with each other over the latter's meddling role in Harriet's matchmaking. During a conversation with Elton, Emma's implication that Harriet is his equal offends him and he leaves for the town of Bath. Emma tries to comfort her friend. Emma then speculates about Mr. Weston's son, Frank Churchill. Mr. Knightley is suspicious towards Frank but Emma finds Frank charming and feels that he is inclined towards her. Emma meets Jane Fairfax, another visitor to the Highbury. Everyone feels that Frank and Emma are inclined towards each other but Emma dismisses Frank as a prospective match for her and sees him as a suitor for Harriet. Everyone comes to know that Frank has lost his aunt. This event unfolds that Frank and Jane have been secretly engaged and he flirted with Emma in order to conceal his engagement with Jane. With his uncle's approval, Frank later marries Jane. Emma comes to know that Harriet is in love with Knightley. Harriet believes that Knightley also loves her. Emma feels sad with this revelation. After this, Emma expects that Knightley would tell her that he loves Harriet but to her joy, Knightley declares his love for Emma. Robert Martin proposes to Harriet. The novel ends with the marriage of Emma and Mr. Knightley and that of Harriet and Mr. Martin.

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## 2.6 KEY TERMS

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- **Picturesque:** It is an aesthetic ideal introduced into English cultural debate in 1782 by William Gilpin in *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770*, a practical book which instructed England's leisure travelers to examine 'the face of a country by the rules of picturesque beauty'.
- **Modern novel:** It is a long prose narrative that describes fictional characters and events in the form of a sequential story, usually.

## NOTES

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## 2.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728), John Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* (1682) and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) are also the most well known mock epic poems of that period.
2. He wrote in a satirical vein used mainly in the Augustan Age. He was a pioneer of the down-to-earth fiction writing in the eighteenth century.
3. Some of the fictional works of Daniel Defoe are *Robinson Crusoe*, *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, *Roxana*, and *Captain George Carlton*.
4. A kind woman takes care of Moll as her foster mother during her growing years.
5. The most recurring theme in *Moll Flanders* is repentance.
6. When Moll and the plantation owner move to Virginia, she meets her mother there and comes to know that he is her half-brother.
7. Austen found the raw materials for her novels in her daily routine, visits, shopping, sewing, gossip and other trivial matters.
8. Emma's implication that Harriet is his equal offends Elton.
9. Emma's major flaw is that she imagines herself to be naturally endowed with the ability to conjure love matches.

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## 2.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Describe briefly the theme of greed in the novel *Moll Flanders*.
2. List three mistakes that Emma makes during the course of the novel.
3. Write a note on the representation of Emma in the novel *Emma*.
4. Describe the character of Mr. Knightley in the novel, *Emma*.
5. Trace the origin of the novel.

NOTES

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Critically analyse the theme of repentance in the novel *Moll Flanders*.
2. Explain the theme of marriage in the novel *Emma*.
3. Assess the flaws in Moll's character and how they help to shape her choices in life in the novel, *Moll Flanders*.

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**2.9 FURTHER READING**

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Byrd, Max; *Daniel Defoe: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1976.

Hammond, J.R.; *A Defoe Companion*, MacMillan, New York, 1993.

Bloom, Harold; *Jane Austen*, Chelsea House, New York, 1986.

Booth, Wayne; *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Penguin, New York, 1991.

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## UNIT 3 NINETEENTH CENTURY FICTION

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
  - 3.1 Unit Objectives
  - 3.2 Genres of Novel
  - 3.3 Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*
  - 3.4 Thomas Hardy: *The Return of the Native*
  - 3.5 Summary
  - 3.6 Key Terms
  - 3.7 Answers to 'Check your Progress'
  - 3.8 Questions and Exercises
  - 3.9 Further Reading
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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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The novel as a genre in comparison to other literary forms such as epic, drama, poetry, prose, etc, is of relatively recent origin. Critics have tried to establish the century in which the novel as a genre originated but it is a much debated issue with different literary theorists temporally situating the novel in different ages. For instance, the conservatively held view is that novel as a genre emerged with the publication of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* whereas the contemporary Russian cultural theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin asserts that novel had its origin in the time of Hellenistic Greece in the form of Hellenistic romances. While it is difficult to authoritatively establish (temporally speaking) the genesis of novel, it is equally difficult to define the novel as a genre. Literary theorists have tried to define it in multiple ways but an exhaustive definition of novel is still lacking. William Hazlitt, as early as in the eighteenth century, defined the novel as, '...a close imitation of man and manners; (where) the very web and texture of society (is represented) as it really exists, and as we meet it when we come into the world. If poetry has 'something more divine' in it, this savors more of humanity. We are brought acquainted with the motives and characters of mankind, imbibe our notions of virtue and vice from practical examples, and are taught knowledge of the world through the airy medium of romance.'

Lionel Trilling in his celebrated critical work, *The Liberal Imagination* writes in appreciation of this genre saying that, '...its greatness and its practical usefulness lay in its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it. It taught us, as no other genre ever did, the extent of human variety and the value of this variety. It has the literary form to which the emotions of understanding and forgiveness were indigenous, as if by the definition of the form itself.'

German philosopher Hegel saw novel as the 'epic of a prosaic modern world. It has all the range and richness of the epic, without, for the most part, its supernatural dimension. The novel resembles the classical epic in its consuming interest in narrative,

### NOTES



## NOTES

dramatic action and the material world. It differs from it, however, in being a discourse of the present rather than of the past. ...the epic deals with a world of nobles and military heroes, whereas the novel deals with the common life. It is the great popular genre, the one mainstream literary mode which speaks the language of the people.'

Interestingly, as novel emerged after epic poetry, dramatic form, prose had reached their pinnacle as literary genres; its definition is always done in context of these literary forms. To explain further, both Hazlitt and Trilling's definition of novel is in context of a comparative analysis of novel with regards to other literary forms.

In fact Terry Eagleton states that the novel comprises different attributes of all genres. In his work, *The English Novel*, Eagleton defines the novel as 'a piece of prose fiction of a reasonable length.' Although Eagleton's definition appears to be complete, he himself goes on to denounce this very simplistic definition of novel as having too many loopholes. For instance, as he himself points out not all novels are written in prose; for example, Vikram Seth's *Golden Gate* is a novel in verse. Then again the question arises what suffices as reasonable length? The question arises that how does one differentiate between a novel, a novella and a short story? If length is one criterion then Eagleton argues how we can classify Anton Chekhov's *The Duel* as a short story and Andre Gide's *The Immortalist* as a novel when both are of relatively same length. Eagleton thus argues his point only to establish that according to him novel as a literary form is a genre which defies precise or exact definition. He says that it is a form which weaves together several literary modes so as to defy being classified as a one single pure genre. To quote Eagleton, 'You can find poetry and dramatic dialogue in the novel, along with epic, pastoral, satire, history, elegy, tragedy and any number of other literary modes... The novel quotes, parodies and transforms other genres, converting its literary ancestors into mere components of itself. ...'. Hence, one can safely conclude that the rapid growth of novel was largely possible because it merged in itself the most appealing features of almost all literary genres. Thus after having discussed and defined novel as a genre let us study the beginnings of novel as a genre.

### Beginnings

A study of the growth of English literature reveals that the novel as a literary form gained ascendancy around the turn of the seventeenth century. There were several factors that precipitated this surge. Every new genre that gained popularity, be it Elizabethan drama or prose in the Augustan age, it was the result of interplay of social, cultural, literary forces. For instance, around the years 1580 - 90 there was a sudden manifestation of Elizabethan drama with the flowering of Marlowe, Kyd and the greatest of all dramatists, Shakespeare. Prior to that only mystery and morality plays had existed and nothing anticipated the rapid growth of drama as a literary form. With novels, again there were no signs signaling the emergence of this genre.

Moreover, there was not even a classical model to serve as a precursor. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is often cited as one of the most significant influences that shaped the modern novel. Coming back to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* even after its translation into English another 130 years were to pass before Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* was published. The earliest works that are often cited as being close to the

genre of a novel are Geoffrey Chaucer's prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde* etc. Besides this, Bunyan's work *The Pilgrim's Progress* published in 1678 is also regarded as a significant precursor of the modern novel.

Initially novels were looked upon with disdain, most critics regarded it as trash to be pursued only by females and servants as it was considered as a low genre and not to be taken seriously. It was with the publication of Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* that the novel started to be regarded as a serious art form.

Walter Allen in his very significant critical work, *The English Novel*, says that the time period for which novel as an art form flourished was very short lived. To quote Allen, 'The first great flowering of the English novel began in 1740, with Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* and ended thirty-one years later with Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*.'

Commenting on its origin and growth as a literary genre, Eagleton opines that it is difficult to assert with precision when the form gained ascendancy. He differs with the most commonly held view that Cervantes *Don Quixote* and Daniel Defoe's works can be said to be the first precursors to the English novel; rather Eagleton quotes the cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in whose view the novel can be traced back to ancient Hellenistic romance which as a literary form does not develop as a mode consistently. Virginia Woolf regarded novel as the most pliable of all literary forms.

The nineteenth century was a great age of English novel. This was to some extent because this essentially middle class form of literary art was bound to flourish increasingly. The middle class rose in power and importance partly because of the steady increase of reading public with the growth of lending libraries and development of publishing in the modern sense. The novel presented the picture of life lived in a given society against the stable background of social and moral values. The people who wrote the novels were recognizably like the people encountered by the readers and the novels painted the kind of picture of life the middle class reader wanted to read about.

Hardy criticizes certain social constraints that hindered the lives of those living in the 19th century. Hardy's characters often encounter crossroads, which are symbolic of a point of opportunity and transition. The hand of fate is an important part of many of Hardy's plots. Thomas Hardy's works reflect the impact of 19th century evolutionary thought and naturalistic doctrines. He saw man as an alien in an impersonal universe, at the mercy of environment, heredity, and blind chance. Most of his fiction poignantly presents tragic human situations, and thus Hardy earned a reputation for pessimism.

In this unit, we will discuss the work of the nineteenth century fiction writers—Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. Dickens was, in his social origin and in his ultimate social position, a petit bourgeois. His actual life experience was, at the outset so much that of the lower strata of the petit bourgeoisie as to coincide, at points, with that of the proletariat. He was born into the swiftly accelerating period of the industrial revolution and lived on through its culmination into the phase of the neo-feudalism of finance capital, of aborted development, disintegration, international wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions.

## NOTES

### 3.3 CHARLES DICKENS: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Charles Dickens was born to a clerk from the lower gentry of professional class. He received varied types of schooling—sometimes no schooling and at times home tutoring. He was sensitive about his humble origins as a member of middle-class society. The unhappy circumstances of his own childhood, which included his father's imprisonment for debt and his own much-hated job at the blacking factory as a young boy, were sore points with him. Nevertheless, he was humane and had a sentimentally humanitarian attitude towards common problems of people.

He began his career as a reporter in the ecclesiastical law court of 'Doctors Commons'. Later, he was member of True Sun and Morning Chronicle. Beginning as a little more than a comic journalist, he soon discovered his special gift for telling a story and decided to be a novelist. At twenty-five, he found himself to be the most popular English novelist. He began as a follower of the tradition of Smollett whom, as a child, he had read with great enthusiasm and who, despite immeasurable differences between them in spirit and tone, may be regarded as his master.

Dickens began with great sense of life and little sense of form. '*Sketches by Boz*', written in 1836 is lively journalism merely but with *Pickwick Papers* (issued in

monthly parts) in 1836–37 we can see the growth in his writing. He began his career in the picaresque tradition. *Pickwick* began as burlesque but soon emerged as picaresque comedy. Each of the characters develops his moral, physical and emotional quality and the interest is kept up by showing how these qualities reveal themselves in new and unexpected situations.

## NOTES



Fig. 3.1 Charles Dickens

Dickens was the most instinctive of the great English novelists and sentimentality was often his only way of handling difficult moral problems as in *Nicholas Nickleby*. *Oliver Twist* is the first of Dickens' novels, which concentrates on specific social ills, but the force of the indictment falls most heavily on the individuals who administer the attacked institutions rather than on the institution. It was with *Martin Chuzzlewit* that Dickens first showed his real stature as a novelist. Here, he takes central moral situation as a focal point which links him to other Victorian novelists—Thackeray on the one hand and George Eliot on the other. *Dombey and Son* (1846–48) joins richness of character and incident to unity of moral purpose with new maturity. In *David Copperfield*, (1849–50) autobiography has been subdued into art with remarkable skill. *Bleak House* also shows the same kind of strengths.

In *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens dealt with the morality of the utilitarian industrialist and its effects on the possibilities of human happiness. In this novel, there is juxtaposition of apparent and real knowledge, of mechanical and imaginative and the moments of supreme irony. In *Little Dorrit*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens achieves that careless maturity that Shakespeare achieved in his last plays. Dickens spent the last years of his life reading his own works.

## NOTES

### Style

Regarded as 'the first great English novelist of the city,' Charles Dickens is an urban novelist. Not only are his themes predominantly city-oriented but more significantly he writes 'in an urban kind of way'. As Terry Eagleton points out, Dickens' 'prose style is alive with the swarming energies of his surroundings, full of hyperbole, extravagant gestures, unpredictable connections, rapid thumbnail sketches, melodramatic exclamations, abrupt shifts of tone and theatrical display...' His style is florid and vivacious and he is prone to give in to frequent flights of fantasy.

The most endearing quality of his work is the humour that informs all his works. He is a pure humorist, wielding a language which abounds in comic exuberance and invention. Dickensian characters are the most memorable in English literature. Often they are whimsical and idiosyncratic with their names often hinting at their most abiding trait, for instance in *David Copperfield* we have Mr. Murdstone which is a play at the words murder and stony suggesting that cruelty is what defines this character. Dickens often drew his characters on the basis of the real people he knew, for instance Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House* is based on Leigh Hunt, and *David Copperfield* is partially autobiographical. As Virginia Woolf observes that 'we remodel our psychological geography when we read Dickens' as he produces characters who exist not in detail, not accurately or exactly, but abundantly in a cluster of wild yet extraordinarily revealing remarks. George Santayana regards Dickens as a great mimic representing people as they really are. His characters are odd, incomprehensible, sometimes absurdly comic, terrifying. Scarcely ever they are ordinary.

Characters emerge from the narrative only to disappear again. Commenting on Dickens' art of characterization, Raymond Williams comments that 'Dickens perceives men and women— vividly but externally, caught in a single posture or defined by one or two idiosyncratic features...these figures are at once animated and enigmatic, expressive but hard to decipher.'

As Eagleton further comments, Dickens 'defines his characters by their noses, waistcoats, boots, knees, fob watches, tricks of speech or peculiar gait. When the characters of Fielding or Austen speak, they sound roughly similar, given some differences of class, gender and the like. Almost everyone in Dickens, by contrast, has his or her inimitable quick-fire delivery, churlish mumble, wheedling whine, verbose ramblings, pious cant or portentous rhetoric.'

Characters sometimes wear their souls on their sleeves, and sometimes demand as much laborious deciphering as an ancient manuscript. They are either flamboyantly self-dramatizing or disturbingly clandestine. People either improvise themselves on the spot, or persist mysteriously in their secret being like pieces of furniture.

His comic characters fall into two groups. When he accepts them without any intervention of moral scruples, rejoices in them for their own sake, the result is pure humour: Pickwick, the Wellers, Micawber, Boffin or, greatest of them all, Mrs. Gamp. When sympathy is withheld or he feels a strong moral disgust or contempt, the result is a character not so much of humour as of savage comedy. These characters are most evident when he is attacking social injustice, or flaws in the social code. Bumble, Heep and Gradgrind are typical examples of savage comedy.

Critics have criticized Dickensian humour for lacking in subtlety, but while it lacks in subtleness, it is compensated by its depth and humaneness. Although his novels deal with some social malady they are remarkable for not being dark and dismal. The mood is buoyant and full of effervescent energy instead. Another very significant aspect of his work is that he is 'the first English novelist, indeed one of the first English writers of any kind, to place children at the centre of his fiction.'

In fact until the nineteenth century children were scarcely recognized as beings deserving attention. Surprisingly no novel in the eighteenth century gives even sparse attention to children. It is Dickens who brings children as victims of social oppression to the forefront, for instance *Oliver Twist* and *Paul Dombey*, *David Copperfield* and *Amy Dorrit*. Dicken's fiction is thronged with prematurely aged children and childish adults. 'The Artful Dodger, Smike, Little Nell, Paul Dombey, Little Dorrit and Jenny Wren are examples of the former, while Mr. Pickwick, the Cheeryble brothers, Mr. Dick, Mr. Micawber, Dora Copperfield, Harold Skimpole... are instances of the latter.'

### Reputation

According to F.R. Leavis, Dickens was a great genius and he places him among the immortal classics. Leavis sees in Dickens the qualities of a great entertainer. 'He is 'a great poet'; 'in range and ease [of command of word, phrase, rhythm, and image] there is surely no greater master of English except Shakespeare.'

Dickens has often been railed against for his art of characterization. Instead of complex characters which are rich in suggestiveness and 'round' to use E.M. Forster's terminology, Dickens characters are 'flat', easily described by an adjective. They are either hypocritical grotesque characters like Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*, perverts, or amiable idiots. Yet this does not imply that they are defectively drawn. His novels are very rich on account of the multiplicity of characters, as Edward Albert points out, 'He creates for us a whole world of people.'

F.R. Leavis, while assessing the literary merit of Dickens dismissed, him as a mere entertainer, but eventually revised it saying that he ranked as a serious novelist. 'What he failed to note was a third possibility: that Dickens is both a serious novelist and a great entertainer.'

To conclude in the words of Terry Eagleton, 'Dickens has none of the intellectual resources of George Eliot, and little of the psychological subtlety of Henry James... He was rather, a writer of prodigious imaginative power and superb rhetorical mastery, who unlike Eliot or James remains in touch with caricature, lampoon, melodrama, sentimental ballad, oral legend, popular theatre and everyday culture. No other classic English novelist has been so wildly popular, and hardly has been so uproariously funny. Dickens takes the popular arts of farce, caricature, sentiment and polemic and harnesses them to complex aesthetic ends. The vivid flatness of his figures may reflect the art of the streets; but... it also says a great deal about the streets, raising grotesque and broad brush portraiture to a new kind of artistic perception.'

Tolstoy regarded Dickens as the best of all English novelists, and considered *David Copperfield* to be his finest work. James Joyce has paid it reverence through parody in *Ulysses*, whereas Virginia Woolf who held a poor opinion of Dickens' works, confesses to the merit of *David Copperfield*.

### NOTES

NOTES

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Charles Dickens has appeared on the British £10 note.



**Great Expectations: Summary**

The story begins at the cemetery with Pip, a little boy orphaned at an early age, who is visiting the graves of his deceased parents and little brother. He gets a jolt when a man springs up from behind a tombstone and grabs him. The man is an escaped convict. He orders Pip to bring him some food and a file for the iron chains that bind his legs. Pip gets the required things from his sister's house. Pip has been living with his sister and her husband who have brought him up after the death of their parents. The convict, who manages to escape, gets caught again but does not give Pip away and takes responsibility for the things stolen from Pip's sister's house.

Pip's Uncle Pumblechook takes him one day to play at Satis House. This is the home of Miss Havisham, a wealthy dowager. Miss Havisham is quite eccentric. Her old wedding dress always adorns her wherever she goes and all the clocks in her house are stopped and showing the same time. During his visits to Miss Havisham's house, Pip meets Estella, a beautiful young girl. Pip falls in love with this girl even though she looks down upon him and treats him with disdain. Pip wants to find favour with her and impress her and harbours great dreams of becoming a wealthy gentleman so that she may notice him. He is even under the notion that Miss Havisham might make a gentleman of him and give Estella's hand in marriage to him.

His hopes are however short-lived as after regular visits to Satis House for months, Miss Havisham aids him in finding a job as a common labourer in his family business. Under Miss Havisham's supervision, Pip apprentices with his family law, Joe. Joe is the village blacksmith. Pip is not happy working in the forge but has no choice. Side by side he strives to further his education. Bidley, his plain, kind friend assists him in his endeavour. Orlick is Joe's malicious day labourer who always looks for ways to pick on Pip. One night, Orlick picks a fight with Pip, and in retaliation he attacks Mrs. Joe, Pip's older sister with whom Pip resides. The vicious attack leaves Mrs. Joe a mute invalid. She signals to Pip and Bidley that it was Orlick who had attacked her.

One day Pip receives stunning news through a lawyer called Jagger. A secret benefactor has left him a large fortune. Pip is instructed to proceed to London immediately to pursue his education as a gentleman. Pip assumes that it is Miss Havisham who is the benefactor and that she plans for him to marry Estella.

Pip has a good time in London. His new friends are Herbert Pocket and Jagger's law clerk, Wemmick. Pip now looks down upon his past acquaintances and friends including Joe. For Estella, his feelings are as strong as ever and he continues to miss her and long for her. In London, Pip's tutor is Mathew Pocket, father of his friend Herbert. Herbert is instrumental in training Pip on how to behave like a gentleman. Pip decides that when he turns 21 and begins to receive an income from his fortune, he will secretly help Herbert set up the business he desires. Meanwhile, Pip and Herbert lead a wild life in London. They have the time of their lives and in the process run into debts. Orlick shows up in Pip's life once more. This time he is employed as Miss Havisham's porter. When Pip discloses Orlick's nasty past, he is immediately fired by Jagger. Mrs. Joe dies and Pip goes home for the funeral. His heart is filled with anguish and guilt.

Several years pass by. One night someone familiar rushes into Pip's room, unannounced. Pip is in for another great shock of his life. It is the convict, Magwitch, who discloses some disturbing news. In one of Dickens famous plot twisters it turns out that he was the person responsible for Pip's fortune and not Miss Havisham. Pip's gesture as a small child had so moved him that he decided to repay that act of kindness by helping Pip become a gentleman and lead a life of dignity and refinement. He had made a fortune in Australia for this very purpose. Pip is troubled by this news. It now becomes his moral duty to help Magwitch flee London. Magwitch is wanted by both the police and Compeyson, his former partner in crime. Magwitch left all his money to Pip in gratitude for that kindness and also because in Pip he saw his own child, who he thinks, was killed by her mother over two decades earlier. Pip feels humiliated when the truth about his benefactor is revealed. He is ashamed of Magwitch's criminal past. He is also deeply saddened when he realizes that Miss Havisham merely allowed him to believe she was the source of his expectations and never intended for Pip to marry Estella.

However, Magwitch now expects to live in England with Pip for the rest of his life. Pip, very reluctantly, lets Magwitch stay with him. Pip is unhappy in his new found knowledge and the risk and uncertainty it brings. To avoid Magwitch and his expectations, Pip at one time contemplated running off and joining the military. The police are on the lookout for Magwitch in England and he will be hanged if he is caught in the country.

Pip becomes wary of being watched. He also cannot reveal Magwitch's identity therefore he tells his landlord and all other close acquaintances (save for Herbert) that Magwitch is an uncle named Provis. Over time, it becomes difficult for Magwitch to continue staying in England as chances of his arrest increase each day. Herbert and Pip draw up a plan for Magwitch to escape the country by boat. In the course of these events, Pip learns that Estella is the daughter of Mr. Jagger's housemaid, Molly, whom he defended in a murder charge and who gave up her daughter to be adopted by another of his clients, Miss Havisham, in return for his service in allowing her to

## NOTES



## NOTES

be acquitted of the charge. Later, Pip understands that Estella is Magwitch's daughter. When Pip confronts him with this fact, Mr. Jaggers does not clearly confess to anything, however gives Pip a hypothetical situation in which these events transpired. He also hints that Molly, Estella's mother was a jealous and wild woman and that in order to keep her waywardness in check he beat her regularly and severely. This is proved later through Molly and Mr. Jaggers' interactions. Molly is terrified of her master.

A short time prior to Magwitch and Pip's escape, Pip receives an unsigned note at his home telling him to appear at the marshes near his old home that night at 9pm. At first Pip is scared but the mention of a threat to his Uncle Provis alarms him. Pip does not want any harm to come to his benefactor so leaves for the village by carriage immediately. When Pip reaches there, he is accosted and struck on the head by a blunt object, leaving him unconscious for a period of time. When he gains consciousness, he finds himself bound in a small shack far away from any other residences. It turns out that both the author of the anonymous note and his attacker is Orlick, who admits that he was in fact the one who attacked Mrs. Joe. Orlick confesses that he intends to kill Pip as he was always jealous of young Pip when he worked with Joe. Also, he harbours resentment against Pip for intercepting his advances on Biddy.

Though Pip is terrified and sure that he is going to die, he refuses to cry out or beg for mercy. Fortunately for Pip, he is rescued just in the nick of time by Herbert, a village shop boy and their old friend Startop. Herbert reveals that he came upon the anonymous note which Pip had accidentally left at home and thus was able to track him. Unfortunately, Orlick manages to escape. Herbert and Pip decide not to inform the police as they are already at risk due to Magwitch.

Meanwhile, out of spite for Miss Havisham, Estella has married Bentley Drummle, a conceited rival of Pip's whom he dislikes thoroughly. Mr. Jaggers is apprehensive about the relationship and believes that Drummle will beat Estella into submission to prove his superiority in the marriage. Pip is furious and miserable although he finds it difficult to believe that Drummle would do such a thing.

Before Pip flees with Magwitch, he makes one final visit to Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham realizes that she created a monster out of Estella by encouraging her vanity and her coldness towards others but especially Pip. Miss Havisham claims that she adopted Estella for the sole purpose of saving someone else from the heartbreak and misfortune she herself suffered as a young woman. She instead taught Estella to be cruel, proud and vain. When she was young, Miss Havisham was convinced into buying her half brother out of his share of the brewery at Satis House by a young man who claimed to love her. The young man proposed to Miss Havisham and arrangements were made for their wedding. However, in a cruel twist of fate, on her wedding day, shortly before the ceremony, the young man never showed up—she had been jilted. This incident left Miss Havisham heartbroken after which she shut herself in her darkened house where she sits in her bridal gown amongst the rotting wedding cake for several years. Miss Havisham vowed never to be heartbroken again and used Estella as a tool with which to exact her revenge on all men by encouraging her vanity and her meanness and her constant misleading of men. Miss Havisham eventually realizes that what she did was very wrong and had caused great harm. Estella has grown to become a vain girl with a tarnished image and Pip, who loves her, nurses a

broken heart. Miss Havisham is sorry for her misdeeds and asks for forgiveness. Miss Havisham is held responsible for Estella's unhappy marriage resulting from her cold, calculating and unloving nature. She is confronted by Pip with the stark truth. After the confrontation, Pip comes back into the house once more to discover Miss Havisham standing too close to the fire. Her dress catches fire and in an effort to save her, he removes his overcoat and throws it around her. The fire is put off; however, he and Miss Havisham are both badly injured, Miss Havisham infinitely more so as she eventually succumbs to her injuries.

Pip, Herbert and another friend, Startop, make a courageous attempt to help Magwitch escape, but instead he is caught and sent to jail. Pip starts caring for Magwitch by now and sees in him a good and noble man and is ashamed that he had formerly looked down on Magwitch as his inferior. Pip tries to have Magwitch freed but Magwitch dies shortly before his execution. Pip's 'Great Expectations' are thwarted when, under English law, Magwitch's wealth forfeits to the Crown.

Things do not go too smoothly for Pip. He is sick for a long time during which he is nearly arrested for his numerous unpaid debts to several creditors; however, due to his condition, which includes fever, he is not arrested at that time. Joe looks after him and he eventually returns to good health. Joe leaves early one morning leaving Pip with only a note of good wishes, believing that as Pip had not visited him in years since, he would not visit him then and that he likely would never see Pip again. Pip is greatly saddened by this turn of events and realizes how thankless and ungrateful he had been over the years. His guilt is intensified by the discovery that he was not arrested for debt not to allow him time to recover, but because Joe had paid all of his debts in full. Pip returns home to ask Bidley and Joe for forgiveness and to thank Joe for his unconditional kindness and unflinching love for which Pip felt undeserving.

Arriving at the village, he finds that Bidley and Joe are going to get married that day. He congratulates the couple and tells them that he is only on a brief visit for he intended to pay Joe back every penny of the money he paid the creditors. Later, Pip goes into business abroad with Herbert. After eleven years spent abroad with a fair amount of success, Pip goes back to visit Joe and the rest of his family out in the marshes. Pip meets Estella in the streets. Drummle, her abusive husband has died. Estella and Pip exchange brief pleasantries and Pip states that while he could not have her in the end, he was at least glad to know she was a different person now, changed from the coldhearted girl Miss Havisham had reared her to be. The novel ends with Pip saying he could see that 'suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham's teachings and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be.' They meet again at the ruins of Satis House and sit and talk for a while. As they get up and go together hand in hand, Pip knows that now they will never part.

### **Great Expectations: Themes**

#### **Ambition and Self Improvement**

The novel, *Great Expectations* has an underlying moral theme. It propounds the view that affection, loyalty and conscience are more important than social advancement, wealth and loss. The story shows Pip caught in this web, exploring the ideas of ambition and self-improvement. This is the central theme of the novel and the nexus around

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

which the plot revolves. The psychological drive that is the moving force behind Pip's character is explored in this story. Pip is seen an idealist at heart; one who strives to achieve a level of perfection. Whenever he sees that something that is attainable is within his reach, he tries his best to attain that improvement. Seeing Satis House inspires in him a desire to be a gentleman. His own moral shortcomings lead to a longing to be good. Being uneducated sparks in him a desire to learn to read and write. Pip has 'Great Expectations' about his future and this becomes the basis of his wanting to improve and advance in life.

Ambition and self-improvement take three forms in *Great Expectations*—moral, social and educational; these motivate Pip's best and his worst behavior throughout the novel. Firstly Pip wishes for moral improvement. His feeling of guilt motivates him to act better in the future. While leaving for London, he feels a terrible feeling of guilt as he had behaved badly toward Joe and Biddy. Pip wishes to rise to a certain level in society. He wants to become worthy of Estella and for this he has to become a gentleman if he ever hopes to catch her attention. He is encouraged in this venture by Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook. Pip's attempt to work out his fantasy becomes the basic plot of this novel. The social set up is gently mocked by Dickens. The irony is that Pip's life as a gentleman is in no way better than one as a blacksmith's apprentice.

Thirdly, Pip wants to be an educated person. This longing is closely connected with his longing to gain entry into the upper rungs of society and to become worthy of Estella. To be a gentleman, it is imperative that he be educated. As long as he is considered a country bumpkin he has no hopes of furthering his social status. This fact is quite clear to Pip even as a little boy when he read at Mr. Wopsle's aunt's school and later when he took lessons from Mathew Pocket. In the end, however, through the examples of Joe, Biddy and Magwitch, Pip realizes that a person is not valued according to his education or his social status. Conscience and affection are to be valued above scholarly knowledge and social standing.

### Social Class

Dickens' *Great Expectations* is a study of class systems in Victorian England. It touches both ends of the social scale as well as the middle classes. On the one end we have the most wretched criminal, Magwitch, following the poor peasants of the marsh country—Joe and Biddy. The middle class is represented by Pumblechook and the very rich, the upper end of the social scale, has people like Miss Havisham. The theme of social class is central to the novel's plot and to the ultimate moral theme of the book—Pip's realization that wealth and class are less important than affection, loyalty, and inner worth. Pip achieves this realization when he is finally able to understand that, despite the esteem in which he holds Estella, one's social status is in no way connected to one's real character. Drummle, for instance, is an upper-class hooligan, while Magwitch, a persecuted convict, a man with a golden heart, has a deep inner worth.

One important fact worth noting is that though upper class has been represented in this novel, it does not talk about nobility or the hereditary aristocracy; it talks about those people who have gathered fortune through commerce in the era that coincides with post-Industrial Revolution in Victorian England. Miss Havisham's family fortunes

came from the brewery that is still connected to her mansion. Thus social class, ambition and self-advancement are interconnected and through them Dickens finely reinforces the novel's overarching theme of aspiration and self-improvement.

### Crime, Guilt and Innocence

Another theme that has been looked into in depth in this novel is crime, guilt and innocence. This has been largely studied through the characters of the convicts and the criminal lawyer, Jaggers. The book points out, a number of times, to images relating to this theme, like the handcuffs which Joe mends at the smithy to gallows at the London prison. These images are important in conveying Pip's struggle to come to terms with his own inner conscience within the institutional system. Just as Pip had to overcome social barriers which class consciousness had imposed and had to look ahead in a bid to improve his way of living, the outward façade of the criminal justice system (police, courts, jail, etc.) became a phony standard of morality that Pip had to ignore in order to believe in his own inner conscious. For example, Pip is at first frightened by Magwitch as he is a convict; he is guilty of helping him and is scared of the police. Later, however, Pip is able to recognize Magwitch for who he really is, a noble human being with a large heart. Pip can now push aside the knowledge that Magwitch's status in society is that of a criminal and he is wanted by the police. Pip is now able to appreciate Magwitch's character and feels no qualms about helping him. Putting his trust in his conscience, Pip has replaced an external standard of value with an internal one.

### Great Expectations: Major Characters

#### Pip

*Great Expectations* is the story of the life of a single character, Philip Pirrip, who is known as Pip. As a *bildungsroman*, it explores growth and the development of his character and personality. The focus throughout the novel is on Pip who is both the protagonist as well as the narrator. His actions make up the plot of the story. He is the most important character in the story. The reader gets to know the story through his thoughts and attitudes. To comprehend *Great Expectations*, it is important to study the character of Pip.

The story has been narrated many years after the events in the story occurred so we may actually consider the presence of two Pips—the narrator and the character—the voice telling the story and the person acting it out. The two Pips have been carefully delineated by Dickens; Pip the narrator voices his opinions with maturity while Pip the character conveys his feelings about what is happening to him as it actually happens. This difference is skillfully implemented in the beginning of the book when Pip the character is a child; here, Pip the narrator gently pokes fun at his younger self, but also enables us to see and feel the story through his eyes.

Pip's character has two important traits; his immature, romantic idealism and his intrinsically good conscience. Pip has a deep yearning to improve himself and gain educational advancement in life. He also wishes to improve morally and rise socially. His idealistic desires make him crave for Estella as he knows that by marrying

### NOTES

## NOTES

her he will be able to climb the ladder of society. The same ideals also apply to his wish to educate himself and his fear of punishment for bad behaviour. Once he understands ideas like poverty, ignorance, and immorality, Pip does not want to be poor, ignorant, or immoral.

Pip, the narrator, is a stern judge when it comes to judging his own past. He rarely acknowledges his good deeds but severely criticizes himself for bad ones. As a character, however, Pip's idealism often leads him to see the world rather narrowly, and his tendency to oversimplify situations based on surface values leads him to behave badly toward the people who care about him. After acquiring an education and becoming a gentleman, he starts behaving as he supposes a gentleman should and this leads to his superior and cold attitude towards Joe and Biddy.

In reality, Pip is a very generous and sympathetic young man. Throughout the book we come across several acts of his kindness like helping Magwitch, secretly buying Herbert's way into business, etc. and his fundamental love for all those who love him. We can infer from this novel that all along Pip, in the process of development, learnt to place his innate sense of kindness and conscience above his immature idealism. Meeting Miss Havisham and Estella had a profound effect on Pip and this created in him the need for social advancement. It is this desire that, to a great extent, takes precedence over his basic goodness. Pip's idealistic wishes are ratified, when after receiving his mysterious fortune, he indulges in a gentlemanly life of idleness. His ideal world collapses when he learns that it is Magwitch, the hated criminal, and not Miss Havisham who is his secret benefactor. In course of time, Pip comes to admire Magwitch and value him as a person and appreciate all his qualities. He does not mind losing Estella to the harsh nobleman Drummle.

He comes face to face with the reality that one's social standing is not the most important thing in life. He feels sorry for the fact that in his behaviour as a gentleman, he has knowingly or unknowingly hurt those people who care deeply about him. Once he has learned these lessons, Pip matures into the man who narrates the novel, completing the *bildungsroman*.

### Estella

Estella has often been quoted as Dickens's first credible female character. She is a study in contrasts as we learn towards the end of the novel. She undermines all that romantic love stands for. She is bogged down in a certain class system that she represents in a negative way. Estella has been raised by Miss Havisham since the age of three. As she was no more than a babe, it was easy for Miss Havisham to mould her as she pleased. This was done with perfection and Estella grew into a cold hearted woman, raised to torture men and 'break their hearts'. Even though Estella practices deliberate cruelty, she wins Pip's love and affection.

Unlike the warm, loving and charming woman of traditional love, Estella is cold, contemptuous and conniving. She is the first representation of the ideal life among the upper class that Pip craves so much. Ironically, it turns out that she is actually more low born than Pip, it being discovered that she is the daughter of Magwitch, the coarse convict whom Pip had helped when he was just a little child.

remorseful about her behaviour and acknowledges the worthlessness of her attitude which caused Pip so much misery. She begs Pip for forgiveness, emphasizing the novel's theme that bad behavior can be redeemed by contrition and sympathy.

One way to see Pip's development, and the development of many of the other characters in *Great Expectations*, is as an attempt to learn to value other human beings: Pip must learn to value Joe and Magwitch, Estella must learn to value Pip, and so on. Throughout the novel, social class provides an arbitrary, external standard of value by which the characters (particularly Pip) judge one another. Because social class is rigid and preexisting, it is an attractive standard for every character who lacks a clear conscience with which to make judgments—Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook, for instance. And because high social class is associated with romantic qualities such as luxury and education, it is an immediately attractive standard of value for Pip. After he is elevated to the status of gentleman, though, Pip begins to see social class for what it is: an unjust, capricious standard that is largely incompatible with his own morals. There is simply no reason why Bentley Drummle should be valued above Joe, and Pip senses the truth of it. The most important lesson Pip learns in the novel—and perhaps the most important theme in *Great Expectations*—is that no external standard of value can replace the judgments of one's own conscience. Characters such as Joe and Biddy know this instinctively; for Pip, it is a long, hard lesson, the learning of which makes up much of the book.

At the beginning of the novel, Pip's feelings of conscience are determined largely by his fear of what others might think, a state of mind no doubt reinforced by Mrs. Joe's 'Tickler.' He has strong feelings of guilt but an inadequate system by which to judge right from wrong; unable to determine the value of his own actions, he feels guilty even when he does the right thing. He acts with compassion and sympathy when he helps the convict, but he nevertheless feels deeply guilty and imagines that the police are waiting to take him away. As the novel progresses, Pip comes closer to trusting his own feelings; when he helps Magwitch at the end of the novel, he feels no guilt, only love, and he remains with the convict even after the police arrive to take him away. Throughout the novel, symbols of justice, such as prisons and police, serve as reminders of the questions of conscience that plague Pip: just as social class provides an external standard of value irrespective of a person's inner worth, the law provides an external standard of moral behavior irrespective of a person's inner feelings. Pip's wholehearted commitment to helping Magwitch escape the law in the last section of the novel contrasts powerfully with his childhood fear of police and shows that, though he continues to be very hard on his own shortcomings, Pip has moved closer to a reliance on his own inner conscience—which is the only way, as Joe and Biddy show, that a character can truly be 'innocent.'

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What causes Pip's ideal world to collapse?
2. Why is Estella's social status lower than Pip's?
3. Miss Havisham's life is defined by a single tragic event. What is that event?

### 3.4 THOMAS HARDY: THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Except for the period in London during young manhood, Thomas Hardy lived his whole life near Dorchester, close to where he was born in 1840 and died in 1928. His personal experience was bound up with people and customs, the monuments and the institutions of Dorset and contiguous counties of southwestern England, which he placed permanently on the literary map by the ancient name, Wessex. As a writer, Hardy was a living paradox. A natural poet, much of his poetry is nevertheless in prose. He had the poet's largeness, minuteness and intensity of vision—a threefold faculty displayed throughout his novel. The irony in Thomas Hardy's novels is not directed at human egotism but at the very conditions of human existence. He saw his characters as elemental figures whose passions were doomed to run the course that human conditions had set for them.

Hardy was neither a philosophical novelist nor a subtle psychologist. His view of man is neither wholly consistent nor in any degree profound. His prose has an air of being self-taught—it is often clumsy, sometimes pretentious and generally rough hewn and unequal. Hardy's vision of life was genuine and he wrestled it alone. The underlying rhythm of his novel is sound and what Henry James called the 'sense of felt life' is movingly present.

'Critics can never be made to understand that the failure may be greater than the success... To have the strength to roll a stone weighing a hundredweight to the top of a mountain is a success, and to have the strength to roll a stone of then hundredweight only halfway up that mount is a failure. But the latter is two or three times as strong a deed.' (Hardy in his diary, 1907)



Fig. 3.2 Thomas Hardy

Hardy was born to a master mason and building contractor in the village of Higher Bockhampton, on the edge of Puddletown Heath. His mother, who had literary tastes and read Latin poets and French romances, had a huge impact on him. Early training as an architect gave him intimate knowledge of local churches utilized to advantage

#### NOTES

## NOTES

in his writings. He married Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1874. At the age of 22, Hardy moved to London and started to write poems which idealized the rural life. Emma Lavinia Gifford encouraged him and he started to consider literature as his 'true vocation.'

*Under the Greenwood Tree*, written in 1872, is an idyllic tale of rustic life. *Far From the Madding Crowd*, 1874, use a wider canvas and takes a closer look at the nature and consequences of human emotions. Misfortune, coincidences and the intrusion into the pastoral life makes this love story tangled and violent. *The Return of the Native* 1878, is a more ambitious work. Egdon Heath, sunk in his tree, representing both the indifferent world of nature and the stage on which human drama have been enacted from time immemorial sets the tone for this somber story of trapped human passion. Fulfillment for one is frustration for the other. Maternal love and pride is a mysterious and paradoxical combination of selfishness and self sacrifice.

Characters are active or passive according to their natures but actions never have their expected consequences and the interweaving of passions produces strange patterns. The march of the events, though continually instigated and affected by human will, is in the long run at the mercy of impersonal logic of fact and coincidence. The dark violence of Eustacia Vye, the idealistic intelligence of Clym Yeobright, the will and affections of Mrs. Yeobright, the weakness of Will Deve, produced in their mutual interactions a tragic pattern in which seen against the background of death, seems to reduce all life in doom that is never final. Tragedies occur, hopes are crushed, expectations are cruelly disappointed, self-knowledge comes through sad or bitter experience but life has been before and will go on. The novel has a combination of earthiness and visionary truth.

In the novel *the Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), nature, civilization and human character work on each other continually. The novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* outraged the religious conscience of 1891 and his novel *Jude the Obscure* is fatally injured by his ruthlessness. In 1896, disturbed by the public uproar over the unconventional subjects of two of his greatest novels, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy announced that he would never write fiction again. In April, 1912, Hardy wrote: 'Then somebody discovered that *Jude* was a moral work—austere in its treatment of a difficult subject—as if the writer had not all the time said in the Preface that it was meant to be so. Thereupon many uncursed me, and the matter ended, the only effect of it on human conduct that I could discover being its effect on myself—the experience completely curing me of the further interest in novel-writing.'

During the remainder of his life, Hardy continued to publish several collections of poems. 'Hardy, in fact, was the ideal poet of a generation. He was the most passionate and the most learned of them all. He had the luck, singular in poets, of being able to achieve a competence other than by poetry and then devote the ending years of his life to his beloved verses.' (Ford Maddox Ford in *The March of Literature*, 1938) Also, their marriage did not result in any offspring. Hardy and Emma stuck to each other even though theirs was not a very happy union. Hardy had affairs with other women passing briefly through his life. Emma died in 1912 and a couple of years later he married Florence Emily Dugdale, his secretary, who was a woman in her 30s and approximately 30 years younger than him.



Hardy breathed his last on 11 January, 1928, in Dorchester, Dorset. Hardy was popular as a lyrical pastoralist. He was also a modern, even revolutionary writer. It may be a sign of the times that some of us take his books to bed, as if even his pessimistic vision was one that enabled us to sleep soundly' (Anatole Broyard in *New York Times*, May 12, 1982).

## NOTES

### ACTIVITY

Identify the novel of Thomas Hardy which gained him the most popularity and why. Write a synopsis of that novel.

#### *The Return of the Native: Summary*

At the beginning of the novel, Thomasin Yeobright is being taken over the heath by the reddleman Diggory Venn in the back of his wagon. She was to marry Damon Wildeve but this marriage is delayed due to an error in the marriage certificate. On hearing this news, Thomasin had collapsed. She then asked the reddleman to take her home. The reader soon learns that Wildeve had devised this error himself. Damon Wildeve is in love with Eustacia Vye, and he hopes to ignite her jealousy by using Thomasin. Venn comes to know of the romance between Eustacia and Damon and intervenes on behalf of Thomasin who he is in love with. Throughout the novel he tries his best to get the two together. Venn pleads with Eustacia to allow Wildeve to marry Thomasin but in vain. He also doesn't get any further with his own proposal to Thomasin.

There is confusion all around which is only aggravated with the presence of Clym Yeobright, Thomasin's cousin and the son of the strong-willed widow Mrs. Yeobright, who also serves as a guardian to Thomasin. Eustacia is attracted to the suave and sophisticated Clym and looks on him as a means to escape from the heath she hates. Even prior to meeting him, she is influenced into falling in love with Clym. She therefore breaks off with Wildeve who then marries Thomasin. Eustacia's scheming and the hand of fate work simultaneously to bring her together with Clym and the two have a romantic relationship which culminates in marriage much to the indignation of Mrs Yeobright. When Wildeve comes to know of Eustacia's marriage, he again wishes to make her his own in spite of the fact that he is now married to Thomasin. In marrying Eustacia, Clym gets distanced from his mother who was against this alliance. Problems creep up between the newlyweds too and their relationship stars to sour.

Eustacia dreams of moving to Paris but Clym wants to start a school in his native country. Meanwhile, Wildeve inherits a large fortune and he and Eustacia start meeting again. They are spotted at the local dance by Diggory Venn and again when Wildeve visits Eustacia at her home when Clym is asleep. It is at this time that Mrs Yeobright too decides to visit the couple in the hope of making amends. Eustacia gets anxious when she hears the knocking on the door and as she doesn't want Wildeve to be discovered in her house, she ignores Mrs Yeobright's knocking. Mrs Yeobright turns away, sad and dejected with this rejection by her son that she succumbs to heat and snakebite on the walk home, and dies. The shocked son then takes the blame of his mother's death upon himself. When he further learns from his wife how she was

## NOTES

instrumental in his mother being turned back from his house and about her clandestine relationship with Wildeve, he separates from her. Eustacia now wants to leave the heath and Wildeve helps her escape. The story comes to a climax when on a stormy night, Eustacia drowns on her way to meet Wildeve and in trying to save her, Wildeve drowns as well. Only through heroic efforts does Diggory Venn save Clym from the same fate. The last part of the novel sees the growth of an affectionate relationship, and an eventual marriage, between Thomasin and Diggory. Clym, much reduced by his travails and by weak eyesight brought on by overly arduous studies, becomes a wandering preacher, taken only half-seriously by the locals.

### *The Return of the Native: Themes*

This novel is typically modern. Unlike the classical tragedies, which show man's greatness, it only shows the triviality of man and his helplessness in the face of nature and circumstances. Man finds his life full of unhappy events. Times are not fair: 'Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings over sadly tinged'. For this reason perhaps, Hardy chooses Egdon Heath as the stage for the enactment of the tragedy of Eustacia, Clym and Mrs Yeobright. In the opening chapter of the novel, we are given a description of the gloomy stage.

To this somber and gloomy place, our heroine was confined. She was full of Promethean rebelliousness against circumstances and fate, but all her efforts, all her contrivances, and all her rebellion proved to be of no avail and in the end she fulfilled her own prophecy regarding her doom in relation to the heath—'Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death.' Clym, on the other hand, did not hate the heath. Instead of rebelling against it, he was attracted towards it. He was fed up with life in Paris and came back to spend the rest of his life here. The heath received him as it received Eustacia. Just as Eustacia on the barrow was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure, so also Clym was permeated with its scenes, with its subject. The heath did not differentiate between human beings. It treated them alike. Clym's attitude towards the heath is opposite to that of Eustacia. 'Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath and translate them into loves and you have the heart of Clym'.

But the only return that the heath could give to either of them was to submerge his individuality into its own. When Mrs Yeobright looks at Clym from a distance; she is unable to recognize him. Clym 'appeared of a russet hue, not more distinguishable from the scene around him than the green caterpillar, from the leaf it feeds on. He appeared as a mere parasite of the heath'. But according to their different attitudes towards the heath, towards nature and circumstances, Clym and Eustacia meet different fates. Eustacia used to think of the heath alone as an uncongenial spot to be in: she felt it now of the whole world'. And so, unable to escape from the heath in her life, she escaped from the whole world by committing suicide. Clym, on the other hand, loved his surroundings, and tried to accept whatever fate gave him.

As a result, Clym could find a partial fulfillment of his meager ambition. But the impression that we get on the whole is that life is full of difficulties, more sad than happy, and that nothing but tragedy lies in store for characters like Eustacia, Mrs Yeobright and even Clym. Hardy had to add the sixth book, the 'Aftercourses', only

to please the readers of the magazine in which his novel appeared serially. So we may consider the end of the fifth book as the real ending. And according to that, none of the main characters is left with any prospects of happiness. Mrs. Yeobright, Eustacia and Wildeve have all died unhappily, Clym is half blind and Thomasin has lost her husband. One may ask who is to blame for such tragic events.

We cannot agree fully with Eustacia that she may have done Heaven no harm, but she did do Thomasin harm when she tried to attract Wildeve back from her for a very selfish and trivial motive to show her 'power' and to get rid of her boredom. She says she tried to be a splendid woman, but Hardy proves that she was a splendid woman in many ways. We are struck by the precision and artistry of Hardy when he tells us in a single sentence how her specialty—her greatness was the cause of her doom and her fall. Even though she is a modern girl she reminds one of things and people of the grand past.

She was gloomy and lonely because she was conscious of her beauty and her extraordinariness. Moreover, she wanted to be different from the ordinary. She could not mix with the common lot and behave and feel as they did. Because of her hankering after uniqueness, she could not be satisfied with the common things that life offered. So she tried to achieve things for herself with the help of her 'power', but she could only influence Wildeve and Clym a little, she could not change her fate. She wanted 'what is called life and all the beating and pulsing' that one can find in a busy part of the world. But Clym could not give her these things. She might have got them somehow if she had not been a proud woman. So, instead of humiliating herself, she prefers to die. At this point, we are struck by the resemblance between Eustacia and Ibsen's heroine Hedda Gabler. Hedda too, when she learns that she must be at the mercy of Judge Brack—a slave to him, shoots herself. Both Hedda and Eustacia prefer death to a life of humiliation. They both have dignity and pride and they both want a life of glamour.

Eustacia also reminds us of Flaubert's heroine, Emma Bovary. Both of them are romantic by temperament but cabined and cribbed by environment and circumstances. We are told about Emma Bovary that 'true to her favourite theories, she longed for love'. About Eustacia we learn that to 'be loved to madness—such was her great desire'. Both of them are leading a dull and lonely life, while their temperament goads them to seek excitement and adventure indiscreetly.

But in spite of all these similarities there is a great difference in Hardy's depiction of Eustacia from Flaubert's of Emma. Emma's character is exposed to us with relentless realism, whereas Eustacia is romanticized and glorified as 'the raw material for divinity' and a being fit for Olympus.

Before meeting Eustacia, Clym was unhappy because of the unhappiness of the whole world and because of his eager desire to give happiness to others. After he fell in love with Eustacia, he could not be happy because his mother disapproved of her. The relationships between Mrs. Yeobright, Clym and Eustacia are faintly similar to the relationships depicted in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Mrs Yeobright too expects Clym to succeed in life. After the death of her husband, she did not marry again and have another family; she devoted her life to Clym. Naturally, she expects her son to give her affection and obedience but when she finds that he is ready to sacrifice her

## NOTES

## NOTES

wishes for the sake of Eustacia, we discern in her a jealousy similar to that of Mrs. Morel in *Sons and Lovers*, Mrs Yeobright's speech. 'You answer me; you think only of her. You stick to her in all things', is similar to the speech of Mrs Morel, '...you only want me to wait on you—the rest is for Miriam'. Clym also loves his mother very much. His following speech is similar to Paul's speeches towards the end of *Sons and Lovers*:

O, my mother, my mother! Would to God that I could live my life again, and endure for you what you endured for me.

These lines are surprisingly similar to the lines of the poem 'The End' that Lawrence wrote after the death of his mother:

*And Oh, my love, as I rock for you tonight*

*And have not any longer any hope*

*To heal the suffering or to make requite*

*For all your life of asking and despair,*

*I own that some of me is dead tonight.*

But this does not prove that Lawrence must necessarily have been influenced by Hardy's *The Return of the Native* in his writing of the above lines or of *Sons and Lovers* for there are great differences between the situations of the two novels. Mrs. Yeobright is not possessive. The Oedipus complex does not play any part in the lives of Mrs Yeobright and Clym. Mrs Yeobright is not opposed to Clym getting married but she is opposed to his marrying Eustacia because she feels that she is not a good woman. Thomasin is not selfish. She does not want Clym in place of her husband and she thinks only of his good. That is why when Clym learns of Eustacia's cruelty, he cries out—'May all the murderesses get the torment they deserve!'

One of the intentions of Hardy in this novel seems to have been to show the insignificance of man in this world. Life is a ruthless struggle and nature is indifferent to the individual. Life is not only difficult; it is incomprehensible with its 'inequality of lots' and 'perpetual dilemmas'. Science has so disillusioned man that he cannot find solace in a religious or spiritual vision of life.

The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusionive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called. What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old-fashioned reveling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation.

Clym makes efforts to change the plight of the whole community, Eustacia tries to change just her own fate, but both of them fail because a human being is as insignificant as an insect in the world of *The Return of the Native*. Mrs Yeobright has to die 'on the heath like an animal kicked out' and looking at Clym from a distance she finds him like a caterpillar, he 'seemed to be of no more account in life than an insect. He appeared as a mere parasite of the heath, fretting its surface in his daily labour as a moth.... We are reminded of the evaluation of man in King Lear: 'Man's life is cheap as a beast's', a comrade with the wolf and owl', ....I such a fellow saw, which

made me think a man a worm...’, ‘As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods.’ Hardy convincingly shows us the insignificances and pettiness of human beings.

Such views about life and people and the dramatic structure of the novel tempt us to class *The Return of the Native* as a modern novel; but the cross-references to the ancient tragedies and the evocation of the world of antique grandeur compel us to regard it also as a work in line with the ancient tragedies.

## NOTES

### *The Return of the Native: Characters*

**Clym Yeobright:** Clym Yeobright, the ‘native’ in the story, is the son of the widowed Mrs. Yeobright, and cousin of Thomasin Yeobright. He leaves his native land to work as a diamond merchant in Paris. However, he soon realizes that material wealth is not what he desires in life and he eventually returns home to the heath. Eustacia Vye pursues him and he marries her. She wants him to return to Paris but he has other plans. He wishes to stay on Egdon Heath and teach in a school. This is the cause of their conflict and the marriage turns sour. Clym is intelligent, cultured and deeply introspective. He is patient and generous, but also deeply determined, and fierce when angered. It is this determination which is the cause of his drift with his mother and later his separation from Eustacia. At the end of the novel, weakened by a degenerative eye condition and by the ordeal of losing his mother and Eustacia—for whose deaths he blames himself—he becomes a wandering preacher, sermonizing about simple moral topics.

**Diggory Venn:** Venn is a semi-nomadic ‘reddleman’ who travels throughout the region selling the dye that farmers use to mark their sheep. As a result of his exposure to the dye, his entire body and everything he owns are dyed red. Entirely red, camping out on the heath in his wagon, and emerging mysteriously from time to time, Venn functions as an image of the heath incarnated. Throughout the novel he keeps an eye on Thomasin Yeobright’s interests but also preserves his own interests; he has long been in love with her, and at the end of the novel they marry. Venn is very clever and perceptive, and can be a conniving conspirator.

**Eustacia Vye:** Eustacia was born in the busy port town of Budmouth and loved city life. She was later moved to Egdon Heath to live with her grandfather. Eustacia hates the heath and is always looking for a way to escape. Nevertheless, in her deep brooding passion, she seems to be a vital component of its wild nature. Eustacia has a love affair with Damon Wildeve but gives him up for the more suave and sophisticated Clym Yeobright as she feels she will have a better and more interesting life with him. Unfortunately, this marriage does not work and she is once more drawn to Wildeve and enters into an illicit relationship with him which eventually spells doom for both of them.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Why was the marriage between Thomasin Yeobright and Damon Wildeve delayed?
5. Why did Clym Yeobright return to Egdon Heath?
6. Why is Mrs. Yeobright against her son’s marriage to Eustacia?

## NOTES

### 3.5 SUMMARY

- *Great Expectations* is the story of Pip, an orphan boy adopted by a blacksmith's family, who has good luck and great expectations, and then loses both his luck and his expectations. Through this rise and fall, however, Pip learns how to find happiness. He learns the meaning of friendship and the meaning of love and, of course, becomes a better person for it. The novel, like much of Dickens's work, draws on his experiences of life and people. *Great Expectations* is a bildungsroman, a novel depicting growth and personal development, in this case, of Pip.
- Some of the major themes of *Great Expectations* are crime, social class, empire and ambition. From an early age, Pip feels guilt; he is also afraid that someone will find out about his crime and arrest him. The theme of crime comes in to even greater effect when Pip discovers that his benefactor is in fact a convict. Pip has an internal struggle with his conscience throughout the book. *Great Expectations* explores the different social classes of the Georgian era. Throughout the book, Pip becomes involved with a broad range of classes, from criminals like Magwitch to the extremely rich like Miss Havisham. Pip has great ambition, as demonstrated constantly in the book.
- Thomas Hardy's works reflect the impact of 19th century evolutionary thought and naturalistic doctrines. He saw man as an alien in an impersonal universe, at the mercy of environment, heredity, and blind chance. Most of his fiction poignantly presents tragic human situations, and thus Hardy earned a reputation for pessimism. The theme of this novel reflects Hardy's concept that human fate is shaped by accidents and natural forces over which there is no control. *The Return of the Native* revolves around five people and the Egdon Heath. Clym, the native who returns to Egdon, changes the life of Mrs. Yeobright, Eustacia, Thomasin, Mr. Wildeve and his own. Eustacia, the heroine and Clym are two contrasting characters beautifully sketched by the author. Mr. Venn, the reddleman's presence at the right places, at the right times is an important part of the novel. Hardy's use of a barren heath and his art of characterization are truly remarkable.

### 3.6 KEY TERMS

- **Burlesque:** It is a literary, dramatic or musical work intended to cause laughter by caricaturing the manner or spirit of serious works, or by ludicrous treatment of their subjects.
- **Bildungsroman:** Also known as coming-of-age story, it is a literary genre that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood and in which character change is thus extremely important.
- **Reddleman:** A reddleman travels the country marking flocks of sheep with a red mineral called 'reddle', a dialect term for red ochre.

### 3.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Pip's ideal world collapses when he learns that it is Magwitch, the hated criminal, and not Miss Havisham who is his secret benefactor.
2. Estella is the daughter of Magwitch, the coarse convict, and thus springs from the very lowest level of society.
3. The single tragic event in Miss Havisham's life is her being jilted by Compeyson on what was to have been their wedding day.
4. The marriage was delayed due to an error in the marriage certificate.
5. Clym returned to Egdon Heath as he was fed up with life in Paris.
6. Mrs. Yeobright is against her son's marriage to Eustacia as she feels she is not a good woman.

### NOTES

### 3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Who are the two different 'Pips' in *Great Expectations*?
2. Trace the growth of Pip's character through his hardships.
3. Give a character sketch of Clym Yeobright.
4. What are the contradictions in Eustacia's character?
5. Write a short note on the novel of realism.

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the title *Great Expectations*.
2. How does Miss Havisham use her ward, Estella, to exact her revenge on men? How does Estella make this training a part of her character?
3. How does Hardy depict the hopelessness of life through his characters? Give adequate examples from *The Return of the Native*.
4. Discuss the prose writing style in Hardy's novels.
5. What were the features of the sentimental novel? Who were the main proponents and what were their representative works?

### 3.9 FURTHER READING

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