

AMERICAN LITERATURE

M.A. ENGLISH, FINAL YEAR - Paper - II

Lesson Writers

Prof. Shyamala

Dept. (Institute) of English
University of Kerala
Trivandrum - 34

Dr. Sindhu Menon

Dept. of English
University of Bangalore
Bangalore

Dr. K. Sandhya

Reader in English
Dept of English
Maris Stella College
Vijayawada

Dr. Raja Sekhar Patteti

Associate Professor
Dept of English
Acharya Nagarjuna University
Nagarjuna Nagar - 522 510

Editor :

Dr. Raja Sekhar Patteti

Associate Professor
Dept. of English
Acharya Nagarjuna University
Nagarjuna Nagar - 522 510

Academic Co-ordinator :

Prof. K. Ratna Shiela Mani

Associate Professor, Department of English
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar

Director

Prof. M.V. Ramkumar Ratnam M.A., Ph.D.

ENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

**Acharya Nagarjuna University
Nagarjuna Nagar - 522 510 A.P.**

Ph : 0863-2293299, 2293356, 08645 - 211023,

Cell : 9848285518, 08645 - 211024 (Study Material)

Website : www.anucde.com, e-mail : anucde@yahoo.com

AMERICAN LITERATURE

PAPER - II

First Edition : 2004

Second Edition : 2011

Third Edition : 2014.

No. of Copies : 2000

(C) Acharya Nagarjuna University

This book is exclusively prepared for the use of students of M.A., Centre for Distance Education, Acharya Nagarjuna University and this book is meant for limited circulation only.

Published by :

Prof. M.V. Ramkumar Ratnam

Director

Centre for Distance Education,

Acharya Nagarjuna University

Printed at :

Don Bosco Technical School Press

Ring Road, Guntur-7, Ph : 2350832

FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging ahead in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining a B++ (80-85) grade from the NAAC in the year 2003, the University has achieved recognition as one of the front rank universities in the country. At present Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from about 300 affiliated colleges spread over the three districts of Guntur, Krishna and Prakasam.

The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education with the aim to bring higher education within reach of all. The Centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. With the goal of bringing education to the doorstep of all such people, Acharya Nagarjuna University has started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A. and L.L.M. courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004 onwards.

To facilitate easier understanding by students studying through the distance mode, these self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been drafted with great care and expertise within the stipulated time by these teachers. Constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers involved respectively. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of this distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, weekly classes and contact classes will be arranged at the UG and PG levels respectively.

It is my aim that students getting higher education through the Centre for Distance Education should improve their qualification, have better employment opportunities and in turn facilitate the country's progress. It is my fond desire that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will grow from strength to strength in the form of new courses and by catering to larger number of people. My congratulations to all the Directors, Academic Co-ordinators, Editors and Lesson - writers of the Centre who have helped in these endeavours.

Prof. K Viyyanna Rao
Vice - Chancellor,
Acharya Nagarjuna University

**AMERICAN LITERATURE
PAPER - II**

Syllabus

Detailed Study :

1. Whitman : **Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd**
2. Frost : **Home Burial : Birches**
3. Emerson : **The American Scholar**
4. Miller : **Death of salesman**

Non-detailed Study :

5. Dickinson: **Poems (J303, J322, J347, J528, J712)**
6. Thoreau : **Walden**
7. Hemingway : **The Old Man and the Sea.**
8. Malamud : **The Assistant**
9. O'Neill : **The Hairy Ape**
10. Poe : **The Raven**
11. Melville : **Moby Dick**
12. Williams : **The Glass Menagerie.**

M.A. English (Final) DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2005

Paper - II : AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question 1 from Unit I and TWO questions each from Units II and III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT - I (4 x 5 = 20 marks)

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following:

- (a) Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind - its is not my voice;
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.
- (b) I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze of thee in the west, fronting the west, Coming with thee,
O comrade lustrous, with silver face in the night.
- (c) When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy' been swinging them.
- (d) That would be good both going and coming back
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches
- (e) Books are written on it be thinkers, nor by
Man thinking; by men of talent, that is,
Who start wrong who set out from accepted
dogmas, not from their own sight of principles.
- (f) Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town; in the
insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women.
- (g) Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the papers.
He's not the finest character that ever lived.
- (h) You never took my interest in him. My salvation is that I never took any interest in any-

thing.

UNIT - II

2. Write a critical appreciation of Whitman's poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking".
3. Consider Robert Frost as a pastoral poet.
4. Write an essay on the American character' of American Scholar.
5. Examine Miller' Death of Salesman as an experimental play.
6. Write a note on American Romanticism.

UNIT III

7. In Emily Dickinson one often wonders whether she was writing a poem or a letter. Discuss.
8. Consider Thoreau's WALDEN as a fable of general.
9. Discuss the theme of quest for identity in the Hairy Ape.
10. How did Poe justify the composition of his poem RAVEN.
11. Write short notes on FOUR of the following:

(a) Thoreau's use of "I" voice in Walden. (b) Santiago in The old Man and the

Sea.

- (c) Plot of The Glass Managerie. (d) Theme of Moby Dick.
(e) Emerson's Transcendentalism in American Scholar.
(f) Symbolism in Whitman's poetry. (g) Symbolism in Whitman's poetry.
(h) Theme of Hairy Ape.

M.A. English (Final) DEGREE EXAMINATION, MAY 2006

Paper - II : AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question 1 from Unit I and TWO questions each from Units II and III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT - I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following:

- a) He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.
- b) Where do you mean to go? First tell me that
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I will-
- c) Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory
Pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites.
- d) Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who
creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never
want.
- e) In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.
- f) If old man Wagner was alive I'd have been in-charge of
New York now. That man was prince, he was a masterful man.
- h) In action is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind.

UNIT - II

2. Why is Emerson's 'The American Scholar' considered to be prophetic?
3. 'Out of the cradle endlessly Rocking' is Whitman's most perfect poem. Discuss.
4. Consider Robert Frost as a New England poet.
5. Critically examine the dramatic technique employed in Death of a Salesman.
6. Attempt a study of the transcendentalist movement in American literature with special reference to Emerson and Thoreau.

UNIT - III

7. Mention some of the ways in which Thoreau relates himself to the world around him in Walden.
8. Bring out the metaphysical element in Emily Dickinson's poems prescribed for study.
9. Discuss the tragic vision of Hemingway in The Old Man and the Sea.
10. "Moby-Dick is a representation as much of the voyage within as the voyage without". Elucidate.
11. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - a) White whale in Moby - Dick
 - b) Expressionism
 - c) Negative capability in Frost's poetry
 - d) Dark Romanticism in Emily Dickinson's poetry
 - e) Yank in the Hairy Ape
 - f) Regionalism in American Literature
 - g) Tragic tension
 - h) The American Renaissance.

(DEG 22)

M.A. (Final) DEGREE EXAMINATION, MAY 2008.

Second Year

English

Paper II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Question No. 1 is compulsory.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

(a) I, Chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and here after, taking all hints to use them

(b) Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?

(c) She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,
Blind creature, and a while he didn't see.

(d) I like to get away from earth a while
And then come back to it and begin over.

(e) Only so much do I know, as I have lived.

(f) We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands;
we will speak our own minds.

(g) We get a rope and sling her around, and then we climb up there
with a couple of saws are take her down.

(h) Been driving me crazy, the most terrific machine I ever saw in
my life. I was up all night with it.

UNIT II

2. Critically examine Emerson's concern for the individual in The American Scholar.

3. Comment on the use of symbolism in Whitman's poem's prescribed.

4. Discuss the element of realism in the poetry of frost.

5. Consider Death of a salesman as an experimental play.
6. Comment on the literature of the Civil War period in America.

UNIT III

7. Examine the view that Walden portrays Thoreau's feeling for the unity of man and nature.
 8. In Dickinson 'one often wonders whether she was writing a poem or a letter'. Discuss.
 9. Examine The Old Man and the sea as a symbolical novel.
 10. Comment on the observation of W.B. Yeats that 'Poe was a great lyric poet'.
 11. Write an essay on the use of expressionism in The Hairy Ape.
 12. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - (a) Malamud as a novelist
 - (b) Ishmael's quest in Moby Dick
 - (c) Tragic irony in The Glass Menagerie
 - (d) The bard of concord
 - (e) Elemental nature of Whitman's poetry
 - (f) American renaissance
 - (g) Theme of death in Dickinson
 - (h) Character of Santiago.
-

(DEG 22)

M.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2009.

Second Year

English

Paper II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Question No.1 compulsorily.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) And everyday I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
cautiously peering, absorbing, translating,
shine, shine, shine,
- (b) With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.
- (c) God, what a woman ! and its come to this,
A man can't speak of his own child that's dead
- (d) Not so much larger than a bed room is it?
There are three stones of state and one of marble.
- (e) This time, like all times, is a very good one, If we know what to do with it
- (f) Books are the best of things well used, abused among the worst. What is the
right use? What is the one end which all means going to effect? They are for
nothing but to inspire.
- (g) See Biff, everybody around me is so-false that I'm constantly lowering my
ideals Happy.
- (h) A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a
company thirty six years thin march, opens up unheard of territories of their
trade.

UNIT II

2. Examine the evaluation of "The American Scholar" as the first clarion of an American literary renaissance.
3. Attempt an essay on the note of democracy in Whitman.
4. Critically examine Frost's 'Home Burial' as a dramatic monologue.
5. Examine Miller's death of a salesman as an experimental play.
6. Examine how the American imagination is often conditioned by a puritan ideology.

UNIT III

7. Consider Thoreau's Walden as a fable of general.
8. In Emily's poetry we see a gradual evolution from doubt and scepticism to faith and belief". Justify.
9. "Old man and the sea" is an allegorical interpretation of Heming way's vision of himself, O' an artist's struggle with his material. Explain.
10. How did Poe justify the composition of his poem Raven?
11. Sketch the character of Yank. How far are we justified in calling him a hairy ape?
12. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - (a) The Jewish – American Novel
 - (b) The treatment of nature in Frost and Dickinson
 - (c) The anti-hero
 - (d) Freedom in American dream
 - (e) The Baston Brahmins
 - (f) Americanness of American literature
 - (g) Puritanism
 - (h) Linda in The Death of a Salesman.

M.A. (Final) DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2010.

Second Year

English

Paper II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question No. 1 is compulsorily.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and
TWO from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

13. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) I saw, I heard at intervals remaining one, the he – bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.
- (b) Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must come, come infalteringly
- (c) I shall laugh the worst laugh I even laughed
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I am cursed.
- (d) Earth's the right place for
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
- (e) Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past
instructs; him the future invites.
- (f) The people delight in it; the better part of every man feels, This is my music;
this is myself.
- (g) When this game is over, Charley, you'll be laughing out of the other side of your
face.
- (h) I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because
the woman has waited and the woman has suffered.

UNIT II

14. Critically examine Emerson's The American Scholar as an example of the American Renaissance.
15. Bring out the lyrical quality in the poetry of Robert Frost.
16. Consider Walt Whitman as an elemental poet.
17. Discuss the dramatic technique of Arthur Miller in Death of a Salesman.
18. Write an essay on the impact of the American dream on American Literature.

UNIT III

19. Write an essay on Thoreau's Walden Pond.
 20. Discuss the theme of death as portrayed in Emily Dickinson's poems prescribed.
 21. Examine the art of characterisation in The Old Man and the Sea.
 22. Explain the Central idea in Poe's 'The Raven'.
 23. Write an essay on the use of expressionism in The Hairy Ape.
 24. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - (a) The Bard of Boston.
 - (b) Dramatic techniques of Williams.
 - (c) The Journey motif in Moby Dick.
 - (d) Theme of The Assistant.
 - (e) Whitman as an elegiac poet.
 - (f) Existentialist predicament in Modern American Drama.
 - (g) Theme of Alienation in American Fiction.
 - (h) Symbolism in American Poetry.
-

(DEG 22)

M.A. English, Second Year, DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2011.

Paper II – AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question No. 1 which is compulsory.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT – I

1. Annotate FOUR of the following passages :

- (a) He call'd on his mate
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.
Yes my brother I know.
- (b) With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love.
With every leaf a miracle – and from this bush in the dooryard.
- (c) "I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed
I'm cursed, God, if I don't believe I'm cursed".
- (d) So was I once myself a swinger of birches
And so I dream of going back to be.
- (e) The people delight in it : the better part of every man feels, This is my music : this is myself.
- (f) "The office [the duty] of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances."
- (g) And always to have to get ahead of the next fellow. And still that's how you build a future.
- (h) His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being.

UNIT II

2. What could be the failures of American scholar according to Emerson?
3. Bring out the elegiac note in Robert Frost's poems studied by you.
4. How does Whitman celebrate American democracy?

5. Can you consider Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman a quintessential American hero?
6. Discuss the major themes in Modern American poetry.

UNIT III

7. Critically assess the arguments of Thoreau in asserting virtue in living away from civilization.
8. What are the unique qualities of Emily Dickinson's poetry?
9. Consider The Old Man and the Sea as an epic celebrating heroism.
10. Attempt a critical appreciation of Poe's Raven.
11. Critically comment on theatrical technique of The Hairy Ape.
12. Write short notes on any FOUR of the following :
 - (a) Boston Brahmins
 - (b) Women characters of Williams
 - (c) Themes of The Assistant
 - (d) Frost's Dramatic monologues
 - (e) The existential themes in American drama
 - (f) Symbolism of the sea in Moby Dick
 - (g) Animal images in the Glass Menagerie
 - (h) Theme of Alienation in American fiction.

CONTENTS

Introduction to American Literature

1. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking 1.1 - 1.20
2. Walt Whitman - When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloomed 2.1 - 2.23
3. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) -The Raven 3.1 - 3.18
4. Eugene O'Neill - The Hairy Ape 4.1 - 4.15
5. The American Scholar 5.1 - 5.11
6. Moby Dick 6.1 - 6.29
7. The Glass Menagerie 7.1 - 7.14
8. Walden 8.1 - 8.13
9. The Assistant 9.1 - 9.10
10. The Death of a Salesman 10.1-10.10
11. The Old Man and the Sea 11.1. - 11.10
12. "Home Burial" and "Birches" 12.1 - 12.10
13. Poems 13.1-13.10

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

American literature has succeeded in gaining the central status in the academic curriculum of Indian Universities. American literature has circumscribed every discontinued voice and has acquired multidimensional perspective. When we try to cartograph the evolution of American literature the prominent tendency is to recognise the socio-political circumstances. American literature has assimilated itself with the social history and culture of America. As the American writers were burdened with the task of dismantling the acquired universal principles of British literature, they tried their best to establish a distinctive identity in every genre of literature. So, when an American takes up the task of writing, it is understood as an eccentric activity. Keeping himself away from the center American writer goes to the extent of acquiring peripherality to further achieve the status of liberating the 'self'. This element is seen in the writings of all the American writers.

To trace the origin of American writings one has to recognise the major wars and the significant changes. The period from 1607-1775 the overall era from the founding of the first settlement in Jamestown to the Outbreak of American Revolution is considered Colonial period. The writings during this period were religious, practical and historical. Some of the writers during this phase were William Bradford, John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. The writings of these people have defined the nationhood of America and propelled America into the revolution. It is the repressive and humiliating Acts of the British Govt.—Sugar Act (1764), the Stamp Act (1765)—that compelled the first Congress meet in Philadelphia on 5th September, 1774 to defy the Colonial rule. Samuel Adams played an important role in organizing the resistance. The second continental congress that initiated the war of Independence included Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Benjamin Franklin with his versatile personality became a symbol of American enlightenment. He effectively promoted American interests in England and France. In 1776 he helped the Second continental congress to draft the Declaration of Independence. He is known in his life time for his publication of Poor Richards Almanack (1732-35). Thomas Jefferson gave American democracy its basic premise. The complete text of the declaration of Independence remains purely his contribution. Another significant era is the publication of poems on various subjects in 1773 by Phyllis Wheatley, a slave girl who initiated the line of black writers.

The period from 1775 to 1828 is known as the early National period and triumph of Jacksonian democracy. This is also considered the period of emergence of National imaginative literature. The first American comedy The Contrast (1787) by Royall Tylers was produced. The earliest American novel The Power of Sympathy (1789) by William Hill Brown was written during this period. This is also the period of the long series of Slave narratives and autobiographies by the Black writers. Another significant development of this period is the publication of The North American Review.

The period from 1828-1865 from Jacksonian era to the American Civil war was called the Romantic period in American literature. The period is particularly known as the period of American Renaissance. This period is also addressed as the age of Transcendentalism. Transcendentalism owes its debt to Unitarianism. Unitarianism was propounded by William Ellery Channing, who made God and Human mind daringly similar. God is another name for human intelligence. Under the influence of idealist philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Schelling transcendentalism emphasized individualism implicit in Unitarianism. Transcendentalism developed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott and Margaret Fuller preferred intuition to reason, freedom to institution. The Transcendentalists preferred 'intuited truth' through

S.T. Coleridge's primary imagination in Biographia Literaria as the repetition of infinite 'I am'. The Transcendentalist journal The Dial which propagated the ideas won the faith of the people for a long time. F.O. Matthiessen in American Renaissance (1949) examined the concentrated experience in the works of these writers.

Emerson and Thoreau stood for consciousness and created the age of First person singular. Both held to the idea that 'every real man must be a non conformist'. Emerson's American scholar was hailed as our 'Intellectual Declaration of Independence'. The scholar is defined as 'Man Thinking' who goes beyond convention to learn directly from life. Emerson emphasized the qualities of self respect and self-reliance. His insistence on self-determination in Representative Men (1850) implied that the qualities of great men are present in all Americans. Thoreau's conscience is evident in all his works. In 'Civil Disobedience' his assistance to fugitive slaves is seen as an act of revolution. His Walden is the result of his determination to find out the necessities of life. Walden Pond predictably reflected different states of mind. The vision of Emerson and Thoreau brought a new dimension to the nature, God and human mind. Nathaniel Hawthorne, with his works The Scarlet Letter brought out the effects of puritan obsession and 'Transcendental naivety'. Herman Melville with Moby Dick or The Whale and Billy Bud proved the variety of the 20th century discovery. Walt Whitman with the base of authentic human experience effectively and appropriately represented Nationalism and became the bard of democracy. His Leaves of Grass has been considered the extraordinary piece of wisdom. The longest poem in Leaves of Grass, 'song of myself' is remembered for the celebration of 'Self' and 'Individuality'. Whitman played a significant role in nourishing the universal identity with an undercurrent Americanness. Through his works he has preserved the objectives of the Union during the period of Civil war on the issue of Slavery. He paid sincere and committed tributes to Abraham Lincoln with an elegy When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed. All his works stood for the expression of finest symbolism.

The period from 1865-1914 is the realistic period. Realism became the dominant mode in American writing after the civil war. The works of Mark Twain, Henry James, William Dean Howells, Charles W. Chestnut have marred the Romantic and escapist writings. Mark Twain with the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, (1875), The Princess Pauper (1882), Life on the Mississippi and Adventure of Huckleberry Finn (1884) expressed the heights of reality. Henry James with his works The Portrait of a Lady 1881, The sacred Fount (1901), The Ambassadors, The Tragic Muse unveiled the contours of human psychology with an authentic rendering of reality.

The era between 1914 and 1939 is called the period of two world wars. This is also known as the period of modernism. It is marked by economic depression and it had its effect over the writings of Harriet Monroe, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Robinson Jeffers, T.S. Eliot and E.E. Cummings. The period of Modernism begins with the vision of Henry Adams. His work Democracy: An American Novel (1880) portrayed the corrupt system. During this phase Native Poetry has emerged with the recognition of Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) by Roosevelt. His collection of poems The Man against the sky (1916) established him as a substantial poet. Robinson's modernism is seen in Robert Frost's poems A Boy's Will, (1913), North of Boston. Frost's poems 'Home Burial', 'Birches', 'Mending Wall', 'After Apple Picking, The Road not Taken' evoked the paradoxes of life. Most of the early 20th century American poets were influenced by Ezra Pound's 'Making it New'. American poets have gathered around Hulme and Pound in advancing the theory of Imagism. Pound's work Make it knew carried the content of accommodating ordinary reader. I.S. Eliot's reputation as an exponent of theory of Impersonal poetry and his uncompromising exposition to the myths and allusions made him the perennial poet in American literature.

This period was abuzz with the theatrical activity. The emergence of 'American Company' 'the Theatre Guild of New York', 'The Group theatre' gave a new lease of life to the experimental drama of social context. Eugene O'Neil proved to be a master dramatist with the themes of power of illusion. His works Beyond the Horizon (1920), the Emperor Jones (1920), the Hairy Ape (1922), and the Great god Brown (1926) created the mixture of realism and expressionism. His experimentation with wide range of theatrical techniques advanced American dramatic consciousness and sustained the interesting possibilities for the stage.

During this period the novel emerged as the dominant literary form. John Steinbeck (1902-68) with Of Mice and Men (1937) the Grapes of wrath responded to the impact of the depression on ordinary people. Ernest Hemingway with incontrovertible reality achieved inverted sentimentality. Hemingway with his works A Farewell to Arms (1929), For Whom the Bell Tolls, Across the river and into the Seas compelled man to devise a method of carving a significant living in a secular world. He also developed a practice of prose style from the guidance of Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. H.L. Mencken with The American Language (1919), Ellen Glasgow with the most celebrated Barren Ground (1925) made the south as the most productive literary region. William Faulkner embarked on the creation of Yoknapatwpha country in his works Absalom, Absalom, The Sound and the Fury (1929), Light in August (1932). He has centralized the works on the influence of past and present, the moral decay of old south and the erosion of tradition by the secular values. Different facts of modernism like avarice, perversion and murder are the major occupants in the trilogy the Hamlet (1940), the Town (1957), Mansion (1959). Faulkner's attitude towards Negro's claim to equality remained unacceptable as he said "To oppose a material fact with a moral truth is silly". Intruder in the Dust is his didactic novel and The Sound and the Fury (1929) fetched him eminence as the Noble Prize winner. Robert Penn Warren was considered a man of letters. As a co-author of influential books Understanding Poetry (1938), Understanding Fiction (1943), and Modern Rhetoric (1948) he has raised the standards of literary appreciation in U.S.

This period is sub classified into Jazz Age. F.Scott Fitzgerald's the Tales of the Jazz Age (1922) has initiated a new dimension in narrativity. This period is also known as the period of Harlem Renaissance. Upper Manhattan in New York became the bed of Afro-American writings. Writers like James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Langhston Hughes, Countee Culeen, W.E.B. Dubios, James Baldwin have given authenticity to the Afro-American writings.

DIVERSITY: The period from 1939 was influenced by New Criticism represented by the conservative Southern writers. The two world wars have strengthened America's influence in every sphere. American literature has provided a space for every community to voice its aspirations. Social minorities asserted themselves with new vigour particularly after 1950s. The Civil Rights Movement and the Black writings created commotion in the cultural frame work of America. "March on Washigton" on 25th March 1963 led and controlled by Martin Luther King compelled the urgency in drafting the rights of equality under the constitution. With the assassination of Martin Luther King on 4th April 1968 Black movement lost its solidarity. It has succeeded to create greater curiosity to perceive Afro-American literature in the right perspective. This phase has outlined a perfect genealogy of Afro-American writings that goes back to Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, An American slave (1845), Booker T. Washington's Up From Slavery (1901) and William E. B. Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk (1903). Afro-American philosophical and theoretical frame works developed by W.E.B. Dubois and Alaine Lock contributed for the production of significant works like Richard Wright's Native son, Ralph Ellison's the Invisible Man, James Baldwin's Go Tell it on the Mountain (1953).

This period is also marked particularly by anti establishment and anti traditional literary movements. The period is marked by the presence of Beat writers like Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac who established the reciprocation of the cultural echoes in literature. Another school of poetry that emerged into the scenario with resonances of African cultural renaissance is the Black Mountain School of Poetry. Charles Olson and Robert Creeley brought in the significance of African cultural symbolic significances, with a considerable deviation from the stream of African Literature, in their poetry. Another school of poetry that appropriately reflected the contemporaneity is the New York school of Poetry. Poets like John Ashberry, Kenneth Koch and Frank O'Hara reiterated the very fundamental credentials of American democracy. They succinctly represented the universal aspirations of Americans who enacted the role of guarding the very existence of American multiculturalism in their poetry.

Another stream of significant writings that brought authentic subjective density are the American Jewish writings. Jewish writings made a clear demarcation from the traditional themes of American literature. The writings of Leslie Fiedler, Joseph Heller, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth nourished the appreciative spirit of the readers to the precincts of literature.

The elements of Modernism and Postmodernism are also effectively imbibed in the contemporary writings. John Barth and Thomas Pynchon are the most crude writers who reflected the theoretical transition in their works. Barthes with Giles Goat Boy, The revised New Syllabus and Thomas Pynchon with Crying lot 49, and Gravity's Rainbow initiated an era of post modernity and theoretical applications.

Helena Grice and Candida Hepworth's Ethnic American Literatures (2001) aptly reflects the contemporary discourse of American Literature. The work has represented Native American, Asian American (with Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian) Chicano American literatures as the contemporary streams of literature. As America has acquired multicultural and Diasporic identity, the writings of different ethnic communities have become worthy things to be considered. Native American writers like N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor, Louise Erdrich have produced a coherent body of Native American Literature. Native American literature effectively corresponds to the theoretical and post theoretical developments. Asian American literature by the writers of Asian descent is a growing field of literature. Writers like Bharati Mukerjee and Chitra Bennerji Devakaruni portrayed the oscillating psychic dilemmas of south Asian existential problems. Chinese writers like Lee Yan Phou, Amy Ling, Jade Snow Wong, Louis Chu are of considerable recognition. Japanese American literature has recorded substantially the experiences of immigration. Etsu Sugimoto's auto biographical novel A Daughter of the Samurai dealt with the real and fictional portraits of Japan and American life. Writers like Monica Soan, John Okada, Toshio Mori, Hisaye Yamamoto produced significant works that depicted the contemporary American culture.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Marshall Walker. The literature of the United States of America. Macmillan, Oxford. 1983.

Helena Grice, Candida Hepworth. Beginning Ethnic American Literatures. Manchester Univ. Press. New York. 2001.

Lesson Writer,
Dr. Raja Sekhar. Patteti

WALT WHITMAN (1819 – 1892)**Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking****(DETAILED STUDY)****Contents:**

1. 1. The period
1. 2. Walt Whitman – his life and works
1. 3. The poetry of Whitman
1. 4. The text – 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking'
1. 5. Explication
1. 6. Critical Appreciation
1. 7. Sample Questions
1. 8. Suggested Readings

1. 1. The Period

Literature is always influenced by the physical, cultural, social, political, psychological, and literary background of its country. This is especially true of American literature. The First Frontier of America, established during the seventeenth century, enclosed a small area of land, which, because it was left comparatively undisturbed for about two centuries, became the seat of a new civilization. This civilization was composed, according to Spiller, "of almost all the elements thrown off by a seething Europe". And it produced what is known as America's first 'Renaissance' in about the 1840's bringing forth writers like Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Poe. But it was not till the Second Frontier of America was firmly established that the roots of Modern America were planted. In 1890 the Continental Nation was formed stretching from ocean to ocean and from Canada to Mexico. This was the beginning of a civilization very different from the earlier one in many ways besides size and this produced the second Renaissance, which brought forth a new generation of writers in the different genres of literature.

The Americans were an off-shoot of the Europeans, but very different from them. The combination of this old, sophisticated culture with a "constantly receding wilderness", produced a unique people who came to be called "typically American." Psychologically, the American is basically self-reliant and independent. Since the beginning he had to fend for himself, and tame a fairly wild stretch of land with the help of just his instincts, and the useless knowledge of a very sophisticated civilization. Faced with the limitless space of the new continent, its hazards and dangers, he developed his qualities of individualism and self-reliance.

The Americans became basically Democrats at heart, for having no traditional criteria they made judgments on the basis of merit and not birth. This freedom in a land of new hope and great potentialities made them very optimistic and positivistic towards life. But they felt insecure, needed something solid to lean on, and so they either turned to religion, or Puritanism, or transferred their allegiance to old English and European traditions, finding their own salvation as best as they could. However, this wave of conventionalism ended with the First World War, after which came the "lost generation", who were materialistic and cynical, for their ideals have been shattered.

The Cultural background too went through the same stages of progression as the psychological state of the American. The period before the first World War was known in America as 'the genteel age', which in spite of the interferences of some realists, and of the machine age remained basically "European, refined and 'old fashioned'". The Post war period between 1918 and 1929 was a time of easy money, cynical materialism, an age of the youth of revolutionized morals.

The social background also passed through phases of remarkable change. The American society in the nineteenth century was a combination of "Frontier life, local folklore, and religious institutions." Melville, Hawthorne, Irving, Cooper, and in the field of poetry, Poe and Whitman, did try to represent this distinctively American society, but the main stream of American literature up to the time of Henry James continued to be derivative from Europe. Like most later generations of American authors, this first generation often considered itself 'lost' and traced its plight to a society whose values were too confused and crude to sustain a mature literary art. However, there followed upon this sense of retardation, the hope of a literature of genuine merit. Emerson declared bluntly that the Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetic nature. The work of Poe, Emerson, and Whitman manifests a wholly conscious attempt to break through the anti-poetic to the idea of man, define it, and so make it a force for the transformation of the anti-poetic into the poetic. Now, of course, the American even writes in an English of their own, different from the British variety.

The political background of America is, of course, democratic. Americans believe in the right of the individual to liberty in political, economic, and other fields. Yet criticism of capitalism filtered into American thought with the coming of Marxism in the twentieth century, the influence of which is to be seen in some twentieth century writers.

As far as the literary background is concerned, there are some elements in classical American literature, which influenced modern literature. The chief of these was rebellion against conventions, and a tendency towards iconoclasm. Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862) in *Walden* expresses the "typically American attitude of rejecting sophisticated European civilization" in favour of living in the woods, and working with one's own hands. He wishes "so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust." Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803- 1882) also had the same idea, only he preached against "organized religion." He was for "intuitive spiritual experi-

ence." He complained of American intellectuals' dependence on Europe. He exhorted the Americans to relate to their own landscape and culture and to work with American materials. It was the very same landscape, which brought out the prophetic strain in American poetry. However, the fulfillment of Emerson's views was left to Whitman whose *Leaves of Grass* was greeted by Emerson with enthusiasm. In Whitman, the various strains of American culture fulfil themselves – the Puritan, the Transcendental, the realistic and the visionary, the prophetic and the citizenly.

Rebellion in the technique of writing may be seen in Hawthorne and Poe, who changed the European "tale" into what has now become the American short story. Herman Melville developed a style, which was no influence modern writers of fiction. Besides these, Walt Whitman was the first to write in "free verse". He was called the spiritual predecessor of the moderns, and his *Leaves of Grass* has greatly influenced modern poets like Pound, Cummings, and Hart Crane.

1.2. Walt Whitman : His life and works

Walt Whitman was born in West Hills, Long Island, on May 31, 1819. His father Walter, was a small farmer who moved to Brooklyn and became a carpenter. His mother, Louisa Van Velsor was closer to her son and her interest in Quakerism was the only religious inheritance passed on to the future poet. Later on we find him romanticizing his Quaker childhood, while idealizing his mother.

Whitman's childhood was spent on the farms of Long Island and the streets of the neighbouring city of Brooklyn. As James Miller has put it, "Both the world of nature and the world of man impinged forcefully on the young boy's imagination, and the mature poet denied neither, but exultingly embraced both." In his poem 'There was a Child Went Forth', we get a glimpse of the domestic scene of his youth. He was a bright boy, imaginative and dreamy and given to doubts which made him restless. He attended school only briefly, leaving it at the age of eleven. Then he worked for short periods as an office boy, a printer, a country schoolteacher and an editor of contentious political newspapers. No wonder he could not stick to teaching, not only for want of adequate academic background, but also because of his dreamy and speculative temperament. For a period of three years, from the age of about seventeen to twenty, he drifted from one rural school to another.

As a journalist, Whitman wrote propaganda and sentimental fiction for a number of years, until suddenly in his thirties he began to write the enormously original poems of *Leaves of Grass*. By then he had worked on various newspapers in and out of Brooklyn, including *The Long Islander*, *The New York Aurora*, and *The Brooklyn Evening Star*. At the age of twenty-seven, he became editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, a position of importance, considering his young age. However, the position did not last for more than two years because of his political involvement. He was a Democrat and so was the paper too, but he was a supporter of the Free Soil Party, which was opposed to slavery. His newspaper writings have been published which hardly show any signs of America's genius and epic poet in the

making. As an editor Whitman was living the full life of the man of the city and one of his greatest passions was the opera. The magnificent music and high melodrama of the opera left indelible impressions on his imagination, which helped shape the poetry of his masterpiece. While working on the staff of a newspaper in New Orleans, he got the opportunity to travel through the length and breadth of the varied landscapes of America that he was to later celebrate in his songs. He was enthralled by the beauty of his country and his imagination was liberated from the provincialism of the narrow Long Island world, to embrace the kaleidoscopic variety of the vast America of his dreams. On his return to Brooklyn in June 1848, once again Whitman turned to journalism; but his political stance created problems and he finally turned to his father's work as a carpenter.

The first edition of the *Leaves of Grass* was published in July 1855 by Whitman himself, when he was thirty-six years old. This edition did not sell well and Whitman himself wrote three reviews of it for the public. In 1856 he published the second edition with a number of new poems, in part as a reply to a letter from Emerson, extolling the original edition. The third edition, with a still larger number of new poems came out in 1860, which proclaimed him as a practicing poet in every sense of the term. As poet and artist Whitman found his true milieu in the society of Bohemian New-York. He had a considerable literary circle of friendship. With his absorption in poetry his political interests had started declining. However, when the Civil war broke out, he acted as a nurse among the wounded of both sides in the vicinity of Washington. The sight of the great mass of suffering soldiers preyed on his mind and he offered his service to the wounded with all his fellow feeling and deep human sympathies. The Civil War proved to be a turning point in his life, as out of his deep emotional involvement he found material for new poems. Inspired by a new purpose and enthusiasm, Whitman poured out new poems in abundance, to be published in 1865 as *Drum-Taps*. Shortly after its appearance, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated and Whitman's sorrow and sense of loss found expression in great poetry, 'O Captain! My Captain!', a kind of public tribute and 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed', a personal chant welling out of emotional depths that only Whitman could have written. While he celebrated his relationship and comradeship with Lincoln, he had a good many close friends from the non-literary, even the illiterate class of the lower social strata.

In 1865 he was fired from his job in a government department for his obscene poetry. In 1873 he suffered a paralytic stroke that left him incapacitated. The death of his mother later in the year was another terrible blow, which left him in a state of depression. One of the poems of this period, 'Prayer of Columbus' is a symbolic embodiment of his own situation. He was given the best kind of treatment in Camden and Whitman has recorded his times there in a series of journal entries later published as *Specimen Days* (1882). He regained his to some extent by dint of his powerful will and in 1879 undertook a long journey to parts of the country in the far West which he had seen only in his imagination. His imagination was inspired anew by the raw grotesque landscapes. The most significant activity of his closing years was the final touches he gave to his masterpiece. The result was new editions with major additions and restructuring. He published some other books also during this period.

His defense of American democracy appeared in *Democratic Vistas* in 1871. *Specimen Days* was out in 1882-83. A volume of miscellaneous prose and poetry *November Boughs* appeared in 1888. But his main creative efforts went into the final shaping of his *Leaves of Grass*. When he died in 1892, at the age of seventy-two, he was well prepared for death. He had portrayed death as a 'strong deliveress' in 'When Lilacs Last to the Doorstep Bloomed.'

1. 2. 1. Formative Influences

The earliest influence on Whitman was that of his parents. As a child, he was greatly influenced by his father's radical democratic ideas and his mother's Quakerism, with its cardinal teaching, "in each person there is an inner light, which it is his duty to heed". These influences must have contributed towards making him a poet of democracy, with firm faith in the dignity of the individual and in equality and fraternity. The natural beauty of the Long Island with its long seashore as well as the crowded cities of Brooklyn and New York in its vicinity too had left indelible impressions on his mind. James Miller has rightly called him "son of the sea and the city, absorbing both the seashore scenes and teeming Brooklyn, lover of both solitude and the crowds..." and commented, "Among romantic poets, Whitman appears unique in his absorption and celebration of both country and city. His poetry represents an imaginative fusion of the two, its very form resolving their opposition and reconciling their conflicting pulls."

The earliest literary influences on Whitman were Homer and Shakespeare whom he used to read for hours together. He was a voracious reader of the epics, the classics and the Bible. He was impressed by the "divine and primal poetic structure" of the Bible and his intimate and early knowledge of the Bible's simple rhythms and stately language must have influenced his poetic lines later on. As a boy, he was frequently exposed to Evangelism and Oratory in vogue at that time. His passion for the opera was another major influence, which reflects in his masterpiece. The mystic transcendental philosophy of India and of Emerson had contributed towards shaping Whitman's mysticism. It was Emerson's dream that some American poet should embody in his poetry the very spirit of his country, and Whitman's poetry is a fulfillment of that dream. His *Leaves of Grass* is the epic of modern America. However, all these manifold influences are inadequate to account for the distinctive tone and quality of his masterpiece. It has been suggested that some mystic experience of the poet is at the root of the mysticism that runs through the *Leaves*. Some biographers attribute it to some love affair. The truth remains a mystery.

1. 3. The Poetry of Whitman

During his lifetime Whitman's poetry was considered shocking and went largely un-read, but later on he came to be considered as a national poet, the representative poet of America. It is aptly remarked that with Whitman, America established its intellectual identity. He is an unabashed singer of the glories of America and democracy.

1.3.1. The Note of Democracy in his Poetry

During his lifetime Whitman's poetry was considered shocking and went largely unread, but later on he came to be considered as a national poet, the representative poet of America. As he wrote frequently about America and about democracy, he has been considered as a national poet and the poet of democracy. He was a firm believer in the inherent dignity, equality and brotherhood of man and faith in democracy is the keynote of his poetry. He is the greatest poet of American democracy and his *The Leaves of Grass*, the epic of democracy, has come to be regarded as "The Bible of Democracy." Being a born democrat, Whitman believes in the inherent dignity and equality of all men and women. All men are equal for him and all professions equally honourable. In the words of Edward Dowden, "He will not have the people appear in his poems by representatives or delegates; the people itself, in its undiminished totality, marches through his poems, making its greatness and variety felt." The individual is all important, not to be sacrificed even for the good of society.

The democratic poet celebrates no individual hero, nor does he celebrate himself. In his great 'Song of Myself', he is everyman, like Joyce's *Ulysses*. The longest poem in *Leaves of Grass* is named after his own name, but the self-celebration throughout is celebration of himself as a man and as an American. As James Miller has commented, "The 'I' in any/one Whitman poem is not so much a personal reference as a fusion of several characters, a composite character, who exists in no place other than in the poem." In his own words, Whitman rationalizes his attention on self in his poetry, "Other poets celebrate great events, personages, romances, wars, loves, passions, the victories and power of their country, or some real or imagined incident. This poet celebrates natural propensities in himself, and that is the way he celebrates all." The 'I' in his poetry is 'Everyman', a creature of contradictory impulses and instincts, both good and bad.

Whitman's poetry is not a 'class' poetry, but a poetry in which he celebrates common humanity. His sense of identity with the humanity at large is complete.

Whitman has a sense of identity not only with man, but with all living creatures. This sense of the 'oneness of all' makes his democracy universal and pantheistic. He is led away from the 'political' aspect of democracy towards transcendental, pantheistic democracy, which was always his main concern. The basic emotion in Whitman's lyricism is a feeling of kinship with all creation, evidenced in the very title of *Leaves of Grass*. The grass is the great democratic symbol in nature, and lying on it and 'observing a spear of summer grass' that the whole great motif is set in motion.

Whitman is proud of his nationality. He believed that modern America is the center of science and democracy, just as in the past, Europe was the center of Feudalism and Asia, of myth and fable. The American nation, visualized as the leader of humanity, is the true hero of his poetry. For the most part his America is a dreamed and inward continent.

Whitman's democracy is spiritual also. He is a spiritual democrat as he sees in democracy the possibilities of universal peace, tolerance and brotherhood. The human soul

has immense possibilities of good in it, and these possibilities are fully brought out only in a democracy. Whitman writes, "Democracy is not so much a political system as a grand experiment for the development of the individual." He is not a mere idealist, rather his democracy is practical. The democratic note runs through the entire gamut of his poetry and he may rightly be called the "voice of democracy." He had a dream to establish a world-wide institution "of the dear love of comrades" and the *Leaves of Grass* Embodies that dream.

1.3.2. Symbolism in his poetry

Symbolism is an effective tool of the writer to communicate to his readers highly abstract and metaphysical truths, which cannot be conveyed directly through ordinary use of language. Whitman's poetry is highly symbolic, for he believed that true art is suggestive and that it requires 'mental gymnastics', as he called it, for the reader to really appreciate it. He wanted to communicate his own perception of (1) the essential oneness or identity of all, (2) the spiritual reality at the back of the sensuous and the phenomenal, and the 'fluidity', 'liquid-ity' or what D.H. Lawrence calls the 'shimmeriness' of what seems to be solid and concrete. He makes use of the objects of nature as symbols of the spiritual so that "the unseen is proved by the seen."

For example, the 'I' in Whitman's poetry symbolizes the modern American, the modern man, or even everyman. As James Miller puts it, "The 'I' in his poetry is a fusion of several characters, a composite character, who exists at no place other than in the poem."

The road is another recurring symbol in his poetry, which is not merely the physical path on which the poet travels, but it also symbolizes the path which leads to spirituality, and the journey itself symbolizes the process by which the soul achieves its identity with the divine. His journeys are voyages in the metaphysical sense, and not analogous to a sight seeing trip.

In the *Leaves of Grass* there are images, which recur as symbols of major significance. The very title is symbolic. The grass, which grows in single blades as well as in clusters becomes a symbol of democracy. It symbolizes in its simplicity the miracle of the universe, the mystery of life and nature which lies not in the far away and the wonderful, but in the familiar and the common. Therefore a leaf or blade of grass is an object of contemplation for the poet and for him it is the key to the mystery of the universe, "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-works of the stars." In the *Calamus* section, the Calamus plant symbolises the intimacy of friendship. It does not grow everywhere, but in "paths untrodden", thus symbolizing that real friendship is rare and uncommon.

Another favorite symbol of Whitman is the sea, along with related water images such as rivers, lakes, and ponds. Land symbolizes the body and sea symbolizes the soul, and the seashore, where the two meet, symbolizes both the antithesis between the body and the soul and the fact that it is only through the body that one can attain spirituality. Sometimes the sea symbolizes the emotional restlessness of the poet. In *Out of the Cradle Endlessly*

Rocking, the sea assumes the role of death in the enactment of the death scene. The sea is also conceived as a cradle "endlessly rocking" at the opening of the poem and the metaphor is repeated at the end, "old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside." This vivid figure is inevitably associated with the word whispered out of the sea — death. Through the association of images, the poet links birth with death, death with birth. As he realizes that the two are closely linked, that death is not an end but a beginning, the poet accepts the word death as the "word of the sweetest song." Elsewhere, the seashore becomes the meeting ground for body and spirit, life and death, as in "Cabined Ship at Sea." In the *Autumn Rivulets* section, the "mystic ocean" is the realm of the spirit, and the seashore symbolizes the marriage of body and soul, of the material and the spiritual, of life and death. In the *Passage to India* the voyage across the sea symbolizes the journey of the soul to the country of God. Throughout the *Leaves*, water is associated with death, but in Whitman's view, death is birth, a rebirth, an entry into the spiritual world. The sea may not only be the realm of spirituality, but also the embodiment of eternity. Rivers, streams, and rivulets are all time passing and when they have finally run into the sea, they have become one with eternity.

Birds also appear as symbols in his poetry. The mocking bird, the thrush, and the hawk are the three birds, which are recurringly used in the *Leaves*. In his early poem 'Starting from Paumanok', the mocking bird symbolizes love, the hawk symbolizes democracy, and the hermit thrush symbolizes religion. This symbolism persists in the bird images in the *Leaves*. The bird image has been variously used in several poems. In *Song of the Universal*, America herself becomes a hovering, "uncaught bird", flying high. The poet's bird symbols are remarkable for their vividness and complexity.

The heavenly bodies also used as symbols in Whitman's poetry. The earth, sun, moon and stars appear frequently in a number of his poems in the *Leaves*. The heavenly bodies revolving in their orbits symbolize order and balance in the midst of the chaos and disorder raging down below and this brings out the poet's faith in the divine governance of the universe. The star, temporarily obscured by a passing cloud, is the most frequently occurring celestial image in the *Leaves*. This image occurs with great vividness at the opening of 'When Lilacs Last at the Doorsteps Bloomed' and later in the poem, this "harsh surrounding cloud" is identified directly with the long funeral procession. This recurring image receives climactic treatment in one of the key poems in the later part of the *Leaves*, 'Whispers of Heavenly Death'. This simple but vivid celestial image signified for the poet the rebirth that is inherent in death. By their very nature, the star in its fixedness and the cloud in its transience, these heavenly bodies symbolize the triumph of the eternal, the illusoriness of death. The sun figures in a number of poems. In *Out of the Cradle* and in the *Drum-Tap* poems, the sun symbolizes fertility or a fruitful life. Elsewhere, the sun symbolizes the poet's own creativity as an artist. The moon too figures in a number of poems, helping to reconcile the poet to death and tragedy. In *Out of the Cradle*, he associates the moon, enlarged, sagging down, drooping, almost touching the face of the sea, with death.

The tree and the city are also recurring images in the *Leaves*. In several sections of *Song of Myself*, the tree symbolizes the procreative processes of life. Like the Calamus root, the tree seems to be a physical symbol of a spiritual love, that love which transcends the earthly love of man and woman. In the *Leaves*, again and again, the life force manifested in the sex-instinct, seems to be symbolized by the masculine tree, poised and independent, and by the feminine earth, mistress and source of all. Unlike the English Romantics, Whitman did not dislike the city and glorify the village. For him the city symbolizes companionship and friendship or the possibilities of such relationships existing in the masses of people living in the city.

1.3.3. Treatment of Love and Sex

Love and sex forms one of the dominant themes of Whitman's poetry. In fact, he called his *Leaves of Grass*, "the song of sex." His treatment of sex is frank and realistic without any of the prudery and inhibitions of contemporary poets. He himself has asserted that he is the poet, "both of the body and the soul" and that he sings of "the body electric." For his uninhibited treatment of sex, he has been called a believer in the flesh and the appetites, gross and sensual. At times his sexual realism is shockingly gross and vulgar, describing passionate experiences of love and sex. The most revealing of his poems is 'A Woman Waits for Me', in which he glorifies sex by saying that "sex contains all."

Whitman has been charged of homosexuality. The *Calamus* poems do celebrate the love of man and man. They make the matter as plain as words can make it without direct obscenity. Every kind of love experience, every shade of love from the purely physical and sensual to the spiritual, finds a place in the *Leaves*, where love is all-pervasive. Whitman's free and uninhibited treatment of love has blinded critics to the real significance of sex and love in his poetry. It is to be noted that his vision of sex as an energy at work in all nature connects with his mystic vision of "the oneness of all." Thus, when Victorian prudery shunned any talk of man's "lower nature", Whitman celebrated man's sexual instinct in all its manifestations and complexity.

1.3.4. The Mystic Element in Whitman's Poetry

There is a vein of mysticism running through the poetry of Whitman. His mysticism has certain peculiar features of its own. As Schyberg has put it, "The most interesting thing about Whitman as a mystic type is that in his book we can find the typical characteristics of absolutely all the various mystic doctrines.... they arose naturally out of his own temperament and he has developed characteristic mystic tenets, often even more striking and paradoxical than those of his predecessors." He gives expression to his mystical experience, his feeling of 'oneness', of identity, with both the great and the small, the sense of the essential divinity of all created things. His poetry is replete with expressions of his mystic experience.

Though Whitman accepted the Darwinian concept of evolution, he never lost faith in the supreme power at work behind the material. He always believed in the divine act of

creation and its divine ordering. While believing in science and materialism, he went beyond them into the realm of the unknown, and these mystical experiences find expression in many of his poems. While he celebrates the progress of the human soul conquering the earth, he believes that it must seek God through the Universe. It was in this profoundly religious and mystical spirit that he accepted science and built it into his poetry.

Whitman makes deft use of symbols in order to convey his perception of transcendent reality. As he believed that "the unseen is proved by the seen," he makes use of highly sensuous and concrete imagery to convey his perception of divine reality. What distinguishes Whitman's mysticism is that he does not reject the physical, for it is only through the physical that we can have a perception of the spiritual and it is only through that this perception can be conveyed. This makes him a poet both of 'the body and the soul', and this acceptance of the body differentiates him from other mystics. God has created both the body and the soul, and so both are equally valuable and significant. This also accounts for the sexuality of many of his poems, which must not be taken as a sign of his coarseness and vulgarity. Whitman seems to have created a unique mysticism designed for America – a democratic mysticism available to every man on equal terms, embracing both the body and the soul, science and myth, life and death, the material and the spiritual.

1.3.5. Whitman's Themes

Whitman had an astonishingly wide range, intensity and originality. His major themes are unity, equality, human dignity and progress. His sympathy for the masses is obvious. The unity of the nation and the oneness of nature, the sea and the universe were themes dear to him. 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' and 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed' are both poems of universal mourning. Mourning is perhaps Whitman's tenderest and deepest source of feeling. There are poems out of the war, animal poems that remind the reader of D.H.Lawrence's indebtedness to Whitman, and tiny imagist fragments, all of which testify to the wide range and mystery of this solitary genius.

1.3.6. Use of Free Verse

At a time when in England the great Romantic writers astonishingly exploited metrical and sound patterns, Whitman boldly gave up metre and wrote in what later came to be called 'Free Verse', a kind of poetry that has rhythm, but no fixed rhyme or metre, and which moves from one mood to another through images.

1.4. The text of the poem

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking.

Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle.

Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed wander'd
alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.
Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briars,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro, near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! Shine! Shine!

pour down your warmth, great sun!

While we bask, we two together.

Two together!

Winds blow south, or winds blow north,

Day come white, or night come black,

Home, or rivers and mountains from home,

Singing all time, minding no time,

While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,

May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,

One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,

Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,

Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,

And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,

Over the hoarse surging of the sea,

Or flitting from brier to brier by day,

I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,

The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! Blow! Blow!

Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;

I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,

Allnight long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,

Down almost amid the slapping waves,

Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,

He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother, I know,

The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note

For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.
Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother.
Soothe ! Soothe ! Soothe !
Close in its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.
Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging- O I think it is heavy with love, with love.
O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with Love.
O night! Do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?
Loud! Loud! Loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
~~*Surely*~~ *you must know who is here, is here,*
You must know who I am, my love,
Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.
Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn. O I think you could give me my mate back
again if you only would
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!

Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!

Sound clearer through the atmosphere!

Pierce the woods, the earth,

Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!

Solitary here, the night's carols!

Carols of lonesome love ! death's carols!

Carols under that logging, yellow, waning moon!

O under the moon where she droops almost down into the sea!

O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! Sink low!

Soft! Let me just murmur.

And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,

For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,

So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,

But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me.

Hither my love!

Here I am ! here !

With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,

This gentle call is for you my love, for you, Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,

That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,

That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,

Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!

O I am very sick and sorrowful.

O brown halo in the sky, near the moon, drooping upon the sea!

O troubled reflection in the sea!

O throat! O throbbing heart!

And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life ! O songs of joy!

In the air! In the woods, over fields,

Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved

But my mate no more, no more with me!

We two together no more.

The aria sinking,

All else continuing, the stars shining,

The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,

With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,

On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,

The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face
of the sea almost touching,

The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the Atmosphere, dallying,

The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,

The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,

The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,

The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,

The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,

To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,

To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul)

Is it indeed toward your male you sing? Or is it really to me,

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you.

Now in a moment I Know what I am for, I awake:

And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful
than yours,

A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,

O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,

Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,

Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.
O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!
A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up – what is it? – I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?
Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word, death,
And again, death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me, rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and loving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.
Which I do not forget.
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother.
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside.)
The sea whisper'd to me

1.4.1. Analysis of the poem

- 1-22 The first 22 lines forming one single sentence, introduces the mournful tone of the poem, written in a nostalgic mood of remembrance of things past, 'notes of yearning and love' but it also hints at the maturity he has attained through the experience of love, loss, and death.
- 23-31 narrates briefly the story of the two birds from Alabama who settled in Pauromanok in spring.
- 32-40 constitute the first aria or bird song, a song of blissful joy, expressive of their ecstatic mood of love.
- 41-51 narrates the sudden tragedy that befalls them, the disappearance of the she bird, and the sorrow of the solitary male.
- 52-54 is the second aria, an appeal to the wind to blow his mate back to him.
- Lines 55-70 describe the vain and futile waiting of the male bird for his mate, the boy in Listening to him.
- Lines 71-129 form the third aria, the broken-hearted cry of the desperate lover at the sight of love in all nature, the soothing influence of which is denied to him.
- Lines 130-183 show the boy also frustrated at the agony of the bird, but he learns from the sea the truth about death, the cause of the bird's grief. The realization that death is actually birth into new life transforms him into a wise poet.

1.5. Explication

Lines

- 32-40, etc. The lines in italics are spoken by the bird.
- 56 *moss-scallop'd stake* : a stick or pole, the curved edges of which are covered with moss
- 99 *Shake out carols* : sing songs of joy and praise.
- 115 *decoy'd* : lured into a trap
- 130 *aria* : a term in opera – a melodic song as contrasted with the narrative part called 'recitative.'
- 136 *dallying* : playing; caressing.
- 143 *the oursetting bard* : the poet being born.

158 clew : clue

182 crone : an old woman.

1.6. Explication and Appreciation

This poem was first published as 'A Word Out of the Sea' in 1860 and in its final form by 1871. It is considered as Whitman's most complex and successfully integrated poem. There is a triad of images - boy, bird, and sea - through which the poet develops his theme through a dramatic colloquy. The sea as earth-mother symbolizes life or creation; the mocking bird symbolizes the soul of the poet, a projection of his inner self and the boy symbolizes curiosity. Some critics consider the poem as an elegy mourning the death of someone dear to the poet. But the basic theme of the poem is the relationship between suffering and art, the sublimating power of suffering and sorrow, and not death. It shows how the boy matures into a poet through his experience of love and death. Art results from the sublimation of frustration and grief, and death is a relief from such frustrations.

The boy full of curiosity, then of sympathy and sorrow, is transformed into a sage who is able to see into the truth and reality of death and grief.

The poem is a reminiscence song, a remembered experience, which shows how one matures into a poet or artist through experiencing frustration and death. Lines 1-31 constitute a kind of Prologue or introductory section. It sets in the tragic atmosphere for the tragic love of the birds separated by death. The main argument of the poem is also foreshadowed as the poet identifies himself with the bird, his "sad brother", and sees in his experience of frustration, the awakening of his own sense of vocation, the "thousand responses" of his heart and the "myriad thence aroused words." The poet is here identified as the "uniter of here and hereafter", the "integrating seer" of Emerson's definition. In a few lines the sad story of the birds is narrated. The two birds from Alabama came to Paumanok, the she bird brooding over her eggs with her mate by her side, full of loving care. Then suddenly, one day, the she bird disappears, plunging her mate in a state of utter frustration.

The first aria or bird song is a song of joy, addressed to the sun, expressive of their great joy in being together. There is an ironical ring about 'while we two keep together', for the she bird soon disappears. This sunny song of joy serves to heighten by contrast the frustration and anguish of the second much longer aria. The following narrative passage describes the tragic turn of events. The she bird just vanished, never to return and her mate waited in vain day and night. The boy who shares the anxiety of the solitary male bird, follows him "cautiously peering" at the bird, in his futile search of his mate.

The bird's second aria is an apostrophe to the south wind to "blow my mate to me." He seems to be hopeful thinking that she has slipped momentarily home to Alabama. But the reader is fully aware of the irony.

In lines 54-70 we find the lonely he bird waiting for his mate and also the reaction of the boy. The bird is now positioned closer to the sea. The boy alone, of all the people, is able to understand and translate the import of the bird's song. He knows it for two reasons; first, the bird's song of loss tallies naturally with the boy's sense of melancholy and with his own search for coherence and identity; secondly, the curious and sympathetic boy took pains to hear the song of the bird all summer long. The bird is his brother.

The third aria comprises the very core of the poem. It is the cry of a broken heart at the sight of love in all nature around, the soothing effect of which he is denied. It exhibits the progression of the bird's emotions. It begins in love reminiscence, proceeds to a desperate hope and moves finally in total despair to a recognition of perpetual loss. The surf-sand love image leads to joyful reminiscence of his past joys, and he begs the night to reassure that his love is indeed returning. After an excited and hopeful address to his mate, he turns to the moon who seems sympathetic to the bird. Then he turns to the land and the stars, but they too have no answer to his queries. The bird is desperately torn between a desire to listen for a possible response from his love and a desire not to stop singing lest his love miss him. A perception of the truth gradually dawns upon the bird and he realizes that his singing "all the night" has been useless. He thus closes his song with a note of anguish in which he reminds himself, for the last time of his joyful past.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy
.....

We two together no more.

The bird experiences anguish and frustration, but it cannot understand the true meaning of death. But such understanding and interpretation is possible for the boy and it transforms him into a poet, an artist who can sublimate an experience of sorrow in his art. It was the sea-mother, the old crone, who helped him to do this. From the sea, the poet came to know that the she bird had died. Death was the cause of their sorrow, but death is lovely and soothing and it completes the journey of life. We feel perfection after death embraces us. Death is birth into new life and not the end of life. So it should be welcomed as a friend and "deliveress".

It is this knowledge that transforms the boy and it comes not from the bird but from the sea, the "old crone rocking her cradle." The sea thus may be taken as symbolizing the principle of eternity. The sea, the mother, whispers "death", but as the sea is also regarded as rocking the cradle, death here implies rebirth also. Life and death are not the beginning and the end, but rather ceaseless continuations. Death is birth into spiritual life. The sea, as it sends its waves unceasingly to the shore, is the 'cradle endlessly rocking' just the spiritual world, through the mystic experience of death, provides the cradle for man's spiritual birth. The poem, thus, ends on a note of hope and faith, and not despair.

1.7. Sample Questions

1. Comment on Whitman's use of symbols in 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking'.
2. "The poem's dramatic quality is heightened by the lyric interludes of the aria". Discuss.
3. How far is the poem an elegy mourning the death of someone dear to the poet?
4. The basic theme of the poem is the relationship between suffering and art. Do you agree?
5. Examine 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' as a poem about the birth of Whitman the poet.
6. Critically examine Walt Whitman's 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' as an aesthetic artefact underscoring affirmation in the face of death. Discuss.

1.8. Suggested Readings

1. James Miller, *Walt Whitman*
2. John C. Broderick (ed.) *Whitman the Poet*
3. Frederick Schyberg *Walt Whitman*
4. Leon Bazalette *Walt Whitman, the Man and his Works*

Lesson Writer,
Prof. Shyamala,
Dept. of English,
University of Kerala,
Trivandrum – 34

2. WALT WHITMAN

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOMED

(DETAILED STUDY)

Contents

2. 1. The Period
2. 2. Walt Whitman – His Life and Works
2. 3. The Poetry of Walt Whitman
2. 4. The Text of the Poem
2. 5. Analysis of the Poem
2. 6. Explication and Appreciation
2. 7. Sample Questions
2. 8. Suggested Readings

2. 1. The Period

Literature is always influenced by the physical, cultural, social, political, psychological, and literary background of its country. This is especially true of American literature. The First Frontier of America, established during the seventeenth century, enclosed a small area of land, which, because it was left comparatively undisturbed for about two centuries, became the seat of a new civilization. This civilization was composed, according to Spiller, "of almost all the elements thrown off by a seething Europe". And it produced what is known as America's first 'Renaissance' in about the 1840's bringing forth writers like Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Poe. But it was not till the Second Frontier of America was firmly established that the roots of Modern America were planted. In 1890 the Continental Nation was formed stretching from ocean to ocean and from Canada to Mexico. This was the beginning of a civilization very different from the earlier one in many ways besides size and this produced the second Renaissance, which brought forth a new generation of writers in the different genres of literature.

The Americans were an off-shoot of the Europeans, but very different from them. The combination of this old, sophisticated culture with a "constantly receding wilderness", produced a unique people who came to be called "typically American." Psychologically, the American is basically self-reliant and independent. Since the beginning he had to fend for himself, and tame a fairly wild stretch of land with the help of just his instincts, and the useless knowledge of a very sophisticated civilization. Faced with the limitless space of the new continent, its hazards and dangers, he developed his qualities of individualism and self-reliance.

The Americans became basically Democrats at heart, for having no traditional criteria they made judgments on the basis of merit and not birth. This freedom in a land of new hope and great potentialities made them very optimistic and positivistic towards life. But they felt insecure, needed something solid to lean on, and so they either turned to religion, or Puritanism, or transferred their allegiance to old English and European traditions, finding their own salvation as best as they could. However, this wave of conventionalism ended with the First World War, after which came the "lost generation", who were materialistic and cynical, for their ideals have been shattered.

The Cultural background too went through the same stages of progression as the psychological state of the American. The period before the first World War was known in America as 'the genteel age', which in spite of the interferences of some realists, and of the machine age remained basically "European, refined and 'old fashioned'". The Post war period between 1918 and 1929 was a time of easy money, cynical materialism, an age of the youth of revolutionized morals.

The social background also passed through phases of remarkable change. The American society in the nineteenth century was a combination of "Frontier life, local folklore, and religious institutions." Melville, Hawthorne, Irving, Cooper, and in the field of poetry, Poe and Whitman, did try to represent this distinctively American society, but the main stream of American literature up to the time of Henry James continued to be derivative from Europe. Like most later generations of American authors, this first generation often considered itself 'lost' and traced its plight to a society whose values were too confused and crude to sustain a mature literary art. However, there followed upon this sense of retardation, the hope of a literature of genuine merit. Emerson declared bluntly that the Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetic nature. The work of Poe, Emerson, and Whitman manifests a wholly conscious attempt to break through the anti-poetic to the idea of man, define it, and so make it a force for the transformation of the anti-poetic into the poetic. Now, of course, the American even writes in an English of their own, different from the British variety.

The political background of America is, of course, democratic. Americans believe in the right of the individual to liberty in political, economic, and other fields. Yet criticism of capitalism filtered into American thought with the coming of Marxism in the twentieth century, the influence of which is to be seen in some twentieth century writers.

As far as the literary background is concerned, there are some elements in classical American literature, which influenced modern literature. The chief of these was rebellion against conventions, and a tendency towards iconoclasm. Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862) in *Walden* expresses the "typically American attitude of rejecting sophisticated European civilization" in favour of living in the woods, and working with one's own hands. He wishes "so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust." Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803- 1882) also had the same idea, only he preached against "organized religion." He was for "intuitive spiritual experi-

ence." He complained of American intellectuals' dependence on Europe. He exhorted the Americans to relate to their own landscape and culture and to work with American materials. It was the very same landscape, which brought out the prophetic strain in American poetry. However, the fulfillment of Emerson's views was left to Whitman whose *Leaves of Grass* was greeted by Emerson with enthusiasm. In Whitman, the various strains of American culture fulfil themselves – the Puritan, the Transcendental, the realistic and the visionary, the prophetic and the citizenly.

Rebellion in the technique of writing may be seen in Hawthorne and Poe, who changed the European "tale" into what has now become the American short story. Herman Melville developed a style, which was no influence modern writers of fiction. Besides these, Walt Whitman was the first to write in "free verse". He was called the spiritual predecessor of the moderns, and his *Leaves of Grass* has greatly influenced modern poets like Pound, Cummings, and Hart Crane.

2. 2. Walt Whitman : His life and works

Walt Whitman was born in West Hills, Long Island, on May 31, 1819. His father Walter, was a small farmer who moved to Brooklyn and became a carpenter. His mother, Louisa Van Velsor was closer to her son and her interest in Quakerism was the only religious inheritance passed on to the future poet. Later on we find him romanticizing his Quaker childhood, while idealizing his mother.

Whitman's childhood was spent on the farms of Long Island and the streets of the neighbouring city of Brooklyn. As James Miller has put it, "Both the world of nature and the world of man impinged forcefully on the young boy's imagination, and the mature poet denied neither, but exultingly embraced both." In his poem 'There was a Child Went Forth', we get a glimpse of the domestic scene of his youth. He was a bright boy, imaginative and dreamy and given to doubts which made him restless. He attended school only briefly, leaving it at the age of eleven. Then he worked for short periods as an office boy, a printer, a country schoolteacher and an editor of contentious political newspapers. No wonder he could not stick to teaching, not only for want of adequate academic background, but also because of his dreamy and speculative temperament. For a period of three years, from the age of about seventeen to twenty, he drifted from one rural school to another.

As a journalist, Whitman wrote propaganda and sentimental fiction for a number of years, until suddenly in his thirties he began to write the enormously original poems of *Leaves of Grass*. By then he had worked on various newspapers in and out of Brooklyn, including *The Long Islander*; *The New York Aurora*, and *The Brooklyn Evening Star*. At the age of twenty-seven, he became editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, a position of importance, considering his young age. However, the position did not last for more than two years because of his political involvement. He was a Democrat and so was the paper too, but he was a supporter of the Free Soil Party, which was opposed to slavery. His newspaper writings

have been published which hardly show any signs of America's genius and epic poet in the making. As an editor Whitman was living the full life of the man of the city and one of his greatest passions was the opera. The magnificent music and high melodrama of the opera left indelible impressions on his imagination, which helped shape the poetry of his masterpiece. While working on the staff of a newspaper in New Orleans, he got the opportunity to travel through the length and breadth of the varied landscapes of America that he was to later celebrate in his songs. He was enthralled by the beauty of his country and his imagination was liberated from the provincialism of the narrow Long Island world, to embrace the kaleidoscopic variety of the vast America of his dreams. On his return to Brooklyn in June 1848, once again Whitman turned to journalism, but his political stance created problems and he finally turned to his father's work as a carpenter.

The first edition of the *Leaves of Grass* was published in July 1855 by Whitman himself, when he was thirty-six years old. This edition did not sell well and Whitman himself wrote three reviews of it for the public. In 1856 he published the second edition with a number of new poems, in part as a reply to a letter from Emerson, extolling the original edition. The third edition, with a still larger number of new poems came out in 1860, which proclaimed him as a practicing poet in every sense of the term. As poet and artist Whitman found his true milieu in the society of Bohemian New York. He had a considerable literary circle of friendship. With his absorption in poetry his political interests had started declining. However, when the Civil War broke out, he acted as a nurse among the wounded of both sides in the vicinity of Washington. The sight of the great mass of suffering soldiers preyed on his mind and he offered his service to the wounded with all his fellow feeling and deep human sympathies. The Civil War proved to be a turning point in his life, as out of his deep emotional involvement he found material for new poems. Inspired by a new purpose and enthusiasm, Whitman poured out new poems in abundance, to be published in 1865 as *Drum-Taps*. Shortly after its appearance, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated and Whitman's sorrow and sense of loss found expression in great poetry, 'O Captain! My Captain!', a kind of public tribute and 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed', a personal chant welling out of emotional depths that only Whitman could have written. While he celebrated his relationship and comradeship with Lincoln, he had a good many close friends from the non-literary, even the illiterate class of the lower social strata.

In 1865 he was fired from his job in a government department for his obscene poetry. In 1873 he suffered a paralytic stroke that left him incapacitated. The death of his mother later in the year was another terrible blow, which left him in a state of depression. One of the poems of this period, 'Prayer of Columbus' is a symbolic embodiment of his own situation. He was given the best kind of treatment in Camden and Whitman has recorded his times there in a series of journal entries later published as *Specimen Days* (1882). He regained his health to some extent by dint of his powerful will and in 1879 undertook a long journey to parts of the country in the far West which he had seen only in his imagination. His imagination was inspired anew by the raw grotesque landscapes. The most significant activity of his closing years was the final touches he gave to his masterpiece. The result was new editions with

major additions and restructuring. He published some other books also during this period. His defense of American democracy appeared in *Democratic Vistas* in 1871. *Specimen Days* was out in 1882-83. A volume of miscellaneous prose and poetry *November Boughs* appeared in 1888. But his main creative efforts went into the final shaping of his *Leaves of Grass*. When he died in 1892, at the age of seventy-two, he was well prepared for death. He had portrayed death as a 'strong deliveress' in 'When Lilacs Last to the Doorstep Bloomed.'

2. 2. 1. Formative Influences

The earliest influence on Whitman was that of his parents. As a child, he was greatly influenced by his father's radical democratic ideas and his mother's Quakerism, with its cardinal teaching, "in each person there is an inner light, which it is his duty to heed". These influences must have contributed towards making him a poet of democracy, with firm faith in the dignity of the individual and in equality and fraternity. The natural beauty of the Long Island with its long seashore as well as the crowded cities of Brooklyn and New York in its vicinity too had left indelible impressions on his mind. James Miller has rightly called him "son of the sea and the city, absorbing both the seashore scenes and teeming Brooklyn, lover of both solitude and the crowds..." and commented, "Among romantic poets, Whitman appears unique in his absorption and celebration of both country and city. His poetry represents an imaginative fusion of the two, its very form resolving their opposition and reconciling their conflicting pulls."

The earliest literary influences on Whitman were Homer and Shakespeare whom he used to read for hours together. He was a voracious reader of the epics, the classics and the Bible. He was impressed by the "divine and primal poetic structure" of the Bible and his intimate and early knowledge of the Bible's simple rhythms and stately language must have influenced his poetic lines later on. As a boy, he was frequently exposed to Evangelism and Oratory in vogue at that time. His passion for the opera was another major influence, which reflects in his masterpiece. The mystic transcendental philosophy of India and of Emerson had contributed towards shaping Whitman's mysticism. It was Emerson's dream that some American poet should embody in his poetry the very spirit of his country, and Whitman's poetry is a fulfillment of that dream. His *Leaves of Grass* is the epic of modern America. However, all these manifold influences are inadequate to account for the distinctive tone and quality of his masterpiece. It has been suggested that some mystic experience of the poet is at the root of the mysticism that runs through the *Leaves*. Some biographers attribute it to some love affair. The truth remains a mystery.

2. 3. The Poetry of Whitman

During his lifetime Whitman's poetry was considered shocking and went largely unread, but later on he came to be considered as a national poet, the representative poet of America. It is aptly remarked that with Whitman, America established its intellectual identity. He is an unabashed singer of the glories of America and democracy.

2. 3. 1. The Note of Democracy in his Poetry

During his lifetime Whitman's poetry was considered shocking and went largely unread, but later on he came to be considered as a national poet, the representative poet of America. As he wrote frequently about America and about democracy, he has been considered as a national poet and the poet of democracy. He was a firm believer in the inherent dignity, equality and brotherhood of man and faith in democracy is the keynote of his poetry. He is the greatest poet of American democracy and his *The Leaves of Grass*, the epic of democracy, has come to be regarded as "The Bible of Democracy." Being a born democrat, Whitman believes in the inherent dignity and equality of all men and women. All men are equal for him and all professions equally honourable. In the words of Edward Dowden, "He will not have the people appear in his poems by representatives or delegates; the people itself, in its undiminished totality, marches through his poems, making its greatness and variety felt." The individual is all important, not to be sacrificed even for the good of society.

The democratic poet celebrates no individual hero, nor does he celebrate himself. In his great 'Song of Myself', he is everyman, like Joyce's *Ulysses*. The longest poem in *Leaves of Grass* is named after his own name, but the self-celebration throughout is celebration of himself as a man and as an American. As James Miller has commented, "The 'I' in any/one Whitman poem is not so much a personal reference as a fusion of several characters, a composite character, who exists in no place other than in the poem." In his own words, Whitman rationalizes his attention on self in his poetry, "Other poets celebrate great events, personages, romances, wars, loves, passions, the victories and power of their country, or some real or imagined incident. This poet celebrates natural propensities in himself, and that is the way he celebrates all." The 'I' in his poetry is 'Everyman', a creature of contradictory impulses and instincts, both good and bad.

Whitman's poetry is not a 'class' poetry, but a poetry in which he celebrates common humanity. His sense of identity with the humanity at large is complete.

Whitman has a sense of identity not only with man, but with all living creatures. This sense of the 'oneness of all' makes his democracy universal and pantheistic. He is led away from the 'political' aspect of democracy towards transcendental, pantheistic democracy, which was always his main concern. The basic emotion in Whitman's lyricism is a feeling of kinship with all creation, evidenced in the very title of *Leaves of Grass*. The grass is the great democratic symbol in nature, and lying on it and 'observing a spear of summer grass' that the whole great motif is set in motion.

Whitman is proud of his nationality. He believed that modern America is the center of science and democracy, just as in the past, Europe was the center of Feudalism and Asia, of myth and fable. The American nation, visualized as the leader of humanity, is the true hero of his poetry. For the most part his America is a dreamed and inward continent.

Whitman's democracy is spiritual also. He is a spiritual democrat as he sees in democracy the possibilities of universal peace, tolerance and brotherhood. The human soul

has immense possibilities of good in it, and these possibilities are fully brought out only in a democracy. Whitman writes, "Democracy is not so much a political system as a grand experiment for the development of the individual." He is not a mere idealist, rather his democracy is practical. The democratic note runs through the entire gamut of his poetry and he may rightly be called the "voice of democracy." He had a dream to establish a world-wide institution "of the dear love of comrades" and the *Leaves of Grass* Embodies that dream.

2. 3. 2. Symbolism in his poetry

Symbolism is an effective tool of the writer to communicate to his readers highly abstract and metaphysical truths, which cannot be conveyed directly through ordinary use of language. Whitman's poetry is highly symbolic, for he believed that true art is suggestive and that it requires 'mental gymnastics', as he called it, for the reader to really appreciate it. He wanted to communicate his own perception of (1) the essential oneness or identity of all, (2) the spiritual reality at the back of the sensuous and the phenomenal, and the 'fluidity', 'liquid-ity' or what D.H. Lawrence calls the 'shimmeriness' of what seems to be solid and concrete. He makes use of the objects of nature as symbols of the spiritual so that "the unseen is proved by the seen."

For example, the 'I' in Whitman's poetry symbolizes the modern American, the modern man, or even everyman. As James Miller puts it, "The 'I' in his poetry is a fusion of several characters, a composite character, who exists at no place other than in the poem."

The road is another recurring symbol in his poetry, which is not merely the physical path on which the poet travels, but it also symbolizes the path which leads to spirituality, and the journey itself symbolizes the process by which the soul achieves its identity with the divine. His journeys are voyages in the metaphysical sense, and not analogous to a sight seeing trip.

In the *Leaves of Grass* there are images, which recur as symbols of major significance. The very title is symbolic. The grass, which grows in single blades as well as in clusters becomes a symbol of democracy. It symbolizes in its simplicity the miracle of the universe, the mystery of life and nature which lies not in the far away and the wonderful, but in the familiar and the common. Therefore a leaf or blade of grass is an object of contemplation for the poet and for him it is the key to the mystery of the universe, "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-works of the stars." In the *Calamus* section, the Calamus plant symbolises the intimacy of friendship. It does not grow everywhere, but in "paths untrodden", thus symbolizing that real friendship is rare and uncommon.

Another favorite symbol of Whitman is the sea, along with related water images such as rivers, lakes, and ponds. Land symbolizes the body and sea symbolizes the soul, and the seashore, where the two meet, symbolizes both the antithesis between the body and the soul and the fact that it is only through the body that one can attain spirituality. Sometimes the sea symbolizes the emotional restlessness of the poet. In *Out of the Cradle Endlessly*

Rocking, the sea assumes the role of death in the enactment of the death scene. The sea is also conceived as a cradle "endlessly rocking" at the opening of the poem and the metaphor is repeated at the end, "old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside." This vivid figure is inevitably associated with the word whispered out of the sea – death. Through the association of images, the poet links birth with death, death with birth. As he realizes that the two are closely linked, that death is not an end but a beginning, the poet accepts the word death as the "word of the sweetest song." Elsewhere, the seashore becomes the meeting ground for body and spirit, life and death, as in "Cabined Ship at Sea." In the *Autumn Rivulets* section, the "mystic ocean" is the realm of the spirit, and the seashore symbolizes the marriage of body and soul, of the material and the spiritual, of life and death. In the *Passage to India* the voyage across the sea symbolizes the journey of the soul to the country of God. Throughout the *Leaves*, water is associated with death, but in Whitman's view, death is birth, a rebirth, an entry into the spiritual world. The sea may not only be the realm of spirituality, but also the embodiment of eternity. Rivers, streams, and rivulets are all time passing and when they have finally run into the sea, they have become one with eternity.

Birds also appear as symbols in his poetry. The mocking bird, the thrush, and the hawk are the three birds, which are recurringly used in the *Leaves*. In his early poem 'Starting from Paumanok', the mocking bird symbolizes love, the hawk symbolizes democracy, and the hermit thrush symbolizes religion. This symbolism persists in the bird images in the *Leaves*. The bird image has been variously used in several poems. In *Song of the Universal*, America herself becomes a hovering, "uncaught bird", flying high. The poet's bird symbols are remarkable for their vividness and complexity.

The heavenly bodies also used as symbols in Whitman's poetry. The earth, sun, moon and stars appear frequently in a number of his poems in the *Leaves*. The heavenly bodies revolving in their orbits symbolize order and balance in the midst of the chaos and disorder raging down below and this brings out the poet's faith in the divine governance of the universe. The star, temporarily obscured by a passing cloud, is the most frequently occurring celestial image in the *Leaves*. This image occurs with great vividness at the opening of 'When Lilacs Last at the Doorsteps Bloomed' and later in the poem, this "harsh surrounding cloud" is identified directly with the long funeral procession. This recurring image receives climactic treatment in one of the key poems in the later part of the *Leaves*, 'Whispers of Heavenly Death'. This simple but vivid celestial image signified for the poet the rebirth that is inherent in death. By their very nature, the star in its fixedness and the cloud in its transience, these heavenly bodies symbolize the triumph of the eternal, the illusoriness of death. The sun figures in a number of poems. In *Out of the Cradle* and in the *Drum-Tap* poems, the sun symbolizes fertility or a fruitful life. Elsewhere, the sun symbolizes the poet's own creativity as an artist. The moon too figures in a number of poems, helping to reconcile the poet to death and tragedy. In *Out of the Cradle*, he associates the moon, enlarged, sagging down, drooping, almost touching the face of the sea, with death.

The tree and the city are also recurring images in the *Leaves*. In several sections of *Song of Myself*, the tree symbolizes the procreative processes of life. Like the Calamus root, the tree seems to be a physical symbol of a spiritual love, that love which transcends the earthly love of man and woman. In the *Leaves*, again and again, the life force manifested in the sex-instinct, seems to be symbolized by the masculine tree, poised and independent, and by the feminine earth, mistress and source of all. Unlike the English Romantics, Whitman did not dislike the city and glorify the village. For him the city symbolizes companionship and friendship or the possibilities of such relationships existing in the masses of people living in the city.

2. 3. 3. Treatment of Love and Sex

Love and sex forms one of the dominant themes of Whitman's poetry. In fact, he called his *Leaves of Grass*, "the song of sex." His treatment of sex is frank and realistic without any of the prudery and inhibitions of contemporary poets. He himself has asserted that he is the poet, "both of the body and the soul" and that he sings of "the body electric." For his uninhibited treatment of sex, he has been called a believer in the flesh and the appetites, gross and sensual. At times his sexual realism is shockingly gross and vulgar, describing passionate experiences of love and sex. The most revealing of his poems is 'A Woman Waits for Me', in which he glorifies sex by saying that "sex contains all."

Whitman has been charged of homosexuality. The *Calamus* poems do celebrate the love of man and man. They make the matter as plain as words can make it without direct obscenity. Every kind of love experience, every shade of love from the purely physical and sensual to the spiritual, finds a place in the *Leaves*, where love is all-pervasive. Whitman's free and uninhibited treatment of love has blinded critics to the real significance of sex and love in his poetry. It is to be noted that his vision of sex as an energy at work in all nature connects with his mystic vision of "the oneness of all." Thus, when Victorian prudery shunned any talk of man's "lower nature", Whitman celebrated man's sexual instinct in all its manifestations and complexity.

2. 3. 4. The Mystic Element in Whitman's Poetry

There is a vein of mysticism running through the poetry of Whitman. His mysticism has certain peculiar features of its own. As Schyberg has put it, "The most interesting thing about Whitman as a mystic type is that in his book we can find the typical characteristics of absolutely all the various mystic doctrines they arose naturally out of his own temperament and he has developed characteristic mystic tenets, often even more striking and paradoxical than those of his predecessors." He gives expression to his mystical experience, his feeling of 'oneness', of identity, with both the great and the small, the sense of the essential divinity of all created things. His poetry is replete with expressions of his mystic experience.

Though Whitman accepted the Darwinian concept of evolution, he never lost faith in the supreme power at work behind the material. He always believed in the divine act of

creation and its divine ordering. While believing in science and materialism, he went beyond them into the realm of the unknown, and these mystical experiences find expression in many of his poems. While he celebrates the progress of the human soul conquering the earth, he believes that it must seek God through the Universe. It was in this profoundly religious and mystical spirit that he accepted science and built it into his poetry.

Whitman makes deft use of symbols in order to convey his perception of transcendent reality. As he believed that "the unseen is proved by the seen," he makes use of highly sensuous and concrete imagery to convey his perception of divine reality. What distinguishes Whitman's mysticism is that he does not reject the physical, for it is only through the physical that we can have a perception of the spiritual and it is only through that this perception can be conveyed. This makes him a poet both of 'the body and the soul', and this acceptance of the body differentiates him from other mystics. God has created both the body and the soul, and so both are equally valuable and significant. This also accounts for the sexuality of many of his poems, which must not be taken as a sign of his coarseness and vulgarity. Whitman seems to have created a unique mysticism designed for America – a democratic mysticism available to every man on equal terms, embracing both the body and the soul, science and myth, life and death, the material and the spiritual.

2. 3. 5. Whitman's Themes

Whitman had an astonishingly wide range, intensity and originality. His major themes are unity, equality, human dignity and progress. His sympathy for the masses is obvious. The unity of the nation and the oneness of nature, the sea and the universe were themes dear to him. 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' and 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed' are both poems of universal mourning. Mourning is perhaps Whitman's tenderest and deepest source of feeling. There are poems out of the war, animal poems that remind the reader of D.H. Lawrence's indebtedness to Whitman, and tiny imagist fragments, all of which testify to the wide range and mystery of this solitary genius.

2. 3. 6. Use of Free Verse

At a time when in England the great Romantic writers astonishingly exploited metrical and sound patterns, Whitman boldly gave up metre and wrote in what later came to be called 'Free Verse', a kind of poetry that has rhythm, but no fixed rhyme or metre, and which moves from one mood to another through images.

2. 4. The Text of the Poem

(1)

When lilacs last in the fooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,

I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.
Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

(2)

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night – O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd – O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless – O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

(3)

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-washed palings
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle- and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A spring with its flower I break

(4)

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.
Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.
Song of the bleeding throat
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou was not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

(5)

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets peep'd from the ground, spotting
the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat every grain from its shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeyys a coffin.

(6)

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land.
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women standing,
With procession long and winding and the flambeaus of the night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the unbarred heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

(7)

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O sane and sacred death.
All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,

Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

(8)

O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other stars all look'd on,)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know not what kept me from
sleep,)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full you were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you das orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

(9)

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me;
The star, my departing comrade, holds and detains me.

(10)

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?
Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the western sea, till there on the precious meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

(11)

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls?
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?
Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the
air,
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

(12)

Lo, body and soul-this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships,
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light, Ohio's shores and flashing
Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn
Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

(13)

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.
Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,

Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.
O liquid and free and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul-O wondrous singer!
You only I hear-yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

(14)

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the farmers preparing their
crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and
women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor.
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and minutia of
daily usages,
And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the cities pent-lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest.
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.
Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving bight that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.
And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse fro him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.
And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love-but praise ! praise ! praise !
For the sure-enwinding-arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest-welcome?
Then, I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly,*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades.
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know.
And the soul turning to thee O Vast and well-veil'd death,*

*And the body gratefully nestling close the thee.
Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

(15)

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading, filling the night.
Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.
While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.
And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.
I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remian'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

(16)

Passing the visions, passing the night,
 Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
 Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,
 Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering, song
 As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the night,
 Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again burst'ng with joy,
 Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
 As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
 Passing, I leave the lilac with heart-shaped leaves
 I leave thee there in the dooryard, blooming, returning with spring.
 I cease from my song for thee,
 From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
 O comrade lust'ous with silver face in the night.
 Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night.
 The song, the wondrous chant of the fray-brown bird,
 And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
 With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
 Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the dead I loved so
 well.
 For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake,
 Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
 There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

2. 5. Analysis of the poem

Sections

- I – II An expression of the poet's intense grief at the death of Abraham Lincoln. The basic symbols of the elegy, the lilacs, the drooping star and the spring are introduced.
- III- IV The symbol of the lilac is further developed and the hermit thrush introduced, as the voice of the poet's inner self.

- V-VI A description of the funeral procession with the dead hero's coffin, across the country. We get the picture of a whole nation in mourning.
- VII This song is not merely a song mourning the death of Lincoln, but it is also a celebration of death, "sane and sacred death."
- VIII The premonition the poet had a month ago, foretelling some national calamity, the meaning of which he understands now.
- IX Once again he hears the call of the hermit thrush, but doesn't heed to listen, overwhelmed by sorrow.
- X-XII The poet's feelings of inadequacy for paying adequate homage to the great leader. He will forever live in the hearts and minds of the whole nation.
- XIII Once again the song of the hermit thrush, pouring out its soul; it brings him calm of mind, but still the true nature of death has not yet dawned on him.
- XIV The conflict between his grief and consolation is finally resolved, as he realizes the inevitability of death and acquires "the knowledge of death", of "lovely and soothing death."
- XV The poet has attained the mystical insight into the true nature of death through which he could rise above his personal grief and accept death and realize that those who die heroic deaths are fully at rest, while it is those who survive that really suffer.
- XVI The elegy ends on a note of reconciliation and acceptance. The main symbols and images are repeated so as to complete a cyclical structural pattern and the poem ends on a note of peace and serenity.

2.6. Explication and Appreciation

'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed' was first published in 1865, in the *Drum Taps*, on the occasion of the death of Abraham Lincoln. It is a poem to extol the memory of a hero and it represents a high point in the writing of the elegy in modern times. Entirely free from the admixture of sectarian and personal polemics that mar *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, it has an underlying symbolic structure that is perfectly firm and amazingly integrated. The poem worthily formulates a feeling that all – including Americans in general and the poet in particular – have on the death of a great leader.

It is a long elegy in sixteen sections on the death of Lincoln, the President of America who championed the cause of the Negro slaves and freed them from the yoke of slavery. The poet is full of love and admiration for the honesty, sympathy, courage and determination of Lincoln. His assassination in April 1865, soon after the end of the American Civil War,

grieved him greatly. Keeping with the conventions of an elegy, in this poem also we have an expression of personal grief at the loss, then a funeral procession of mourners through whom the poet's grief is universalized, and then, finally, there is the consolation offered for the death of the beloved one.

The first two sections express the grief of the poet and also introduce the basic symbols of the elegy. It was in spring that Lincoln was shot dead, the season when lilacs bloomed in the dooryard and the great star Venus drooped in the western sky. Every spring, as long as he lives, he would mourn for him. The blooming lilacs, the drooping star and the spring would always bring him the memory of his beloved hero. Commenting on the use of these symbols, James Miller has said, "The emotions of the poem are embodied in a number of powerful symbols. The western star is Abraham Lincoln, its fixed position in the heavens suggesting his steady leadership of the nation. The 'harsh surrounding cloud' represents death and the tragic loss it leaves in its wake. The lilacs returning every spring, symbolize the eternal memory of the President and the strong love of the poet for him. The hermit thrush represents the voice of spirituality and his song 'Death's outlet song of life'".

In the next two sections the symbol of the lilac is further developed. The poet wanted to offer something to his hero and so he plucked a lilac spring with a flower from a lilac bush growing in the dooryard of a farmhouse. Thus it becomes a symbol of love and sympathy. It is also the symbol of equality and brotherhood, for it grows everywhere and is easily available to all and sundry. The hermit thrush, the voice of spirituality and of the inner self of the poet, is a shy and hidden bird and the poet hears it singing, "in the swamp in secluded recesses". It is "Death's outlet song of life", for had it been not allowed to sing, it would have died. The bird is the poet's 'dear brother', with the bond of silent sympathy between them. The poet too sings his death's outlet song of life from his bleeding heart.

Sections five and six describe the funeral procession across the country bearing the coffin of the dear departed leader. The entire nation was in mourning. The procession passed through crowded cities and lanes, through woods and fields, and through grassy meadows. Flags were lowered, cities were draped in black, and women were dressed in black crape. As the coffin passed by, the people wailed and mourned, "with dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn", and bells were tolled in a thousand churches. The poet placed his spring of lilac on the coffin of his dead hero. Thus we get the image of a whole nation in mourning and the poet's grief is universalized.

In the next section, the poet claims that his song is not merely a song of mourning for Lincoln, but it is also a celebration of Death, of "sane and sacred death". He would offer flowers, roses, and lilies, not to one coffin alone, but to all coffins, and mourn the death of not one, but of all those who have died. Though he calls death 'sane and sacred', he has not yet understood its true nature. The thought of death is with him, but not "the knowledge of death".

In section eight, the poet recalls a premonition he had a month before the death of Lincoln. The western star as it "drooped from the sky", seemed to tell him of something sad

and sorrowful about to befall the country. It looked so "full of woe" and as it sank in the west, the poet's soul sank with it. Now the poet understands that it foretold the death of Lincoln, which it could foresee, but which it was helpless to prevent.

In section nine the poet hears the call of the hermit thrush once again, but he does not pay any attention to it, as he is detained by the star. The poet's grief is symbolized by the star and he is still immersed in it. The hermit thrush would explain the meaning of death to him, but as yet he does not heed its call. The section thus introduces the conflict in the poem, provided by the poet's vacillation between his overpowering grief, and the consolation which would result from an insight into the real nature and meaning of Death.

The next three sections constitute a kind of interlude expressing the poet's feeling of insufficiency. He is not sure how he should sing for his loved one who is no more, and what perfume he should sprinkle on his grave. He describes the pictures with which he will adorn the burial house of his hero. There will be pictures of 'growing spring, and farms and homes', of sunlight, of fresh sweet herbage, of rivers and hills, of the city with its varied scenes of life. "The varied and ample land and the far-spreading prairies" in Section twelve conveys a sense of Lincoln's breadth of vision amplitude of soul, while the "morn with just-felt breezes" and "the coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars" suggest Lincoln's immortality. In the end, he offers him the whole of America, suggesting thereby that he will forever live in the hearts of his countrymen. He will live in their memories forever.

In the thirteenth section the poet again returns to the hermit thrush, pouring out its soul in its song from swamps, prickly bushes, and cedars and pines. The bird is his 'dear brother' and its song expresses his own emotion of intense grief and it brings him great calm of mind and immense consolation. He therefore wishes the bird to go on singing. He listens to it, but still he is unable to respond to it fully, since he is held back by the drooping western star and the lilac. The dramatic tension between the poet's grief and the consolation which death has to offer is not yet resolved. An understanding of the true nature of death has not yet dawned upon the poet.

This tension is at last resolved in the next section. A cloud with "the long black trail" enveloped the nation and the poet was grief stricken. He then realized the inevitability of death. It is all-pervasive and no living thing can escape it. His heart was full of anguishing "thoughts of death", as his beloved hero was dead, but gradually he acquired "the knowledge of death" which gave him an insight into the reality of death. With these twin comrades "Thoughts of death" and "Knowledge of death" the poet retreated into the secret retreat from where the hermit thrush was singing. Now the song of the bird charmed him, as the voice of "his spirit tallied the song of the bird". The bird's song was expressive of his own 'knowledge of death'. It was a joyful song of welcome to death. Death in this song is described as a "dark mother" and a "strong deliveress". The universal necessity and goodness of death is vindicated here:

Come lovely and soothing death,
 Undulate round the world, serenely arriving,
 In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
 Sooner or later, delicate death.

The poet is convinced of the real nature of death and he glorifies death and sings joyously the song of death, and welcomes "the strong deliveress".

Section fifteen talks about the mystical insight into the reality of death, which the poet has drawn from the song of the hermit thrush. As a result, now he could rise above his intense personal grief for his beloved hero and visualize the thousands who had suffered and died in the Civil War. The spectre of death and destruction had stalked over the land taking toll of myriads of lives. The poet is now aware of all this human tragedy. Moreover, he realizes that those who were killed in the war are actually resting in peace now while it is the surviving relatives, friends, and countrymen who suffer and grieve.

The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
 And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
 And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

The closing section fifteen winds up the elegy on a serene note of reconciliation and acceptance. No more any conflict or tension. Lilac and star and bird merge with the chant of his soul. He would remember forever, "the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands", but he would also remember the wonderful tallying song of the thrush. Once again the section employs the main symbols and images used earlier. It is as if a circle is completed. As James Miller has commented, "The structure of the poem is cyclic in nature, moving from star to lilac to bird, and back to star again, to repeat the circle, but eventually settling with the hermit thrush". The poet has eventually been released from his anguishing state of intense personal sorrow and has attained a state of philosophical wisdom and reconciliation, with his knowledge of the truth and reality of death. In the words of James Miller, "The closing section of the poem ritualistically chants the poet's gentle and gradual release from the powerful grip of his emotions, concluding:

Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul

There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

The cloud, the star, and the lilac, the three basic symbols in the elegy, which keep recurring throughout the poem, help him in his reconciliation to death. The star, together with the bird's song shows the inexorable necessity of death in the process of life. The poem closes with the acceptance of death. Like the resurrection myths this elegy also ends on a note of hope and joyous acceptance of death.

2.7. Sample Questions

1. Bring out the interplay of symbols in the poem 'When Lilacs Last to the Dooryard Bloomed'.
2. A vein of mysticism runs through the poetry of Whitman. Examine this statement with special reference to the poems prescribed.
3. Comment on the traditional and original characteristics of 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed' as an elegy.
4. How does the poet overcome his intense personal grief and attain a state of reconciliation and acceptance?
5. "Whitman's treatment of death in 'When Lilacs Last to the Dooryard Bloomed' is profound." Discuss.
6. "The influence of Whitman has stemmed more from his poetic technique than from his vision of life." Discuss.
7. Comment on the Americanness of Whitman's poetry, illustrating your views with reference to the poems you have studied.
8. Comment on the pastoral tradition in the poem.

2.8. Suggested Readings

1. James Miller, *Walt Whitman*
2. William E. Barton, *Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman*
3. Samuelson Fisher and Vaid Reniger, *American Literature of the Nineteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1983.
4. John C. Broderick (ed) *Whitman the Poet*
5. Gay Wilson Allen *Walt Whitman : as Man, Poet, and Legend*
6. James E. Miller, Jr. *A critical Guide to 'Leaves of Grass'*, University of Chicago Press, 1957.
7. Leon Edel, et.al (ed.) Whitman, "Death of Abraham Lincoln" in *Masters of American Literature*, Boston, 1959.

Lesson Writer:

Prof. Shyamala,

Dept. of English,

University of Kerala,

Trivandrum – 34.

3. Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849)

The Raven

(Non-detailed Study)

Contents :

- 3.1. The Period
- 3.2. Edgar Allan Poe-His Life and Works
- 3.3. The Poetry of Poe
- 3.4. The Text of the Poem
- 3.5. Analysis of the Poem
- 3.5.1. Explication
- 3.6. Critical Appreciation
- 3.7. Sample Questions
- 3.8. Suggested Readings

3.1. The Period

Literature is always influenced by the physical, cultural, social, political, psychological, and literary background of its country. This is especially true of American literature. The First Frontier of America, established during the seventeenth century, enclosed a small area of land, which, because it was left comparatively undisturbed for about two centuries, became the seat of a new civilization. This civilization was composed, according to Spiller, "of almost all the elements thrown off by a seething Europe", and it produced what is known as America's first 'Renaissance' in about the 1840's bringing forth writers like Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Poe. But it was not till the Second Frontier of America was firmly established that the roots of modern America were planted. In 1890 the Continental Nation was formed stretching from ocean to ocean and from Canada to Mexico. This was the beginning of a civilization very different from the earlier one in many ways besides size and this produced the second Renaissance, which brought forth a new generation of writers in the different genres of literature.

The Americans were an off-shoot of the Europeans, but very different from them. The combination of this old, sophisticated culture with a "constantly receding wilderness" produced a unique people who came to be called "typically American." Psychologically, the American is basically self-reliant and independent. Since the beginning he had to fend for himself, and tame a fairly wild stretch of land with the help of just his instincts, and the useless knowledge of a very sophisticated civilization. Faced with the limitless space of the

new continent, its hazards and dangers, he developed his qualities of individualism and self-reliance.

The Americans became basically Democrats at heart, for having no traditional criteria they made judgments on the basis of merit and not birth. This freedom in a land of New Hope and great potentialities made them very optimistic and positivistic towards life. But they felt insecure, needed something solid to lean on, and so they either turned to religion, or Puritanism, or transferred their allegiance to old English and European traditions, finding their own salvation as best as they could. However, this wave of conventionalism ended with the First World War, after which came the "lost generation", who were materialistic and cynical, for their ideals have been shattered.

The cultural background too went through the same stages of progression as the psychological state of the American. The period before the First World War was known in America as 'the genteel age', which in spite of the interferences of some realists, and of the machine age remained basically "European, refined and 'old fashioned'". The postwar period between 1918 and 1929 was a time of easy money, cynical materialism, an age of the youth of revolutionized morals.

The social background also passed through phases of remarkable change. The American society in the nineteenth century was a combination of "frontier life, local folklore, and religious institutions". Melville, Hawthorne, Irving, Cooper, and in the field of poetry, Poe and Whitman, did try to represent this distinctively American society, but the main stream of American literature up to the time of Henry James continued to be derivative from Europe. Like most later generations of American authors, this first generation often considered itself 'lost' and traced its plight to a society whose values were too confused and crude to sustain a mature literary art. However, there followed upon this sense of retardation, the hope of a literature of genuine merit. Emerson declared bluntly that the Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetic nature. The work of Poe, Emerson, and Whitman manifests a wholly conscious attempt to break through the anti-poetic to the idea of man, define it, and so make it a force for the transformation of the anti-poetic into the poetic. Now, of course, the American even writes in an English of his own, which is different from the British variety.

The Political background of America is, of course, democratic. Americans believe in the right of the individual to liberty in political, economic, and other fields. Yet criticism of capitalism filtered into American thought with the coming of Marxism in the twentieth century, the influence of which is to be seen in some twentieth century writers.

As far as the literary background is concerned, there are some elements in classical American literature, which influenced modern literature. The chief of these was rebellion against conventions, and a tendency towards iconoclasm. Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862) in *Walden* expresses the "typically American attitude of rejecting sophisticated European civilization" in favour of living in the woods, and working with one's own hands. He

wishes "so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust". Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) also had the same idea, only he preached against "organized religion". He was for "intuitive spiritual experience". He complained of American intellectuals dependence on Europe. He exhorted the Americans to relate to their own landscape and culture and to work with American materials. It was the very same landscape, which brought out the prophetic strain in American poetry. However, the fulfillment of Emerson's views was left to Whitman whose *Leaves o Grass* was greeted by Emerson with enthusiasm. In Whitman, the various strains of American culture fulfil themselves – the puritan, the Transcendental, the realistic and the visionary, the prophetic and the citizenly.

Rebellion in the technique of writing may be seen in Hawthorne and Poe, who changed the European "tale" into what has now become the American short story. Herman Melville developed a style, which was to influence modern writers of fiction. Besides these, Walt Whitman was the first to write in "free verse". He was called the spiritual predecessor of the moderns, and his *Leaves of Grass* has greatly influenced modern poets like Pound, Cummings, and Hart Crane.

3.2. Edgar Allan Poe – His Life and Works

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston as the child of traveling actors of a theatrical group in 1809. Before he was three, his father deserted the family and after the death of his mother the orphaned child was taken into the home of John Allan, a prosperous merchant of Richmond, Virginia. As a foster child, he was treated with alternating leniency and harsh severity. At the age of seventeen, he entered the University of Virginia, distinguished himself in Latin and French. Soon he gained reputation as a self-proclaimed "aristocrat", a poet, wit, gambler, and heavy drinker. He had bitter quarrels with his foster father Allan who refused to pay his gambling debts.

Poe left the University and ran off to Boston where he enlisted in the US army. While stationed in Boston, he arranged the publication of a slim volume of verse, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827), his first book of poetry. In April 1829 he gained release from the army and eight months later his second volume of poems *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* was published in Baltimore. He secured appointment to West Point where he remained just for eight months. Galled by academy regulations and angered by a lack of support from his foster father, he deliberately violated a series of minor regulations and consequently got himself dismissed early in 1831. Just after he left West Point, his third volume of poetry was published, dedicated to "The US Corps of Cadets". He then moved to Baltimore, where he lived with his aunt and devoted himself to earning his way as a writer.

In 1832 five of his stories were published and the next year he won first prize in a short story contest. Soon he returned to Richmond where he was appointed editor of "The Southern Literary Messenger", in which he published a series of stories, poems, and acid literary reviews. At the age of twenty-seven, he married his thirteen year old cousin Virginia

Clemm and late in 1836 he left the 'Messenger' and Richmond too, after a bitter argument with the owner.

The remaining years of his life were filled with intense creativity, punctuated by fits of acute mental depression and drinking bouts. In 1838 he published *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, his one full-length novel. The next year he became co-editor of Burton's Magazine. In 1839 his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* appeared, his first collection of short stories. Within a few months, he was again discharged after an argument with the publisher over the severity of Poe's critical reviews and his irresponsible drinking. Then he became editor of Graham's Magazine, which he left the very next year.

While living in New York, in 1844, he wrote "The Raven", his most famous work and an immediate success. The poem was quickly reprinted and even anthologized in a school text, but still Poe remained "as poor now as ever I was in my life". In 1845 he became editor of *The Broadway Journal* that he eventually bought. For this journal he wrote a series of five articles on the "plagiarisms" he perceived in Longfellow's work. This drew wide attention and led to "The Longfellow War", but there was no raise in the circulation of the Magazine and by early 1846, his own dissipations and his inability to secure further loans brought an end to the journal.

Next year Poe's wife passed away, followed by a period of poverty and instability and a series of unsuccessful publishing schemes and unfortunate romance with his female literary admirers. In 1849 he returned to Richmond. He was found lying unconscious on the street in Baltimore on October 2, 1849 and died four days later.

Poe's life has been a series of disasters: psychologically crippling childhood deprivations, bitter literary squabbles, overwhelming poverty, failed publishing ventures and in 1848 an unsuccessful attempt at suicide. More harmful still, to his reputation, was his treatment at the hands of his literary executor Rufus Griswold. In a "memoir", the obituary described Poe as demonic and depraved, an "egotistic villain" with "scarcely and virtue". It was a rather harsh portrait of Poe that gained public attention. Though it aided the sale of his books, it completely destroyed Poe's personal reputation. No complete and fully satisfactory biography of Poe has ever been written. He left no diaries and he had few intimate friends to set straight the details of his life and the result was a false portrait, not completely corrected to this day. We can call him "a Byronic hero, haunted by his own genius, and destroyed by a cruel society and false friends".

Americans long judged his writing according to the legends surrounding his life and undervalued his enormous contribution to literature. The savagery of his reviews earned Poe a host of enemies among the literati, who complained of his vituperative coarseness and his false erudition. Emerson called him "the jungleman" and Henry James pronounced that admiration of Poe's work was "the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of development". Patriots seeking a national literature charged that he lacked an American vision. The literary realists of the next generation complained that his work ignored American themes. Mark Twain pronounced that he would read him only "on salary".

Though Poe's work was sometimes careless and derivative, and he found inspiration in a romanticism divorced from the actualities of American life, a world of disorder, perversity and romantic emotion, there is no doubt that he helped establish one of the world's most popular genres, the detective story. His writings influenced a variety of writers who range from Arthur Conan Doyle and R.I. Stevenson to William Faulkner and T.S. Eliot. He was among the first modern literary theorists of America and his arguments against the didactic motive for literature and for the creation of beauty and intensity of emotion, although they ran counter to the prevailing literary ideals of his time, have had profound effect on the writers and critics who followed him. To the modern age, he stands as one of the foremost writers of America, and he is now, a century and a half after, his death, one of the most popular authors in the world.

3.3. The Poetry of Poe

Poe is perhaps the most thoroughly misunderstood of all American writers. The distorted image of Poe the artist is the result of the criticism of Poe done by people who have not taken the trouble to understand his work, but have just read them cursorily, those who are content to analyze and interpret individual works without evaluating Poe's worth as a writer. Those who dislike Poe's writings thoroughly simply cannot see what other intelligent readers appear to see plainly.

However, in spite of the false portrait of Poe widely publicized, certainly Poe has always had his defenders. Edith Sitwell says that Poe, "now derided by stupid persons", is the only American poet before Whitman whose work was not "bad and imitative of English poetry". One of the most brilliant of modern critics, Allen Tate finds a variety of styles in Poe's works; although Tate makes no high claims for Poe as stylist, he nevertheless points out that Poe could, and often did, write with lucidity and without Gothic mannerisms. Floyd Stovall, enthusiastic admirer of Poe has recently paid his critical respects to "the conscious art of Edgar Allan Poe". The originality and artistic genius of Poe laid the foundations for a native American literary tradition of conscious art as opposed to literary inspiration.

Poe had found a way into the dark recesses of the human soul and he had created a form in which its torments could find direct symbolic expression. Poe often allows his narrator to disburden himself of his tale, skillfully contrives to show also that he lives in a haunted and eerie world of his own demented making. That the narrator is a victim of his own self-torturing obsessions is shown, probably to heighten his agony and intensify his delusions. Through his protagonist's psychic deterioration, he seems to seek his own psychic release and freedom. Poe's narrators should not be construed as his mouthpiece; instead they should be regarded as expressing, in "charged" language indicative of their internal disturbances, their own peculiarly nightmarish visions. Poe is conscious of the abnormalities of his narrators and does not condone the intellectual ruses through which they strive, only too earnestly, to justify themselves. In short though his narrators are often febrile or demented, Poe is conspicuously "sane". They may be "decidedly primitive" or "wildly incoherent", but Poe, in his stories at least, is mature and lucid.

Poe did not become the less American because he turned from the world of commerce to that of the imagination in an attempt to express his inner life rather than the life about him. His tradition is that of Sidney and the Elizabethan court poets and not that of the Puritan England of Milton, the London of Dr. Johnson, or the Cumberland hills of Wordsworth. His feeling for music, his idealization of women, his attempts to make the supernatural credible can all be traced to the lyric poetry and the romantic tragedy of the age of Shakespeare. There are those who use psychoanalysis as a technique of criticism. Some of his poems and tales are difficult, but they can be understood without the help of twentieth century psychology.

All of Poe's poems were composed in conscious art, which accounts for his frequent and meticulous revision. Most of them, if not all, had their origin in thought and express or suggest clearly formed ideas. For instance, "Al Aaraaf" was written with the conscious purpose of suggesting Poe's aesthetic theory: that "beauty is the province of art, the poet must suggest truth through beauty, and that he must keep his art free of passion. "In 1831 Poe declared his poetic creed, "A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object, an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure.... To which end music is an essential....". In his later and matured definition, he said, "Poetry is the rhythmic creation of beauty".

The development of his poetic career reflects in his poetry. The classic restraint of the poem "Helen" marks the turning point of his career in art. Before it, the long poems "Tamerlane" and "Al Aaraaf" wandered in the realm of pure sensuous beauty; after it, "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee" could be constructed with what, for some, seems an all too deliberate architecture. Beauty, restraint, unity of effect – these are the three stages in Poe's mastery of his medium. According to Poe's theory of poetry, every person is endowed by nature with the Poetic Sentiment, or Sentiment of Beauty, an insatiable desire to experience that Supernal Beauty which Poe conceived in Platonic terms as beyond the power of finite man wholly to possess. In this sense, Beauty is an effect, not an attribute. Sensuous beauty, the beauty of natural objects and artistic creations, though it is not an effect but only an attribute, is yet capable of evoking the Sentiment of Beauty, which is an effect, and thus furthering the soul's progress toward Supernal Beauty.

The difference between the early and the later poems is chiefly in the technique of composition. The former are predominantly the lyric expressions of moods in the style of the English romantic poets, particularly Coleridge; the later ones are more dramatic in form, and characterized in style by novelties of rhyme, repetition, metre, and stanza structure, with elements of the fantastic, not common before 1840. These novelties of style give the later poems the effect of seeming contrived; and indeed they may have been more completely the work of these deliberate craftsman than the earlier ones. His poetry is insight revealed in music and picture, in rhythm and image.

"The Raven" describes the inconsolable grief of a bereaved lover unable to believe in life after death, about the composition of which Poe has written in length. Poe did not tell

us how he wrote "The Sleeper" and "The City in the Sea", but the several surviving versions of the poems record pretty fully the process of their development. "The Raven" must have been planned in advance of composition, very much as Poe says it was, in his "The Philosophy of Composition". Poe's account of writing "The Raven" in "The Philosophy of Composition" is not to be scoffed at. Poe means that the poem began in the Poetic Sentiment, was shaped by the imagination, and then constructed according to the imagined pattern with the deliberate and methodical skills in the manner best calculated to evoke in the reader the mood from which it grew in the mind of the poet. In short, "The Raven", and with certain necessary individual differences, every other poem that Poe wrote, was the product of conscious effort by a healthy and alert intelligence.

Though Poe denies the poet the use of the didactic method of inculcating the truths of the intellect and the moral sense, he insists that the true poet can and must suggest Truth through Beauty. He believes, with Emerson, that the Good, the True, and the Beautiful are aspects of one divine Unity; that though they are approached by different means, they are identical under the aspect of eternity. As he says in "Eureka", a work of art is necessarily true, and an intellectual structure, because of the harmony of its elements, is necessarily beautiful. Indeed, as stated above, the imaginatives and analytic faculties work best when they work together.

The sense of irresolution that there is more to the poem than appears on the surface, so frequently experienced by the reader at the end of Poe's poems, is not accidental; his meanings are deeply embedded in the works which he rarely explains; the reader must guess and reach through the poem. The tendency of this kind of poetry is usually symbolic. The poet does not set out, in Poe's theory, to explain or account for his vision, but leaves it to the reader to guess. Similarly, although Poe's understanding of what symbolism means and may achieve is very acute, he rarely manages the directness or the utter surrender to the symbolic surface of a poem like Blake's "The Sick Rose", which, for all its submerged meaning, addresses the reader as if it is, in itself, a thing to be apprehended, a narrative to be followed, which is in no danger of slipping away.

On Poe's part, it is one thing to talk about the ethereal, the indefinite effect of music, the initiation of the reader into a glimpse of the supernal, and quite another to achieve them. Poe admired Tennyson for the ethereal quality of poems like "The Lady of Shalott", but rarely showed in his own poetry a grasp of the fact that Tennyson's effect is as much dependent on the concreteness of the imagined situation as it is on the music of the diction. Only occasionally is Poe capable of anchoring his yearning after the supernal in a fully imagined situation.

The poet, Poe believed, performs a redemptive function, restoring, by his art, man's relationship to the divine, reinstating man in his lost inheritance of eternity. The poet's dreams of supernal beauty are prophecies of reunion with God. *Al Aaraaf* is an important poem, in that it expresses all the elements of Poe's central myth. Although Poe completed only two books of the poem, they are sufficient to provide a standpoint from which to view

the rest of his poetry. Nesace, the queen of the stars, is a messenger for God to lower orders of creation; flowers are used in the poem as one link between the heavenly and the earthly, as are Nesace and Al Aaraaf itself. The earthly reflection of the heavenly flower produces dream and madness, often a way back to heaven in Poe. Flowers here are symbolic of the Unfallen, of the innocent, of beauty, through which the divine is approached. Nesace's function is to reflect in Beauty to lower creation the perfection of God, to protect men from the rationalistic presumption that led to the fall.

Poe's poetry is always striving to fulfill Nesace's function; his point of departure is always a time-ridden, fallen, rationalistic world, to which the imagination is an ambassador of eternity. The second part presents Nesace's great Miltonic heaven-lit palace of Beauty whose collection of architectural and sculptural beauties, like the flowers of the first part, are a reflection of what remains of Beauty, of the Unfallen, on Earth. However, he never quite manages to transport his reader into the realm of supernal beauty; he talks of its, but does not achieve it. The ideal is always beyond the reach of man.

Especially in his earlier poems, Poe shares with the English Romantic poets a yearning, perhaps derived from them, after the intangible, the unchanging and a consciousness of the corrosive power of time. For the first time, in his 1827 volume, Poe presents the frequently iterated association between a departed lover and supernal beauty.

Here we also see early the first expression in practice of his notion of the indefinite, which frequently leads both in his prose and verse to a technique of deliberate distancing.

"Spirits of the Dead" offers an image of an isolated figure in a graveyard, communing in unbroken silence with spirits who have reached a condition transcending the impermanence of dew. "The Lake", another of the poems in the 1827 volume, also intimated the power that death possesses for the isolated imagination. "To Helen" (1831), was, according to Poe, written originally for Mrs. Standard, the first idealized love of his youth; this is of little importance, for the figure that vaguely inhabits this poem is another of those creatures of pre-lapsarian perfection, like Ligeia, the Marchesa Aphrodite, and Virginia Poe; all his women, in literature and in life, are idealizations; they become symbols, analogous to Greece, Rome, Psyche, and Holy-land, which symbolize a world of the spirit. By the final stanza, "Helen" has become like a statue in a window-niche; her similarity here to the bust of Pallas in "The Raven" is not fortuitous-both symbolize the same thing.

The interest of "The Raven" is, of course, primarily psychological; the development of the narrator-poet's obsession, not unlike the disease of inordinate attentiveness in "Berenice", is carefully controlled. The raven itself does not change; the movement of the Poem operates entirely through the speaker's changing awareness of the raven. Condescension changes to a fear, born out of the poet's own uncertainty. The poem is, however, profoundly related to Poe's prevailing themes; the poet's fear transforms the raven into a symbol; he is no random devil but one who is made specifically to commit the poet to earth, to deny him the hope of meeting the dead Lenore on the earth., to commit the poet to earth,

to deny him the hope of meeting the dead Lenore on the earth., to accept the realities of life, however harsh they maybe. The white bust of Pallas and the raven are juxtaposed in a composite symbol, the raven denying Pallas Athene the vision, which it symbolizes. The meaning is enforced when the poet implicitly transforms the raven into a bird of prey, and himself into Prometheus: "Take thy break from out my heart". The raven, like the condor, like the vulture of "To Science", is a forbiddener of the poetic function. The symbols take their force not from any intrinsic power the words have, but from the firmness of the psychological narrative, that persuades us of the raven's being and meaning in the poet's mind before it becomes a convincing symbol. What it forbids is not primarily an abstract idea but a yearning of the poet's heart.

"The Philosophy of Composition" accounts for the use of the poet's pining for a deceased and beautiful woman as the subject of "The Raven"; but it is more than a topic for one occasion; for Poe it amounts to an obsession in many of his stories and poems. It recurs in "Lenore", "To My Mother", "Ulalume", "To One is Paradise", and "For Annie", always as a symbol for that supernal beauty that the poet must try to re-create in his poetry.

Supporters are willing to argue that Poe is the artist he set out to be, the maker of finely calculated effects, and few have cared to deny his power to move his readers, to draw them into an effect of terror that abides with them through all, despite the bulk of adverse criticism. Poe's meanings may for most people always remain submerged, worrying them vaguely behind the immediate impact of terror and this could have been Poe's intention. He made his effects, and he won that victory of art that makes the reader submit.

Poe was the first American writer to succeed in creating a total life in art as a foil to the conflicts and frustrations of the human predicament. He is also the first poet who was bold enough to pronounce the fallacy of regarding a poet as something of a freak in nature, or a divine genius. Poe's importance lies not only in his poetry and short story, but also in laying down rules for both, however rigid and narrow they may be.

3.4. The Text of the Poem

The Raven

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
 Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
 While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
 As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door—
 'Tis some visiter," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
 Only this and nothing more".

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; - vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow - sorrow for the lost Lenore -
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore -
Nameless *here* for evermore.

10

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more."

15

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you" —here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.

20

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"
Merely this and nothing more.

25

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before,
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice:
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
"Tis the wind and nothing more!"

30

Open here I flung the shutter, when with many a flirt and flutter,
 In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
 Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
 But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
 Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
 Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

35

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
 By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
 "Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
 Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore".

40

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
 Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
 For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
 Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
 Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
 With such name as "Nevermore".

45

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
 That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
 Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
 Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—
 On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before".
 Then the bird said "Nevermore".

50

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
 "Doubtless," said I, "What it utters is its only stock and store
 Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
 Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
 Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
 Of 'Never—nevermore'".

55

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
 Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
 Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
 Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
 What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
 Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

60

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
 To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
 This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
 On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated³ o'er;
 But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er;
 She shall press, ah, neverymore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
 Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
 "Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by thee—by these angels he hath sent three
 Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
 Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

65

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird, or devil!—
 Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
 Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
 On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
 Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

70

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
 By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
 Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, Within the distant Aidenn,
 It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
 Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore,"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

75

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—

"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form off my door!"

80

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,

And the lamp—light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

85

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

3.5. Analysis of the Poem

'Raven' is a poem of 108 lines in eighteen stanzas of six lines each. Apparently it narrates the grim and eerie experience of a student in a bereaved mood at the death of his sweetheart, with an ominous bird, the raven, which actually projects the sates of his own depressed mind.

STANZAS

- 1 On a dreary midnight the narrator hears unexpectedly a tapping at the door and thinks it must be some visitor, nothing very unusual.
- 2-3 Description of the cold bleak December night and the student's grief-stricken state at the loss of his beloved Lenore 'the radiant maiden'. The tapping is heard again.
- 4-5 He opens the door with words of apology for the delay, to stare into the darkness outside and he whispers "Lenore?" which just echoes back ruthlessly.
- 6-7 Back in his room, once again the tapping is heard and he tries to explore the mystery, must be the wind. He flings the shutter of the window open and a stately-raven hops in and perches on the chamber door, upon the bust of Pallas.
- 8-9 Description of the ebony bird. He asks its name and it replies "Nevermore" and he marvels at its strange name.

- 10-11 The raven utters nothing but "Nevermore". 'He'll fly off in the morrow', mutters the boy, but prompt is the response "Nevermore." Must have learnt it from some former master, muses the boy.
- 12-13 The boy is wracking his brains to read some meaning into the ominous and repetitive utterance of the bird, unable to guess its meaning.
- 14-16 The air grows denser and the boy is trying in vain to ward off memories of Lenore, when the raven shrieks "Nevermore". Now he sees the bird as an evil spirit, the devil and implores for some balm to cure him of his gloom to which "Nevermore" is the annoying response. He goes on to plead with the bird, the prophet and 'thing of evil' on the possibility of joining his beloved Lenore, but "Nevermore" is the response.
- 17-18 Driven to a state of utter despair and rage, he shouts at the raven to leave him alone and quit the place, 'Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door' to which the raven said, "Nevermore." The raven sits there still like a demon, casting his shadow on the floor and the boy is moaning that his soul lies in that shadow, without any redemption, nevermore.

3.5.1. Explication

Lines

- 12 here : ie, not named or spoken to in this world.
- 41 Pallas : Pallas Athene, in Greek mythology the patron goddess of Athens, the go
- 47 Night's Plutonian shore : In Roman mythology Pluto ruled in Hades, the abode of the dead; as black as the region of the underworld ruled over by Pluto
- 76 gloated : Looked down on with evil satisfaction; it also means 'refracted or reflected light'. Therefore it means 'flowed and relished with malicious pleasure.
- 82 nepenthe : In classical mythology, a drink that banishes sorrow.
- 89 Gilead : Reference to lines from Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" which speak ironically of the healing medicinal resin taken from evergreen trees in the region of Gilead in Jordan.
- 93 Aidden : Of Arabic derivation, meaning "Eden" or "Heaven".

3.6. Critical Appreciation

'The Raven', as a work of art, brings out Poe's exquisite craftsmanship and also his insight into grim, gloomy, and morbid states of mind. The unity and intensity of effect of a poem, which he advocated in his 'The Philosophy of Composition', is brilliantly achieved here and the poem exemplifies an organic piece of art. 'The Raven' apparently tells the story of a student in a particular situation and what happens to him when a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird", the Raven, enters his study, reiterating the word "Nevermore" every now and then. The poem, in fact, concerns more about the effect the bird has on a love-lorn boy, who has recently lost his beloved. The poem evokes an atmosphere, which intensifies from a mere dreary sense of loss, through "fantastic terrors", to utter despair and destruction of selfhood.

On a 'bleak' December night, a student is dejected and in poignant anguish at the loss of his beloved Lenore, when sleet and storm is raging outside his room. Books offer him no relief and memories of Lenore are fresh in his mind. A sudden 'rapping' at the door puzzles him and he opens the door, to peer at the darkness outside. On closing the door, he hears the 'rapping' again, this time at the window. He flings open the shutter and a raven hops in.

On the part of the boy, anticipation has developed to fear and suspense, then to surprise and finally to irony. The mystery of the rapping is solved, but it is ironical that it is the ugly raven that has come in when he expected some late visitor, and then radiant Lenore, his sweetheart. However, his tension is released and he is amused at the unusual visitor, and he asks the 'ebony bird' his name and to his surprise the bird replies, "Nevermore!" Soon he finds that the bird repeats the word, its only stock and store, and its relentless repetition drives him into further despair.

It is interesting to trace the manner in which his despair is intensified. Considering the visit of the bird a unique event, he cannot resist the gloomy thought that on the morrow this bird will fly away, as other birds had done and his own hopes had done. When he is certain that it will fly away, says the bird, "Nevermore". What does the bird mean by this challenge? He knows that the bird is just repeating the word mechanically, but still it makes him feel uncomfortable and disturbed. He falls into a gloomy reverie, 'divining' the mysterious power of the bird and the thoughts of Lenore surge in his mind.

Now he seeks remedial forgetfulness, through nepenthe, telling himself that he should forget his lost Lenore. Quoth the heartless raven, "Nevermore". Since the bird plays the prophet in a sense and since his gloomy mood converges on the bird, he seeks an answer to the question of suffering: is there any possibility of relief from pain, misery, and anguish?

Is there - is there balm in Gilead? - tell me - tell me, I implore!

Again he hears the cruel reply - unmeant, but cruel: "Nevermore".

If there is no hope of freedom from anguish in this life, perhaps he might find happiness in the life to come. Will he not meet the rare, radiant, sainted maiden Lenore away in Eden? Comes the answer, "Nevermore".

Though the bird amused him at first, it has ultimately ended by exasperating him in the extreme. In unbearable despair and exasperation he cries:

Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! – quit the bust above my door!

The word "Nevermore" has acted like a catalytic agent, hastening the dull sorrow through stages of agonized doubt to such a state that his soul is caught in a death-in-life immobility.

In this brilliant narrative structure the conversational tone places the reader in the position of a confidante; the poem can also be considered as a dramatization of his despair. The bird of omen just projects the disturbed mental state of the boy, wallowing in despair and grief. The under current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines,

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form off my door!
Quoth the raven "Nevermore!"

In fact, the words "from out my heart" involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. These words, along with the answer "Nevermore", dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical, but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza of the poem, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen. The last two lines unravel the mystery of the bird's ominous utterance "Nevermore".

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted – nevermore.

Davidson feels that after stanza nine it is no longer the voice of the bird that is heard. The bird is a mental echo responding to the attitudes of doubt and hope of the boy. According to him, in the case of people in highly-strung state of mind, in worry or fear, such echoes have been discerned by psychologists. This means that the bird's croaking, entering the consciousness of the despairing person, sets up a system of echo fitting in appropriately with the nature of his mood, dramatizing it.

In such abnormal states of sorrow the question of self-torture has to be considered as relevant. The weak-willed hero does not face the situation squarely and accept the loss of Lenore in a manly frame of mind. Instead he indulges in escapism. There is a hint that

When man tries to run away from life, however harsh it might be, he is likely to make it worse for himself. It is possible to look at the poem from such an ethical angle too.

The repetitive use of the word "Nevermore" is to be taken note of. Even the word is made to come forth from a non-human agency, and is a meaningless repetition, it can acquire a spectrum of darkening mood, in which the primary colours are sorrow, mystery and terror. At different stages of progression the word reflects different significances and shades of meaning and varying mental attitudes of the questioner. The first "Nevermore" of the Raven starts with amusing mystery; the last "Nevermore" suggests crushing despair with a sharp edge of terror in it.

Taking the raven itself and following its course through the poem, it is interesting to note that starting as a mere bird, it passes through a set of stages ultimately becoming an insubstantial shadow. Putting it differently, we might describe this process as one in which an object is completely converted into a symbol.

For the student it is first a mere bird of refuge, bird and nothing more! Then as it moves onto the bust of Pallas, it becomes an object with a mystery about it. Then as it utters the word "Nevermore" his mystery deepens with a possible story behind it (of an unhappy master, perhaps). Then as the repeated word acquires an emotional significance to the student, the bird becomes endowed with a personality that depresses him. It is "Prophet" and "thing of evil" sent by Tempter. It is "bird or fiend" and the principle of evil. Finally it is a lengthened shadow, insubstantial but formidable in as much as it clutches and crushes his soul.

The fact that this poem was revised sixteen times towards this perfection, and the fact that Poe had given his own analysis of the poem should not make us feel that an organic work of art such as Poe's could be created at will. Poe's account of the genesis of this masterpiece and its construction, as given in the "Philosophy of Composition" is so logically and elegantly developed, with an almost mathematical precision, that we tend to take it for the absolute truth about the poem. In fact, the explanation fits in wonderfully well, and we get the impression that such a masterpiece could be created even without the aid of inspiration, and merely with pure analytical methods that belittle inspiration and exalt technique. But the question remains as to why Poe did not use such a purely analytical approach in other poems, dispensing with inspiration. Poe was not always practicing his 'Philosophy of Composition!' No great poem can disown connection with inspiration; Poe, however, had concealed art with the art of explanation!

3.7. Sample Questions

1. Comment on the use of symbolism in "The Raven"
2. Compare the treatment of the theme of 'grief of lost love and reconciliation to it' by Poe and Whitman in 'The Raven' and 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' respectively

3. Comment on the symbolic significance of the raven in 'The Raven'
4. How does Poe build up an appropriate atmosphere in the poem?
5. Comment on the suggestiveness introduced into the poem.

3. 8. Suggested Readings

1. E. Davidson, *Poe: A Critical Study*, 1957.
2. S. Moss, *Poe's Literary Battles*, 1963
3. D. Thomas and D. Jackson, *The Poe Log*, 1987
4. K. Silverman, *Edgar Allan Poe : Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrances*, 1961
5. Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1961
6. Robert E. Spiller *The Cycle of American Literature*, Macmillan, New York, 1955.

Lesson Writer

Prof. Shyamala

Dept. of English

University of Kerala

Trivandrum-34

4. EUGENE O'NEILL (1888 – 1953)

THE HAIRY APE

(Non-Detailed Study)

Contents

- 4.1. Modern American Drama
- 4.2. Eugene O'Neill – His Life and Works
 - 4.2.1. The Major Plays of Eugene O'Neill
- 4.3. Expressionistic Drama / Playwrights of Protest
- 4.4. Eugene O'Neill as a Playwright
- 4.5. Synoptic Outline of the Play
- 4.6. Critical Appreciation
- 4.7. Sample Questions
- 4.8. Suggested Readings

4. 1. Modern American Drama

Drama in the United States of America has always been incapable of keeping pace with the progress in other branches of literature. Although by the nineteenth century, the Puritan prejudice against theatre had completely vanished and a great many plays had been produced, they were anything but significant. The period preceding the end of the nineteenth century was, in fact, a period of dearth in the history of English drama too. The standards of drama had fallen and the theatre had become impoverished.

By the next decade playwrights became increasingly aware of the richness of the American scene and a few good plays were produced: William Vaughn Moody's *The Great Divide* contrasts the East and the West. In *The Faith Healer* also, Moody shows signs of the fact that he was feeling his way toward adult theatre. Edward Sheldon and Augustus Thomas wrote plays during this period. All these writers, however were handicapped by a tendency towards sentimentality and a readiness to follow theatrical conventions. The much-needed break with conventions took place only with O'Neill. The rise of the Little Theatre Movement marked in America the liberation of drama from the conventional shackles imposed by the commercial theatre. The Provincetown players, a group of young-artists and playwrights drew dynamism from the leadership of O'Neill.

Broadly speaking, modern American drama originates from the little Theatre Movement of the second decade of that twentieth century. In February 1915, an enthusiastic

group of young amateurs calling themselves the Washington Square Players waved a solemn manifesto in the face of New York Drama critics and opened the Bandbox theatre near the corner of 57th Street and Third Avenue. Just a year and a half later another group, equally young and equally enthusiastic, came home from a summer on Cape Cod to take possession of a stable in Mac Dougal Street to be known thereafter as the Provincetown Theatre. Eugene O'Neill acted a role in *Bound East for Cardiff*, the first playlet on its first bill, and thus the new American Theatre, which has been born once on third Avenue, was born again in Mac Dougal Street.

By the early twenties the 'modern drama' was already an old story in major European capitals. Ibsen and Shaw had their say and hey-day. Ibsen was already a classic and Shaw had left his impact on the English managers. America was far behind the times although the American stage knew well Ibsen, Shaw and the rest chiefly in so far as certain isolated plays had succeeded on Broadway. These foreigners, however, were deeply influencing modern American playwrights.

Modern drama is a kind of slow evolution, which has taken place in the form of an amalgamation of various schools. There have been individual dramatists like Tennessee Williams, Miller and O'Neill who have drawn up their own manifestoes of dramatic art. Whereas the dramatists of the Washington Square Players were more influenced by Ibsen, Shaw and Maeterlinck. The dramatists of the Provincetown group happened to accept O'Neill as their guru.

This theatre was at the beginning merely a theatre, which hoped to find an audience for various kinds of plays, native or foreign, which the conventional Broadway managers believed to be unacceptable to their public. But the little theatre did not keep its monopoly of the new drama for the simple reason that a larger audience awaited it than any except the most enthusiastic had ever supposed. But after a short span of time any sharp distinction between the writer for the new theatre and writer for the general public ceased to exist.

Between 1915 until the time of Arthur Miller, a good number of 'insurgent groups' have performed plays, which could not have ordinarily found any place in the commercial theatre. The New Playwrights Group bewildered a diminishing public with imitations of Russian expressionism.

The American theatre in the 1920's experimented in multi directions. It tried to represent life more concretely through abstractions, tried to moralize, satirize, and lyricise in terms of new manipulations of space and movement, new concepts and sequences of dialogue, new versions of characterizations. It also experimented brilliantly in the matter of stage design; the settings in many cases proved more revealing of theme and motivation than the characters themselves. The newness was not exclusively a matter of techniques, but part of the general stir of experimental activity in the arts. The most important characteristic of the American theatre after 1916 is its relentless experimentalism – desire to avoid clichés of plot, characterization, dialogue, acting and staging, which had hitherto tended to make the

theatre lifeless. In the list of experimentations on dramatic form must be mentioned T.S. Eliot's attempts at the revival of poetic play, and the works of Paul Green and Thornton Wilder.

Expressionism was imported to America from Europe. It demonstrated the artist's dissatisfaction with naturalism or realism. The expressionists rejected naturalism as it had a limited scope and was grossly involved with surface reality. They wanted to project in outer symbols a state of mind, an inner crisis, a psychological condition. This also involved expressions of the dream state, Expressionism made positive contribution to the American theatrical spirit.

O'Neill was the genius behind the change that came over American theatre and made the 1920's and 1930's the greatest period in its history. He wrote things of contemporary interest; gave American drama its requisite genius and authority, dynamism and force, when American theatre was in a desperate need for reform. There were notable playwrights in America before O' Neill but the drama had got enmeshed in a stereotyped pattern demanded by the commercial theatre, a pattern consisting of a mixture of Elizabethan traditional and "well-made" play. Eugene O' Neill proved himself to be the chief insurgent against worn out dramatic conventions and the romantically banal and established himself as the symbol of a renaissance that paralleled on the stage the so called renaissance in poetry.

4. 2. Eugene O' Neill-His Life and Works.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, the son of James O' Neill and Ella Quinlan was born on October 16, 1888 in an up-town family hotel, named Barrett House on Broadway at 43, Street, New York. His father was one of the best known of American actors. His parents were ardent Catholics. His mother was an exceptionally beautiful woman who loved music and practiced a curled handwriting.

O'Neill accompanied his actor father on his long acting tours. This filled him with a sense of instability and insecurity. Bowne comments in this connection, "Wherever he lived. The houses he bought were always big, as if their very size would ensure stability: the other side of the picture is, of course, to be seen in his restless experimentation, which ever allowed him exactly to repeat a way of writing he had once essayed".

Having spent his early educational years in Catholic schools, O' Neill studied for four years at the Betts Academy at Stamford from 1896 to 1902. From there he went to Princeton. He joined the university to study law to take his B.Litt, but law did not suit him. He was soon attracted by drama. At Princeton he indulged in gratifying his senses, drank and broke the glass insulators on the telegraph poles. He decided to leave the college, communicated his firm resolve to the Dean, who had interrogated him on his misdeeds.

In 1909 O' Neill secretly married Kathleen Jenkins of New York, and a son was born in the following year. The marriage was not welcomed by the girl's parents, and a divorce was

obtained in 1912. Eugene was then sent by his father to Honduras, Central America, as an assistant on gold-mining expedition. Kathleen's lawyers filed a suit against him for absolute divorce on the ground of adultery. The case was not defended and the suit was granted to Kathleen.

Then for some months he was assistant manager to his father's company during a tour from St. Louis to Boston. There followed a stray-five-day voyage to Buenos Aires; he took up several kinds of employment there, and then looked after mules on a cattle steamer that went to Durban and back. After that, a period of destitution at Buenos Aires was ended by his becoming an ordinary seaman on a British ship sailing to New York. For some time he picked up occasional jobs, and then sailed to Southampton as an able seaman on an American ship. Next he was acting in his father's company in the far west. The tour over, he lived with his parents at their summerhouse at New London, Connecticut. There he worked as a reporter, and he began to write plays and poems. In the autumn of 1914, O'Neill entered G.P. Baker's Academy at Harvard to take lessons in playwriting. It was at the academy that he learnt a great deal about playwriting.

In 1918 he married Agnes Boulton, and they lived for several summers at Peaked Hill. They had two children before separating in 1927. His third wife Carlotta Monterey, accompanied him on many long journeys. O'Neill's last years were marked by physical suffering (his hands being paralyzed so that he could no longer write), increasing isolation, by family trouble and dissension. He died on 27 November 1953.

In his own lifetime, O'Neill was established as a leading American dramatist. He had his triumphs; he was awarded Pulitzer Prizes for *Beyond the Horizon*, *Anna Christie*, *Strange Interlude*, and *Long Days Journey into Night*. He received the highest international recognition in the award of Nobel Prize for Literature. A considerable number of books and articles have been devoted to the study of his work since the nineteen-twenties, and in recent years the sign of interest has grown markedly pronounced. His plays are quite popular in the English-speaking world.

Eugene O'Neill remains America's most outstanding playwright, the only one to win international fame and recognition, and the Nobel Prize. He not only built up the American theatre, but also put it on the world map, where now it has a dynamic and distinguished place beside the European and continental theatre, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams helping to sustain that edifice.

4. 2. 1. The Major Plays of O'Neill

The major plays of O'Neill are briefly surveyed here. *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), which won him the first Pulitzer prize, unfolds the tragedy of a young, farm-born dreamer, Robert Mayo. This play established once for all the reputation of O'Neill as the greatest American dramatist. It is written in the tradition of realism, for it not only deals grimly with the life of a farmer but ends on a note of complete and unrelieved frustration.

Anna Christie was first named Chris Christopherson(1920). The real interest of this play lies not in Chris, the father but in Anna Chris the daughter. Here the struggle is not only with gods but also with himself, his own past, his attempt to belong. The playwright here actually criticizes modern civilization. It is this theme, which attracts his attention later on in *The Hairy Ape*. The same year *The Emperor Jones* was also produced. The next important play of O'Neill was *Desire Under the Elms*(1924), which marked the highest point of his development as a tragic writer.

In the play *The Great God Brown*(1926) the device of wearing a mask is central to the action. Dion Anthony wears a mask except when in the presence of Cybel, the earth mother figure. O'Neill's central theme is the effort to transform into some peace-giving beauty the crude and obvious fact that life is vivid and restless and exciting and terrible. He is not concerned with saying that it is. He is concerned with the effort to get beyond that fact.

In the next play *Lazarus Laughed* (1928), O'Neill gave his exposition of the philosophy of life and death. Here we are concerned more with the idea than with the characters. *Lazarus Laughed* is a hymn to life, a cry of triumph shouted in the face of those Christians who look upon existence as a vale of tears, who expect ever-lasting happiness in heaven because they lack the courage to be content on earth.

Nina Leeds is the heroine of *The Strange Interlude*, produced in the same year. Poetically as well as literally, life begins for her with her father, in whose gigantic shadow the entire play is acted.

Ah Wilderness (1933) is a homely, bourgeois comedy of "the American large small-town at the turn of century." The protagonist here is really the entire family, typical American and upper middleclass, with the kindly father, the adolescent child, the maiden aunt, the family drunkard, and so on.

After 13 years silence, O'Neill came back to the stage with his great play *The Iceman Cometh* (1946). Commenting on this play B.H. Clark has observed: "The scene of *The Iceman Cometh* is the back room and section of the bar of Hope's salon in the new year 1912; a low dive patronized by a strange assortment of bums, male and female most of them hopeless wrecks who find in the liquor generously furnished them by the easy going priest or an escape from the realities of a world in which they no longer have a place."

The play *A Moon for the Misbegotten* was written in 1943, but was published in 1952. The play begins as a farce and ends as a tragedy. It is an autobiographical play. James Tyrone Jr. is none but O'Neill's elder brother.

A Long Day's Journey into Night (1956) is also an autobiographical play dealing with O'Neill's life in the year 1912. It was written in 1941, and posthumously produced and published in 1956 and Pulitzer Prize awarded posthumously.

O'Neill's plays reveal him as one of the greatest dramatists of modern age. His main contribution, the new drama, the purely objective kind of drama, shows the working of man's mind and conscience. He belongs to the expressionistic school of drama and is often called the dramatist of protest. He has really protested against the prevailing surface realism or naturalism, his drama being pre-occupied with spiritual values, inner conflicts, anguish, failure and pride. His use of mask, asides, and expressionistic techniques are of profound interest as experimentation and innovation.

4.3. Expressionistic Drama / Playwrights of Protest

Expressionism as an art form was a movement, which began in Germany before World War I. It is revolt against 'realism', by distorting objects and breaking up time sequences, enabling the dramatist to depict 'inner reality', the soul of psyche of people. The emphasis shifts from the external to the inner reality. Strindberg was the first dramatist to write 'expressionistic' plays. These playwrights who revolted against realism shared Nietzsche's contempt for "constant spying on reality" and "lying in the dust before trivial facts." They were men who were neither satisfied with habitual forms of realism nor contented with the basic aims, which motivated it, men who rebelled against its preordained concern with appearances and hated the technical clichés through which it spoke.

The playwrights, who for convenience were later, to be labeled "Expressionists," wanted to do more than contemplate the surface of things. They sought for deeper conflicts than those granted by the good old external "situations" of the "well-made plays" even as treated by the realists. They looked for a freer means of presentation and a wider range of narrative than their restricted formula afforded. They wanted to see not the surface alone, but beneath the surface too. It was Stanislavski who said "realism ends where the superconscious begins," and the superconscious was the object of their quest. They hoped to enjoy something of that sense of omniscience, which is the usual province of the novelist, to exercise his freedom in selecting one character, through which to see events, and to write with a point of view, which was impossible when, "the fourth wall" was removed and a mere "slice of life" revealed. They wanted to look within their characters, treat them subjectively, tap their streams of consciousness if need be, penetrate into their innermost beings, and lay bare their dreams, their inhibitions, and the hidden workings of their minds, which could not be included in the external observation of the camera. In short, they sought the eye of the X-ray instead of the camera.

In pursuing their aims, they did not want to concentrate on one event, but on a series of events-pivotal, revelatory moments, moments which marched bravely into the essence of the event, crucial moments of crisis rather than half hours of preparation. It, however, they pursued individualized characters they did so with an interest, which was centered in a series of events rather than a single and arbitrary quandary.

As their concern frequently was not the outer world at all but the inner life of the mind and spirit, they availed themselves of the discoveries and the language of the newer psycholo-

gists, and particularly the psychoanalysts and psychiatrists who had appeared since the turn of the century.

In the purely technical matters of playmaking these insurgent dramatists found much to condemn in the customary form of the realistic play that pretended to realism. They objected to the manner in which the "Well-made plays" were padded just to fill, given subplots, minor characters, and comic relief, which were as artificial as they were unimportant and distracting. Usually built around one "big scene" or "situation", these plays had none of the sweep of life, its pace, its confusion, its mad, unfaltering onrush and gave, to their thinking, none of the kaleidoscopic sequence of events or the true complexities of character. As the Expressionists saw them, they took into account only what man said, never what they left unsaid, and were, accordingly eternally preoccupied with surface and appearance. It was, moreover, unfitted to the needs of that new centre of conflict these insurgent playwrights had found, for they were not satisfied with the old sources of action. They, like their time, had stumbled upon new ones. They did not want to present mankind grappling with outside forces. Rather they sought to dramatize man's struggle with himself. And for this the old dialogue was patently inadequate.

In their search for freedom the Expressionists turned, consciously or unconsciously, to the model the Elizabethans afforded. They had marched to their points and their conclusions with superb freedom. No Unities had stood in their way, nor had they bowed to any of the academic niceties, which sapped the vitality of the French Classicists. Their stage was the world and their scripts were nomads traveling at will to its farthest corners. Undoubtedly, the Expressionists were as much influenced by the motion pictures as they were by the novelties, the psychoanalysts.

Though the playwrights using its technique have won a common title, they have but rarely been consolidated into a group or school, in spite of certain similarities in methods of "attack" and, above all, in the common desire for experimentation which has characterized their work the world over, the protest of the Expressionists has been largely individual.

It was in Germany, however, and particularly in the Germany of war and postwar days that Expressionism assumed the staccato scene sequence which is usually associated with its name. Postwar France also felt the tidal wave of protest, the reaction against the old clichés. America, too, the America of the skyscraper and the jazz age, the land of machinery responded to the new impulse. The most notable results have been seen in the vivid, simultaneous, omniscient flashes of biography, which John Howard Lawson's Roger Bloomer revealed, that Francis Edwards Faragoh set against the pushing, impersonal background of New York in Pinwheel in some of the fine, singing moments of John Dos Passos, The Moon is a Gong; in the earlier half of Elmer Rice's stingingly satirical The Adding Machine; and in such familiar examples as Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape.

The plays of these dramatists are not only tokens of protest but also symbols of vitality. For they at least show that the modern playwright, who has lagged behind his theatrical co-

workers in pliancy and courage, has awakened to experiment and shown a willingness to try to plant his flag on new dominion of his own discovery. And as such, they are hopeful symbols, encouraging portents that are not to be despised because, in its last analysis, the theatre of each age is forever at the mercy of its playwrights. Only when their courage is high, their imagination unfettered, and the hot blood of protest is running through their veins can its other artists be granted those opportunities, which call forth their best talents and give the theatre the quality of being theatre and being proud of the fact, which is its condition of glory.

4. 4. O'Neill as a Playwright

O'Neill as a playwright stands in a class by himself. He understood the human psyche, its baseness and its greatness, as few other writers have. And though he was always "a little in love with death," it is life he celebrates in his plays, not some fanciful version of it but the tragic, comic, splendiferous reality of it. "The theatre," he said, "should be a source of inspiration that lifts to a plane beyond ourselves as we know them and drives us deep into the unknown within and behind ourselves. The theatre should reveal to us what we are," What are the techniques he employed to fulfill this aim and what are the peculiar features of his plays?

O'Neill's plot structure reveals a total lack of dramatic scenes. The drama, because of its temporal and mechanical limitations, is a medium for the expression of swift, forceful and animated action. In O'Neill the action consists entirely of a lumbering analysis of the obsessed and even insane minds of the characters in his plays. Depicting insanity, death, and suicide is characteristic of O'Neill plays. It is by the use of abnormal and insane characters violent death and suicide that O'Neill evokes unjustified emotional response from his audience.

4. 4. 1. O'Neill's Heroes and Heroines

"In O'Neill we find no blonde, curly-headed, heroes foiling train robbers and no sleek, dark villains kidnapping heroines, but we do find two male types just as distinct and just as unreal as these." The male protagonist, or rather that male character, who has the sympathy of the author, is the same in every play. He is always a sensitive soul with large, dark eyes and a face harrowed by lines of internal struggle. The other male type, the antagonist, although not always clearly defined since O'Neill's heroes do not always fight against individuals, is usually a thickset, practical man with small blue eyes. These heroes of O'Neill's although they are often described as poetic, are never poets. Their poetic natures do not help them to produce anything; they do not even bring them happiness, for in O'Neill's plays the happiness of the hero is in inverse proportion to his sensibility. They are described as intelligent, but they manifest their intelligence only in their vague manderings concerning their vaguer emotions. To exalt these pitiable figures as O'Neill does, to establish them as Nature's noblemen merely because they have failed to find happiness, is the height of romantic absurdity.

The female characters, almost all are sexually abnormal; rare is the character who is not either a prostitute or a wanton or a nymphomaniac. "There are few normal female characters, but their very normality seems to gain for them the playwright's contempt". Almost invariably, they are portrayed as narrow, petty, bigoted and lacking in understanding. They are in striking contrast to the sexually abnormal female characters, who are presented as noble, spiritual, sympathetic, and wise.

4. 4. 2. O'Neill's Diction

It is only to be expected that unreal and exaggerated characters will talk in an unreal exaggerated fashion. The diction in O'Neill is just as grandiose and extravagant and unreal as the characters who use it. It is a rare O'Neill hero who does not stop the action of the play now and again to deliver a long metaphysical address on the meaning of his existence and it is a rare O'Neill prostitute who does not get some good things on Life in Man and Love in capitals. There are a number of passages in grandiose pseudo-poetic diction. The type of rant and melodramatic diction are very well suited to his melodramatic characters and melodramatic plots.

4. 4. 3. O'Neill as a Tragic Artist

O'Neill is a great tragic artist whose vision of life was essentially tragic. J.W. Krutch compares him with Shakespeare and the Greeks and says that he "is alone among modern dramatic writers in possessing what appears to be an instinctive perception what a modern tragedy should be."

All O'Neill's plays are great tragedies but they are not tragedies of the conventional sort in the Aristotelean tradition. They are tragedies with a difference. Their themes and subject matter may be the same, but their form is different. They are modern tragedies, which strike at the very root of the sickness of the present day. To quote his own words: "The Playwright must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it".

The main cause of this tragedy can be traced to the loss of religious faith. The old religions have not been replaced by any new ones. Hence man's soul is sick because of too much materialism. Materialistic values prevail, life has become too mechanical and impersonal, and this has further shaken man's sense of security.

This suffering and tragic tension may also result from the 'romantic illusion', which some may harbour, lost in which they forget the reality of life and which ultimately leads them to their disillusionment and doom.

O'Neill also regarded the social environment as an important factor in man's tragic agony. In *The Hairy Ape* Yank is a man as well as worker brutalized and mechanized by an impersonal and mechanical social order. O'Neill's tragic personages are all drawn from the humblest ranks of society. They are all ordinary men and women, suffering and down-trodden.

Yank is a stoker, Brutus Nones is a poor Negro, and the people who frequent Harry Hope's bar are pimps, prostitutes, bankrupts, bartenders, etc.

In all his tragedies, however, O'Neill gives us the impression that in spite of the great ordeals that a man has to undergo, life still is worth living. O'Neill's tragic plays have come in for a good deal of criticism for the strong note of melodrama which is such a marked feature of most them.

4. 4. 4. Limitations

O'Neill has his limitations too and melodramatic extravagance is one of them. Another is his lopsided view of human nature and his exclusive preoccupation with the seamy side of life. But despite such weakness, O'Neill remains a great tragic artist. He has done old things in new ways, he has democratized tragedy and thus has considerably enlarged its range and scope.

4. 4. 5. Use of Symbolism

O'Neill was ceaseless experimenter. He always sought new techniques of expression and communication. He began as a realist, but soon he fused realism with symbolic and suggestive modes. In order to communicate inner reality he used expressionistic techniques. He also used poetic devices as asid , soliloquy, masks etc., with the same end in view.

Besides the use of pantomime (dumb show) and masterpiece opening, O'Neill also uses symbolism as a technique of communication. Through its use, the dramatist universalizes its theme and extends the scope and meaning of his play beyond the limits of realism.

In *The Hairy Ape* symbolism runs throughout the play from the beginning to the end. Yank symbolizes a number of ideas. He symbolizes the most perfect individuality of a stoker. Secondly, he symbolizes the proletariat. Thirdly, he symbolizes the animal nature of man, the instincts and impulse, which man has inherited from his biological ancestor, the hairy ape. Fourthly he stands for the primitive in perfect harmony with nature and environment. Fifthly, he symbolizes everyman.

Mildred Douglas, on the other hand, symbolizes the rich capitalist class living an artificial life of comfort and luxury, enervated and anemic, incapable of any originality or vigorous action. The confrontation of Mildred and Yank symbolizes the modern class conflict, the confrontation of the rich capitalist class and the proletariat, which is gradually becoming class conscious and clamoring for rights. This confrontation results in Yank's loss of his sense belonging, symbolic of the modern worker's loss of harmony and creative joy in his mechanical work.

His plays reveal the unreal reality, the concealed truth; they give form and substance to the dream; they lend to that airy nothing which is in reality everything, "ad cal habitation and a name".

His dramatic career shows signs of development from early days of adherence to realism of which he soon got tired and switched on to daring experimentation in protest of the conventions of traditional drama.

4. 4. 6. Development of Dramatic Career

In his early career as playwright, fidelity to human life and nature was O'Neill's chief concern. He provided realistic settings and detailed stage directions to his realistic themes. Characters were realistic, well defined in their features and modes and habits. Soon O'Neill got tired of realism of the nature of Shaw and Galsworthy's plays. He began experiments with other forms of drama. He made use of symbolism, expressionism, and Freudian psychology. *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape* are the best examples of his expressionistic plays. *All God's Chillum Got Wings* is a psychological play. It is a clinical study of racial hatred. In *The Fountain O'Neill* plunged into the world of romance and fantasy. *The Great God Brown* is a play of symbolism and makes use of the device of mask. *Macro Millions* is a fantasy with a pseudo-historical background.

After writing a few plays in the expressionistic technique, O'Neill again turned to realism. But this time his interest was not the external reality or the universality of romantic attachment to illusions that sustain life; it was his desire to explore the various unconscious motivations of man and explain some of their behavioural mysteries.

4. 5. Synoptic Outline of the Play

The Hairy Ape is a play in which O'Neill, using the expressionistic mode and eight-scene form, traces the solitary struggle of an American pariah to belong, his quest for identity and place on the social ladder. Using the technical devices of expressionism, he moves his hero through a series of rapidly changing scenes in his quest to belong, to find his place in the universe. The dominant image in the play is of a cage that traps Yank literally, in actual approximations, and symbolically, in the narrow framework of his limited intellect. The dark region of the stoke hole on the ship reflects the underground of his mind.

In Scene I, the fireman's fore-castle of an ocean liner of its New York-Southampton voyage is depicted as a cage. The setting is expressionistic, symbolizing the trapped condition of the men, who are described as "Neanderthal" brutes, "hairy-chested, with small, fierce, resentful eyes". The comparison here and later between them and machines is an expressionistic device that suggests that they have been dehumanized. Yank then speaks longingly of a home and describes his unhappy childhood.

The second scene shows the promenade deck, the world the stokers' work makes possible. Reclining on a deck chair is Mildred Douglas, daughter of the president of Nazareth Steel and chairman of the liner's board of directors. She is "twenty, slender, delicate, with a pale, pretty face marred by a self-conscious expression of disdainful superiority."

The third scene, which takes place in the stoke hole, is the pivotal section of the play where we have the sudden appearance of Mildred, "the white apparition". The encounter with Mildred rouses Yank from his lethargy and has a twofold effect on him: it makes him aware of his social inferiority and conscious of his inadequacies as a human being. He seeks to find his place on the ladder of evolution.

Beginning in scene four and continuing to the end of the play. Yank's characteristic pose is that of the Thinker, the brutish man in a desperate attempt to fathom the truth of his existence. He seeks to hurt the woman who has given him a glimpse of a higher form of life but who has neglected to sever the umbilical cord that ties him to his animalistic state. Paddy's comment that Mildred looked "as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo!", reinforces the idea in Yank's mind that he is an ape and does not belong.

The first four scenes of the play are primarily realistic, although expressionistic elements setting, sound, movement – are incorporated. The remaining four expressionistic scenes, with their disparate settings, flash by like those in Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, which also depicts a quest for the meaning of life.

Society in scene five is represented by the stylized chorus of the wealthy of Fifth Avenue. Three weeks have elapsed since Yank's traumatic experience. O'Neill suggests in this brief Fifth Avenue scene that the wealthy, using the pretext of religious zeal, will ruthlessly crush any movement that threatens their position and will crucify anew any presumptuous rebel. Yank falls into this category at the end of the scene.

Scene six takes place the following evening in the prison on Blackwells Island. Yank gropes in the dark recesses of his mind for enlightenment. He attributes all his misfortunes to the woman who "lamped" him "like she was seein' some'n broke loose from de menagerie". He vows to get revenge. At the close of the scene an angry guard appears and noticing the bent bar, calls for help.

In scene seven, which takes place a month later, Yank goes to a local I.W.W. meeting room. When the secretary questions his motives for joining, Yank responds: "Yuh want'er blow tings up, don't yuh? Well, dat's me! I belong!" The secretary calling him "a brainless ape," signals his men to evict Yank. The brutality of the treatment he has received brings him close to madness. His search to belong has been futile. Rejected by all segments of society—the wealthy, the imprisoned, and, finally, the representatives of the masses, Yank sits in a gutter, "bewildered by the confusion in his brain, pathetically impotent."

Abandoned by humanity, Yank makes his way in the play's last scene to the gorilla's cage in the monkey house at the zoo. Remembering Mildred's words, He thinks he belongs with those classified as beasts. Yank confronts the beast, looking for traces of himself, and calls it "brother". He settles for brotherhood not with man but with animals. Recklessly, he opens the door of the cage. Grabbing the bars of the cage, he makes one final effort to rise but falls back on the floor and dies. The terrifying last line of the play, "And perhaps, the

Hairy Ape at last belongs", can be interpreted in two ways: either that man, as a mere brute beast, belongs in a cage, or that man, as a rootless spiritual being, can belong only in death.

Thus through a series of changing scenes we get the painful picture of Yank in his quest to belong, to find his place in the universe and through it the dramatist also presents the effects of disharmony and dislocation on the human psyche.

4. 6. Critical Appreciation

The Hairy Ape, one of O'Neill's best plays, was produced in the year 1922. On its first performance a critic, Alexander Woolcott called it "a bitter, brutal, wildly fantastic play of nightmare hue and nightmare distortion." It was also hailed as a vision of the poet's 'inferno'. Man's quest for identity, for his own self was thought to be its theme. It was an attack against American Capitalism, which compels man to lose all connection with life and compels him to lose his identity. Julius Bab calls it "a tragedy of the proletariat". O'Neill calls the play "a comedy of ancient and modern life". In a letter to the New York Herald Tribune (1924), O'Neill wrote, "The Hairy Ape was propaganda in the sense that it was symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with Nature....". He was correct when he remarked, "Yank is really yourself, myself. He is every human being – his struggle to belong – we are all struggling to do just that". The tragedy of today's existence lies in the fact that the technology created to benefit making will inevitably destroy it.

The play is basically a piece of social satire, a study in the disintegration of modern civilization. The theme of the play is man's struggles with himself, his effort to find for himself the place to which he belongs it is the tragedy of a man who is out of place or abandoned by humanity. The wealthy people, the capitalists do not recognize the workers as human beings; they regard them as beasts. But the fact brought out by the play is that they themselves are the beasts. Thus the play is an attack on capitalism. The action of the play symbolically revolves round "Belongingness" and "Lostness". The social revolutionists regard the play as a strong protest against the brutalization of the proletariat, a piece of propaganda, a condemnation of the whole structure of machine rather than modern civilization. As a social satire, the play exposes the vast gulf between the rich and the poor, the capitalist and the labour, the steel factory owners and the half-fed, half-clad workers. The play raises the slogan of the need to treat the stokers or workers as human and not as Hairy Apes.

The Hairy Ape is an expressionistic drama on the pattern of Strindberg's dramas. It uses symbols; it deals with the inner consciousness of Yank who is a symbol of suffering man who is lost and does not belong to anywhere. Its characters are symbolic; its language is also like that of the expressionistic plays. It exploits stage-effects like lightning, the characters are few and the real action takes place in the mind of the hero.

The play is considered to be a piece of pessimism. Even those who put forward sociological interpretations of the play find that the stoker Yank, the hero of the play, is dehumanized by the industrial growth of modern times, and he has no hope of redemption. Yank is a

pessimist out and out and he is the victim of machine civilization. He has no care, no anxieties until he is faced with Mildred Douglas. Since then he begins to think about his own real status in the society. The inevitable result is frustration and his death during his discovery of his belongingness. No man bewails the sad death of Yank. If he has any one to shed tears on his death, they are the chattering monkeys. What more can be pessimistic than this dismal picture of Yank's life painted by the dramatist.

There is also a current of mysticism in the play. There is a mystical touch in the theme, that is, the sense of belongingness. The hero at last goes to the elements such as the earth and waters, where he belongs to. According to Richard D. Skinner, "No one has understood better than Eugene O'Neill that the soul at war with itself belongs to nowhere in this world of reality."

The play does not concern with mere external problems in Yank's life. It is also concerned with certain higher values. Yank's search of identity is a secret for real human existence. Doris V. Falk suggests that there is some note of existentialism in the need of humanity to belong. He has nothing to blame for his failure but himself. All men ultimately belong to themselves; all have to die.

Though there are very few characters in the play, yet they have been fully developed. Modern dramatists do not pay so much attention to individualism. This was so with Ibsen and Galsworthy. So is the case with O'Neill. The expressionists have little concern with the photographic method of characterization. They have nothing to do with individuals. They write about capitalism, industrialism, etc. The personages of the modern drama are devoid of individuality; most of them are types. The main figure of the play Yank, is a symbol and type of a being crushed by environment. Other characters such as Paddy, Long, Mildred and her aunt are also drawn in an impressionistic manner. According to Doris Falk, O'Neill draws his characters as recommended by Aristotle.

The Hairy Ape has some elements of the morality plays of medieval England too. In fact, it is a morality play in the expressionistic genre. The Morality plays have abstractions and allegorical characters as the dramatis personae; the characters thus are symbolic of certain virtues and vices. The thoughts of men are personified and the purpose is to inculcate certain moral lessons in the viewers. In fact, The Hairy Ape is the morality play of modern Everyman. As stated by Doris Alexander, "The Hairy Ape presents an extremely negative view of the state of mechanized America, where the worker best adjusted to the system is a hairy ape, and where the 'Capitalist Class' is even more terribly dehumanized, for it has lost all connection with life, is simply a procession of gaudy marionettes". The Hairy Ape is a morality play because of its structure, plot-construction and characterization, because there are only eight scenes not very well knit, characters are types and representative of abstractions. Yank, the hero of the play, is O'Neill's Everyman. In creating a hero engaged in a struggle representative of abstractions. Yank, the hero of the play, is O'Neill's Everyman. In creating a hero engaged in a struggle representative of a class, the expressionistic playwright became the last descendant of the creator of the morality play of the fifteenth century.

The atmosphere of the play is one of fear and terror, where fantasy abounds. There is little action, which takes place on the stage. There is no place in the traditional sense. The real action takes place in the minds of the characters.

The Hairy Ape is an ironic tragedy. The play in the ironical sense justifies the ways of god or fate to man. There is irony in the subtitle of the play: "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Man." The play is a grim tragedy; the playwright calls it a comedy. The man unconsciously calling himself the ape really becomes an ape, the brother of the Guerilla.

The greatest weakness of the play is its unimpressive ending. The play is somewhat depressing and enervating. Symbolism of the drama is also full with an error of the judgement. It seems to get out of control in the closing scenes of the play.

The Hairy Ape, O'Neill's finest early work, is a memorable, moving theatrical experience. In depicting Yank's increasingly desperate attempts to belong, the author successfully integrates form and subject matter. O'Neill viewed Yank as a symbol of man "who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way". He was dismayed that audiences saw merely the stoker and not the symbol and said, "The symbol makes the play either important or just another play." The author indicates that man should at least engage in a search for the self and question the meaning of this existence. Living complacently on the animal level brings death and destruction; turning inward to discover the self can provide a degree of awareness of one's humanity.

4.7. Sample Questions

1. Consider The Hairy Ape as a comedy of ancient and modern life.
2. The theme of the play is alienation and quest for identity. Discuss.
3. Consider The Hairy Ape as a study in the disintegration of modern civilization
4. How far is The Hairy Ape social satire?
5. Consider The Hairy Ape as a tragedy of the proletariat.
6. Comment on the use of symbolism in the play.
7. "Characters in the play are types rather than individuals." Discuss.
8. Critically evaluate The Hairy Ape as an expressionistic play.

4. 8. Suggested Readings

1. Clark, Barrett, Eugene O'Neill. New York: Robert McBride, 1926
2. _____ Eugene O'Neill, the Man and His plays, New York Dover, 1947
3. Engel, Edwin A: The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill (1953).
4. Floyd, Virginia, Eugene O'Neill at Work. New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1981
5. _____ Eugene O'Neill: A World View, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979.
6. Leech, Clifford: O'Neill (1963)
7. Gassner, John (Editor): O'Neill (Twentieth Century Views), 1964.
8. Raghavacharyalu, D.V.K. : Eugene O'Neill: A Study (1965).
9. Spiller, Robert: The Cycle of American Literature (Mentor Edition, 1957).
10. Weissman, Philip. "Conscious and Unconscious Autobiographical Dramas of Eugene O'Neill". Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 5 (1957), 432-460

Lesson Writer

Prof. Shyamala

Dept. of English

University of Kerala

TRIVANDRUM-34

5. THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

(RALPH WALDO EMERSON)

Contents:

- 5.1. Objectives
- 5.2. The Background of the Author and the Work
- 5.3. Life and Works
- 5.4. Summary of "The American Scholar"
- 5.5. A Critical Evaluation
- 5.6. Sample Questions
- 5.7. Suggested Readings

5.1. OBJECTIVES

Ralph Waldo Emerson was the first philosopher of the American spirit. "The American Scholar" is the title of a lecture delivered by Emerson on the 31st August, 1837, to the 'Phi Beta Kappa' Literary society of Harvard University near Cambridge in U.S.A. The objectives of this lesson are to bring out the ideas of Emerson in his essay in the first part, again divided into three parts, one; dealing with the influences of the Nature, the second with that of books and the third with that of its action. The second part contains Emerson's view of the duties of the American Scholar. The essay also attempts to analyze the state of affairs prevailing at the time in America and the writer's view of the future possibilities. This lesson also throws light on the style of Emerson who utters prophetically about the great future that awaits the American nation: "A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by Divine soul which also inspires all men".

5.2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR AND THE WORK"

Although America had won its political independence twenty-two years before he was born it still imbibed its culture from abroad. Cooper was writing in the tradition of Scott; Washington Irving was writing in the style of Addison. Emerson lived his early life in an expansionist period when Americans were pushing west in large numbers and act upon the principle of democracy with considerable swagger and gusto. Complete independence in spirit as well as in faith was everywhere in the air. President Monroe had given public notice of it in his Doctrine of 1823. Clay had boldly declared; "We look too much abroad. Let us become real and true Americans."

At such a juncture, what the statesmen had already accomplished in the sphere of politics, Emerson applied to culture, not by action, but the exhortation and radiance. In his introduction to his first book in 1836, he says, "Our age is retrospective. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition and a religion by revelation to us?Let us demand our own works and laws and worship." In a courageous address on "The American Scholar" in the next year he said: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe"; and he counseled the scholars assembled in Cambridge to live and think like free men. In the next year, he spoke out against formalism and tradition in religion. What he said in the address was so abhorrent to many people in Boston and Cambridge that nearly thirty years went by before Harvard University felt that he was the safe man to have around again. He was a poetic philosopher who trusted inspiration more than reason. Spiritually and personally he was a man of exalted character that his influence was great and wide and he could enkindle the minds of men and women all around the world. He was a man of deliberate affirmations:

5.3. Life and works:

Emerson was born in 1803 in Boston, on May 25 as son of the pastor of the Second Church and one of five brothers. His father died when he was eight. Though his mother was left with the family and in desperate financial circumstances, she was a woman of great singleness of purpose and she determined that her boys should be educated and she succeeded. Four of them went through college, each one helping the next who was ready. The hard life made two boys meet with premature death. While still young, Ralph's health was never vigorous; on two occasions it was dangerously bad, and his elder brother was never wholly free from pain and physical anxiety. On the whole, the family was not very strong. A brother and sister died as children, another brother never mentally matured. The privations of the Emerson family, after the death of Emerson's father, bore particularly hard on unsound constitutions.

Ralph Waldo Emerson entered Harvard college in 1817 at the age of fourteen. Although he was in the upper half of his class, he did not distinguish himself. He was graduated in 1821. For four years he helped his brother teach finishing school for young ladies in Boston. After teaching school in other communities he entered Harvard Divinity School; but weak lungs and eyes and rheumatism interrupted his education for the ministry almost at once and he had to spend a winter recuperating in the south. After completing his education, in 1829 he was ordained as assistant pastor of the Second Church, where his father had preached, and soon succeeded the pastor in full charge of the parish. At this time he married Ellen Tucker of Concord, N.H. but she lived only a year and a half afterward. The formal customs of religious observance had always been distasteful to Emerson. In 1832 he announced to his congregation that he could no longer administer the sacrament conscientiously because he did not believe that Christ had intended it as a general, regular observance. Although he was well liked in his parish, the church decided that it could not disperse with Christian ideals and Emerson resigned in circumstances that were friendly on

both sides.

Disappointed in his professional life, troubled by the death of his wife and also one of his brothers and his own poor health, he sailed for Italy in the winter. The trip improved his health and off stimulated his mind also. He enjoyed the great art treasures of Italy, visited Landon; in England he sought out Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle, whose works had especially interested him. The visit to Carlyle was a signal event in his life, for he found Carlyle as stimulating and congenial in person as he was in his works. He returned to America in good health after a year and he finally settled in Concord, where his step-grandfather was living. Emerson bought a house and land on the Boston Post road, married Lidian Jackson of Plymouth and settled down to a happy life that developed into a great career. He was thirty two then. His problems which haunted him till then were over. For the next forty seven years he grew in grace and wisdom and ministered the world. He liked Concord very much and took an active part in town life. He had good public relations and helped people in several ways when the occasion demanded. He was an effective public speaker and was a generally recognized master of the art of oratory.

He travelled widely lecturing on various topics. The life of lecturing was arduous. After more than ten years of exhausting scholarship and lecturing Emerson was invited to read some of his lectures in England. He spent a year there. Traveling around England, he had an opportunity to become intimately acquainted with many kinds of English people. He renewed his old friendships, particularly with Carlyle. He also visited France during a period of great political unrest. English Traits, which is at once a history and psychological analysis of the English character, was the result of his busy year abroad.

He was mild, frail, friendly and of civil demeanor. He was a lovable man; was shy, modest and deficient in animal spirit. He did not dominate groups by force of personality. His best thinking was done in private. As the leading transcendental philosopher of the day, he was consulted and implored by every one who had a new system, by the genuine prophets as well as cranks and crackpots. But Emerson kept them at a distance.

Politically he was reluctant. From the first he had believed that the slaves should be freed. He was fifty five when the Civil War broke out and he took no part in the fighting. In 1865 he was invited to make the Phi beta Kappa address at Harvard. In 1871 he lectured on Philosophy at Harvard. In July, 1872, his house has partially destroyed by fire. His health as well as memory began to fail. In 1882 on the 27th of April, he died in the evening. His funeral was attended by many distinguished people and friends. Gentle, kindly and upright, he was the teacher of America. What he said and wrote is still the gospel we most easily understand.

Besides, the lectures which were the principal means of support to Emerson, he was editing 'The dial'- a magazine from 1842 to 1844. His works include his essays in the Journals between 1820 to 1876. He had the habit of keeping a journal even when he was at college and continued the habit throughout his life. He called his journals his 'Savings Bank'

which recorded his development and expressed his views. He elicited his material for his lectures, essays and poems from those journals often.

In 1836, he published his first book Nature which expressed the basic and seminal concepts of Transcendentalism. This led to other works as 'The over-soul'. In 1837, appeared 'The American Scholar' and in 1838 'The Divinity School Address'. These two lectures revealed his dislike for authority and concern. For the individual he protested against the domination of church over the spiritual life of the individual and states that each individual must become his own church by following his "intuition" which "cannot be received second-hand".

In 1841, Essays - First Series appeared. This collection comprised "Self-Reliance", "The Over-Soul", "Compensation", "Spiritual laws", "Love", "Friendship", "History" and so on.

In 1843 Essays, Second series was written. It included "The Poet", "Experience" and "New England Reformers" and so on. These two books, the most important collections of Emerson's prose appeared at the end of his first decade of his writings. His unique form of prose essay blossomed fully by then. Spiller says, "the new form which Emerson developed is neither wholly essay nor wholly lecture. Its unity is the carefully wrought sentence. Each contains in crystalline suspension the whole meaning of the essay".

In 1850, he published Representative Men which revealed once again his concepts of greatness through a study of six men. His book resembles Carlyle's On Heroes and Hero-Worship. But Emerson includes democracy into the Great Man Theory. A great man, according to him has divine essence. His representative men are Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Napoleon and Goethe. His miscellaneous prose works include English Traits in 1856. The Conduct of Life, in 1860, Society and Solitude in 1870 and posthumously Letters to Carlyle in 1883, and Lectures and Biographical Sketches in 1844. His first volume of poems appeared in 1847. Later he wrote May-Day and other pieces in 1876. Some of the popular poems of Emerson are 'The Spinner', "The Rhodora", "Each and All", "The Problem", "The Visit", "The Humble-Bee", "The Snow-Storm", "The Concord Hymn", "Mithridates", "Hamatreya", "Maia", "Thernody", "Grace", "Give All to Love" and "Terminus" and so on.

5.4. Summary of "The American Scholar" :

To reiterate the origin of this essay: it is the address delivered at the 'Phi Beta Kappa' a literary society, at Harvard University near Cambridge, U.S.A on August 31, 1837. In fact, in the absence of a speaker marked for the occasion, Emerson had to give this address published later in 1837 and again in 1838. It was published in London in 1844 as "Man Thinking: An Oration", It is "the Declaration of Independence" in American Letters.

Emerson addresses Mr. President and Gentlemen at the beginning of the literary year.

"Our anniversary is one of hope, and perhaps, not enough of labor". He hopes that the Americans will show greater and more creative independence in matters of literature. "Our day of dependence" our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. Gods in the beginning divided man into men so that he might be more helpful to himself. "The old fable says there is one man, present to all particular men only partially or through one faculty and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man". Man is priest, scholar, statesman, producer, soldier, in short the individual does his own labor as well as the labor of other men. Unfortunately, this original unit. The One Man has been so minutely subdivided that it "is spilled into drops and cannot be gathered". The society has gone into such a state where each man is cut off from the rest.

"Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things". The planter ceases to be anything else but only a Man on the farm; the tradesman only ridden by the routines of his craft, the mechanic a machine, the sailor a rope of the ship".

"In this distribution of function the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state he is "Man Thinking". In the degenerate state, he becomes only a thinker or still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking. "This view of him contains the theory of his true function. All things exist for the benefit of such a scholar, and the true scholar is the only true master of all things. But the scholar often goes wrong, fails to understand his real nature, and so forfeits his privileges as the true master of all things.

Emerson describes the various influences which operate upon the American scholar and through which he is educated.

Firstly, "the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature". Everyday the sunrise, sunset, night stars, appear. The wind blows, men's activities go on. "The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages". He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? "There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power retuning into itself. Slowly the mind finds how to join two things and see in them one Nature; then three; then a thousand; so the mind goes on tying things together and discovering that contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem. "The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy; identity, in the most remote parts." So it is suggested that he and nature proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that root? It is the soul of his soul. He must learn to worship the soul which is a part of the all pervading nature man, here the scholar, shall all that nature is the opposite of the soul; answering to it part for part." One is seal and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. "Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainment. He becomes conscious of unity in diversity which is nature's law. He is ignorant of so much of nature and he does not possess so much of his own mind. Therefore he must follow the ancient precept "know thyself" and the modern precept, "study nature". Both these, at last become one maxim.

Secondly the great influence on the spirit of the scholar is the mind of the past expressed in literature, in art, in institution and so on. "Books are the best type of the influence of the past and we shall get at the truth by considering their value alone." The theory of books is noble. In the beginning, man looked at the world around him and thought upon it, then he gave it a new arrangement in his own mind and expressed his conclusions in his books. "Books are thus a record of the immortal truths discovered by scholars of the past". But as nobody is perfect no artist can entirely exclude the conventional, the local or the temporary from his book. Nobody can write a book of pure thought which will be as useful in all respects for the coming generations as it is for his own generation. The books of an earlier period of history are not of much use to the future. It is necessary to realize that books do not have a value and validity for all times to come. "Books are the best of things, well used, abused, among the worst."

It is supposed rather incorrectly that books have an authority for all times and so men begin to worship books; each generation must write its own books which can be of value at most for the next generation. Submissive young men grow up in colleges and libraries thinking that they have to accept the views which Cicero, Locks and Bacon have expressed in their books. These young men do not realize that Cicero, Locks and Bacon were themselves only young men in libraries when they wrote those books. The result of this worship of books is that we get "the book worm instead of Man thinking. That we Get the book learned class who value books as such and not as related to nature and to the human constitutions". Books thus come to be regarded as a kind of third estate with the world and the soul being the other two. That is how we get the bibliomanias of all kinds. "There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair."

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading, so it be sternly subordinated". Man thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. "Books are for the scholar's idle times when he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. We hear that we may speak. "the Arabian proverbs says " A fig tree, looking on a fig tree, becometh faithful ".

The right use of books is to derive inspiration from them; that will be their right use. The one valuable thing in the world is the active soul. This active soul should not be allowed to become the slave of the ideas contained in books. The active soul sees truth, speaks truth and also creates truth.

Books are meant for the scholar's idle time. In his busy time when he can directly read God, he should not waste his precious time in reading what others have written. Books are certainly a source of great pleasure. The poetry of men like Chaucer, Marvell, and Dryden affords much pleasure. Books should not be underestimated. But it is wrong to confine one's attention to books only. Books should be read in a creative, discriminating manner. One should, for instance, read only the authentic portions of the books of Plato or

Shakespeare; what is not authentic in those authors must be rejected. The active soul, the genius, looks forward to the future, and not backwards. Books are backward looking, but the active soul or genius is forward looking. However, it should be remembered that a genius can cause much harm also by over-influence. This is seen in the fact that, "the English dramatic poets have Shakespeare's now for two hundred years." With the result that the growth of English drama has been hampered and retarded. Freedom from servile imitation of such men of genius is also essential. Human mind can be fed by the knowledge contained in books, but the reading of books must be creative one. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says "he that would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry out the wealth of the Indies." There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. "However, the basic principles or elementary facts can be acquired only by a careful and precise study of books. History and science must be read laboriously and elements of the subjects must thus be acquired. But such a study, too, can be useful only when it develops the creative power of the scholars, when it enables him to think for himself.

Emerson next proceeds to consider the duties of the American scholar. These duties are such as are worthy of "Man Thinking". All those duties may be summed up in the expression "self-trust". The first duty of the scholar is, "to cheer, to raise and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances." He does the slow, unhonoured and unpaid task of observation. He must observe and study men and their psychology and must not mind if fame does not come to him at once. He must be prepared to accept not only poverty and scorn of the people, but also solitude. His chief consolation should be the fact that he exercises the highest functions of human nature. He is a man "who raises himself above private considerations, and lives on public and illustrious thoughts." He is the world's eye, and also the world's heart. In other words, he sees and feels for others. He must preserve and, "communicate heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse and the conclusions of history." Whatever new judgments are pronounced by Reason on the passing men and events of the present, he will hear them and propagate them so that they are also cared for by others.

Such being his duties, it will be necessary for him to have full confidence in himself and never to heed popular opinions. He should have the confidence to think, that not only does he know the world popular opinions, but also that he will not be carried away from his own convictions by mere appearances or popular propaganda. This self-trust includes all the other virtues. He should add patiently observation without caring for the view of the multitudes. And success is sure to come to him in the long run. In understanding his own mind, he would understand all minds and thus world be lord and the master of those with whom he has deal with. People will then listen to him with pleasure, and find that he has expressed their innermost thoughts and sentiments. This would give him power over the hearts and minds of man, and they would listen to him and be guided by him. This is the secret of the success of great poets and orators "SELF-CONFIDENCE AND CONVICTION ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE LIFE."

The scholar should be free and brave. He should not tolerate any hindrances except those which arise from within a himself. He should be brave because fear is a thing which a scholar by his very definition puts behind him. "fear always arises from ignorance." He should face the world boldly, because the world belongs to him who can see through its pretences he must not lead a sheltered life, but must face boldly the vexed problems of the day whether political or social. He should face such problems like a man. It is for those who are lacking in self-confidence to feel afraid of this world. The scholar must have so much confidence in himself as to be able to influence the world with his ideas, and free others from fear. "It is not the man who can alter matter who is great, the great man is he who can alter the state of mind of others. "They are the kings of the world who give to all. Nature and all art the color of their own thinking." Such scholar will find that the world is as plastic in his hands as it was in the hands of God. The great man makes the great thing. "The day is always his who works in it with serenity and great aims."

The common people gladly bow to the great man. It is only in hundred or a hundred years that a great heroic man is born in the world. The common people worship the great man because they see on him the ripening human potentialities. They bask in the warmth of a great the man and feel that warmth to be a part of their own being. they are willing to give their own blood to make the heart of the great man beat. He lives for them and they live in him. The scholar should try to be such a heroic man, and then all will bow down to him.

Men, such as they are, naturally seek money or power. They seek power because it is as good as money or because. That is why we have the phrase, "the spoils of office." People think this to be the highest good but, if they were to realize that this is a false aim they would not hanker after power or office and would leave the government to be run by the clerks and petty officials. It is the duty of the people to apply to the gradual spreading of the idea of culture. "the man's enterprise of the world should be the unbundling of a man" because a man, "rightly viewed includes the particular natures of all man" each philosopher each poet each actor has only done for us.

what one day we can do for ourselves. "It is one soul which animates all men." It is one light which shines from a thousand stars. The scholar must understand this truth and develop his own spiritual faculties. He must concentrate on the divine that permeates all Nature and all men.

Historically, different ideas are thought to predominate in different periods of time. For instance, we speak of the classical age, the romantic age and the reflective or philosophical modern age. Emerson believes in the oneness of all, so does not attach much importance to such superficial differences. It is generally regretted that the present age is the age of introversion. But why should introversion be regarded as an evil? It is no evil to be critical and to try to see into the heart of things. It is good to cast away blindness and to see things clearly through introversion. The discontent of the literary people is not to be deplored. If there is any period in which one would desire to be born in, it is the period of revolution. The

present time- the period of revolution like all times is a very good one if we only knew what to do with it. There are signs of such a revolution in poetry and art, in philosophy and science, in Church and State. A golden age seems to be at hand. The scholar : must contribute his bit to the ushering in of such an age of golden possibilities.

Their writings show that, "things near are no less beautiful and wonderful than things remote. The near explains the far". The drop is a small ocean. A man is related to all nature.

Another sign of our times is the new importance given to the single person. Everything that tends to surround the individual with barriers of natural respect so that he feels the world to be his, every such thing tends to true union between man and man as well as too greatness. No man in this world is either willing or able to help any other man. Help must come from one's own bosom alone. The scholar is that man who, "must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contribution of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be a university of knowledge." He is a man who has understood that the world is nothing and that the man is all important. In man himself is the law of all Nature. He must know that Reason slumbers within him; he must awaken it and apply his reasoning faculty to understand the truth about man and his life. Through his efforts and courage he must bring about the union of man with man and with Nature and God.

Conclusion

The American Scholar should have confidence in the unexplored might of man. Unfortunately, the spirit of the American man is thought to be timid, imitative and tame. There is widespread public and private greed. "Even the American Scholar is decent, indolent and self-satisfied." The tragic result of this state of affairs is that the mind of the American feeds upon itself. The scholar must rise above the greed for worldly power and pelf. Every individual should, with full confidence, rely on his own instincts and should make those instincts prevail for the good of the world. He must work patiently to achieve his noble aims. If that is done the American people will walk on their own feet, will work with their own hands and will speak their own mind. They will acquire self-confidence and independence of outlook. A nation of men will then for the first time exit, the divisions of the North and the South will give way and each will believe himself to be inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men. The scholar must carry out this noble task with patience, courage and determination.

5.5. A Critical Evaluation

It does not do much reading between the lines to find in this address- "The American Scholar a condensed chapter of Emerson's autobiography, an image nature statement of dominant issues in the ethical development." Says W.N.Smith. David Porter feels, "that essay's most inward concern is neither literary nationalism as most interpretations have it, nor Emerson's own justification of his vocation, though both are present. Basically the

essay is concerned with the aesthetic possibilities of the poet-scholar's imagination." Mathew Arnold said, "Emerson was the friend and aide of those who would live in the spirit."

All these are true of Emerson's "The American Scholar." O.W. Holmes calls it, "our Intellectual declaration of Independence. "Emerson was very confident all through his address and felt that he was playing on his listeners as on an organ."

Prose-Style

As regards the prose-style of his address, it, too, has Emerson's usual defect i.e. the lack of causal logical connection between one sentence and another in the various paragraphs. Sentence follows sentence in quick succession, but sometimes the next sentence is not connected directly and logically with the preceding sentence. This creates some difficulty for the average reader. Who often feels puzzled because of this lack of logical causation.

However, Emerson's prose-style is remarkable for its epigrammatic quality. His sentences are pithy and compact, and remind us of the prose of Bacon. His style is characterized by concentration and condensation, and his sentences can be elaborated at length; some of the sentences read like proverbs. Here are a few examples:

1. Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst;
2. Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over influence.
3. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think;
4. Fear always springs from ignorance.
5. Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter the states of mind.
6. The great man makes the great thing;
7. The day is always his who works in it with serenity and great aims.
8. The world is nothing, man is all.

Emerson's style is highly figurative. When inspired, similes and metaphors come out of his pen, as sparks from a chimney fire. His use of vivid, pictorial images is also to be noted. For example, we get, "It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightness the capes of Sicily, and now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men." Many more such examples may be cited at random.

Another aspect of his style to be noted is the judicious use of long and short sentences. In this way he is able to impart variety and avoid monotony. Emerson also makes use of references and allusions to earlier writers, mostly European. But such allusions do

not create much difficulty for most readers are already familiar with them. Pope, Johnson, Carlyle, Bacon etc are well known writers. It is only rarely that he alludes to such little-known figures as Emanuel Sweden Borg or Pestalogzzi.

5.6. Sample Questions

1. Write a note on Emerson's Prose-style with special reference to "The American Scholar".
2. Trace the element of Transcendentalism in "The American Scholar".
3. "The American Scholar" is American Intellectual declaration of Independence; it is the manifesto of "Literary Independence of America". Elucidate.
4. Examine critically the various ideas expressed by Emerson in "the American Scholar".
5. Critically analyze the content and style of "The American Scholar".
6. What are the various factors that shape a man into a scholar? what according to Emerson are the duties and functions of a Scholar?
7. "Emerson's true hero is the scholar and the true vocation is that of the scholar" Explain.
8. What role does self-reliance play in making the scholar a hero? What are the various ways in which a scholar can be self-reliant?

5.7. Suggested Readings:

1. The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, centenary, ed; 12.vols. Boston and New York, 1903-1904
2. George E.Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson. New York 1907.
3. Norman Foerster, "Emerson in American Criticism" Boston and New York, 1928.
4. F.O.Matthiessen, American Renaissance, London and New York, 1941.
5. The selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson Ed. By Brooks Atkinson. The modern library New York, 1950.
6. Student's Handbook of American Literature ed by C.D.Narasimhaiah, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1997.

Lesson Writer:

Dr.K.Sandhya

6. MOBY DICK

(Herman Melville)

Contents:

- 6.1. The objectives
- 6.2. The Background of the Author
- 6.3. His Life and Works
- 6.4. Introduction To Moby Dick
- 6.5. Synopsis of Moby Dick
- 6.6. A Critical Evaluation
- 6.7. Sample Questions
- 6.8. Suggested Readings

6.1. The objectives:

The meaning of Moby Dick by Melville is so involved complex that it had a number of interpretations accepted. The name can be approached from numerous viewpoints. The objective of this lesson is to bring out the thematic analysis of the novel in which Melville presents the idea of the duality of meaning in the universe as opposed to man's desire to see only one meaning in any one thing. Melville suggests that every thing and event has a multiplicity of meanings. The entire creation has manifold meanings. Melville, to justify this idea, shows the difference between the vision of the whale and the vision of the man. Man's eyes are so positioned that they can focus upon only one object and see only one object. On the other hand, for the whale eyes are on the opposite sides of the head and it can see two images. Thus the monstrous animal represents the duality of the universe and the man can represent only one. God created the universe with an infinity of meaning but man is focusing upon one specific meaning. This lesson also brings out Melville's style and structure of the novel besides the characterization.

6.2. The Back ground of the Author

Herman Melville was born in 1819 to Allan and Maria Melville. He was one of a family of eight children- four boys and four girls in the neighborhood of New York city; and was descended from colonial families. Herman admired his father very much and loved his mother too. But her strict rules of discipline aroused in him a rebellious spirit. In 1830 his father's business failed. Herman stepping into his adolescence was depressed with the circumstances and his father, still more depressed, died shortly later. The Melville family had difficult times though they received support from relatives. Melville tried business in New York and decided to go sea. He signed on as "bay" on a British ship called Saint Lawrence and

sailed across the Atlantic to Liverpool and on the return voyage to America. His desire to travel on the sea grew though a sailor's life was harsh. So he sailed on a whaleship, 'the Acushnet' which made a long voyage along South America and into the Pacific. The ship finally dropped anchor at a beautiful island of a Marquesas. The dirty ship; the wretched crew and the brutality of the officers made Melville and his fellow sailor leave the ship and escape into the island. There they met a group of cannibals who adopted these two white men but refused to let them out. His companion escaped but Melville remained and began to admire the simple and peaceful life of the natives. However, he grew restless and escaped to an Australian whaling ship the Lucy-Ann, no better than the earlier one. Again he deserted with the ship's doctor and they stayed with the tribesmen. Later for some time they continued over the sea and in 1844 he got released from the ship. His days at the sea were forever ended.

6.3 His life and works

After his life on the sea; Melville took to writing. In 1846 Typee-a novel based on his life with cannibals appeared; while 1847 and 1848 saw a publication of Omoo and Redburn respectively. In 1850, White-Jacket- a protest against flogging in the U.S. navy appeared and this led to the abolition of this practice by the act of Congress. He became very popular with those great novels. In 1847 Melville had married Elizabeth Lizzie Shaw; a childhood friend and a daughter of famous New England judge. They moved from Pittsfield where he had been living with his mother and two sisters, to New York. In July 1851; Melville completed Moby Dick. After 16 months of strenuous writing he had to support his own family and his mother and two sisters. He was broke. In 1856 he published Pierre. He then tried for an appointment to public office. He had a nervous breakdown in 1856 and his entire family was worried and secured funds to send him on a rest journey to the Holy Land and Europe. It was just after he had completed work on another book, The Confidence Man. He returned to America as an improved man.

In 1863 he sold his England home near New York and returned to New York city. He got a small government job in the customs house in New York in 1866.. His career as a writer began with Typee and when he returned from Palestine, he was supposed to have left the thoughts of writing. But he did not do it as in 1876.

Clarel: a poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land was published. In 1891 he completed Billy Budd written in memory of a sea man, Jack Chase. He died quietly on September 6th 1891 in New York. He lived in an exiting time in the history of his country and an inspiring time in the history of his literature.

During his life span America leaped geographically westward. It also emerged from a colonial existence. On the eastern side there was great mechanical and material progress like telegraph; the telephone, the rail roads and so on leading to social progress and commerce. During Melville's early and most productive years American writers were turning from the period of revolutions to a period of romanticism, democracy and civil war. Literary giants like Washington Irving, Cooper, R.W. Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, Poe, Holmes and Whittier were alive during his time. The nation sought unity and the democracy so hard won in the Revolution. The American writers had not totally cut their literary heritage from Europe partly because of great writers like Tolstoy, Ibsen, Thackeray and others. Of all these great figures in Literature, Melville was attracted to Hawthorne.

6.4. INTRODUCTION TO MOBY DICK

As already explained Melville wants to convey a multiplicity of ideas with many motifs in *Moby Dick*. One is the coffin, Life-Buoy motif. First it is a coffin for queequeg; then he has it made in the form of a canoe, later on the recovery of queequeg he makes it into a storage chest and then into a primitive work of art and religion. It is later connected into a life-buoy and is the object by which Ishmael's life is saved. Thus man cannot assign one meaning to this object. The meaning of any object, according to Melville, lies in the beholder of the object and not in the object itself. *Moby Dick* is a symbol of all the things in the universe rather than the specific one. Another general idea found in the novel is the comradeship between men. The sea is also interpreted in many ways- the source of life and represents the difficulty of understanding. Life symbolizes the terrors which man must face in his life and also the only way by which man can understand life better. These are some ideas in *Moby Dick*.

Steelkilt

A seaman aboard the Town-Ho who is persecuted by Radney.

6.5. SYNOPSIS OF MOBY DICK

We hear the story of *Moby Dick* from the lips of a man who, at the very beginning of the story, says simply, "Call me Ishmael." Ishmael, an inlander of Massachusetts, succumbs to the urge to go to sea, not as a passenger nor as an officer, both of which roles he disdains, but as an ordinary seaman. There is the life!

One cold and wet December day he enters, a carpet bag on his shoulder, the shipping port of New Bedford, and finds a room at Spouter Inn. He shares his bed, at first in great consternation, with a massive South Sea Islander named Queequeg.

Queequeg is a heathen, and an expert harpooner on whaling ships. The next day a driving storm forces Ishmael to seek shelter in the whalemens Chapel, a cold and austere place. Soon the pastor, Father Mapple, enters and, tossing off his greatcoat, climbs a rope ladder to the pulpit situated high above his listeners. Father Mapple's stirring sermon is upon Jonah and the Whale. Father Mapple exhorts his hearers to deny sin and to uphold the truth. But above all, the true delight of life and great achievement of man comes when he acknowledges no law, no force, but the Lord his God.

Ishmael and Queequeg become fast friends. The time arrives to leave New Bedford, cross the short expanse of sea to Nantucket, where together they will search out a whaling ship. On the packet boat en route to Nantucket a foolish landlubber, who had been making fun of Queequeg's strange blank-and-tattoo coloring, is accidentally plunged into the icy water. Only Queequeg, of all aboard ship, dives into the sea and rescues him. They secure a room that evening in Nantucket, and the next day Ishmael, after carefully looking over the whaling ships being fitted for several years at sea, chooses the Pequod. When the ship's owners are told of Queequeg, and subsequently see him, they gladly sign him on also. Good harpooners are scarce.

The captain of the ship, they are told, is Ahab. Because of some vague illness he is confined to his cabin. A strange old wisp of a man later confronts Queequeg and Ishmael and alludes darkly and ominously to Captain Ahab and the Pequod.

On Christmas morning, a cold gray day, as Ishmael and Queequeg approach the ship, they see several dark figures scurry aboard. Shortly the Pequod sets sail upon a wind-swept Atlantic. Now, says Ishmael, the world of the Pequod is surrounded by the mysterious sea.

Ishmael introduces us to Starbuck, the chief mate, Stubb, the second mate, and Flask, the third mate; and their harpooners who are, respectively, Queequeg, Tashtego, and Daggoo. As the ship enters warmer air, some days after leaving Nantucket, Ishmael catches his first glimpse of Ahab, captain of the Pequod, standing on the afterdeck, his white peg leg anchored in a hole bored into the deck floor. A shiver of terror comes over Ishmael.

The focus is shifted momentarily from the crew to whales as Ishmael describes the various types. He points out that the most prized of all is the sperm whale, which yields valuable spermaceti oil which lights the lamps of the world and is also essential for perfume and other products. Ishmael also explains how the officers and seamen are housed and fed in opposite ends of the ship, and how whales are sighted by sailors called "lookouts" who perch precariously from the mast and, when they sight the sperm whale blowing mist from his spout in the distance, sing out, "There she blows!"

The crew is commanded to come before Ahab and there he tells them that the sole purpose of the Pequod's voyage is to hunt down the Great White Whale, which some crew members instantly recognize as Moby Dick. Ahab confesses his deep, burning, tormenting, desire to strike back at the creature who took his leg from him. The crew excitedly accepts the challenge flung at them by Ahab and they all drink a pledge to it. The wine casks are opened and the crew revels through the night, drinking and shouting and singing.

And who is Moby Dick? Ishmael learns from the crew that he is a larger-than-usual sperm whale with a peculiar snow-white forehead, a deformed lower jaw, and a malicious temper which drives him to madness when attacked. No other whale approaches the evil of Moby Dick. Indeed, Ishmael offers affidavits that the enraged sperm whale, such as Moby Dick, has the power to ram and sink a whaling ship!

Night after night, day after day, Ahab pores over the charts of the world's seas, plotting a course which he hopes will take him to Moby Dick. Mean while the crew sights its first sperm whales as the lookout slings out, "There she blows!" The whale boats are lowered from the Pequod. At this moment Ishmael discovers that the mysterious dark figures who slipped aboard the ship the morning of sailing are East Indians who man the oars and tiller of Ahab's boat. In the wild excitement of the first chase Ishmael's boat capsizes. When it is rescued from the water he realizes the crew finds humor in this reckless adventure.

In a later lowering, Little Pip, a Negro, is tossed from a boat and presumably left to die. Although he is finally rescued by the Pequod, this harrowing experience turns Pip into an idiot. The Pequod continues voyaging relentlessly through the South Atlantic, then the Indian Ocean and on the way captures, kills, dissects and extracts oil from the sperm whales. Ships are met, and on each occasion the gab-fest or "game" opens with Ahab's stern demand, "Hast seen the White Whale?"

The suspense of the chase heightens as the Pequod enters the Japanese sea, the area in which the White Whale is most likely to be found.

Then one day the Pequod meets the whaling ship Enderby, whose captain shows Ahab that he has lost his arm very recently to the White Whale. Ahab rushes back to his ship and in the

splinters his ivory leg. The carpenter and blacksmith hurriedly fashion a new one, and Ahab has a new harpoon fashioned from the finest iron.

The Pequod, now in full sail, enters the vast depths and expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Despite the efforts of Starbuck and Stubb to abandon the mad chase, the Pequod plunges ahead. Suddenly a fierce typhoon descends upon the Pequod. The ship's sails are ripped by the raging winds, her decks washed by mountainous waves. The three main mast tips suddenly spout fire casting an eerie glow over the ship. Still Ahab urges the vessel forward. He becomes increasingly impatient –devising a new compass when the storm ruins the regular ship's compass.

The storm subsides and the Pequod meets the whaling ship Rachel, which had encountered Moby Dick and lost a whale boat bearing a crew including the captain's son. Ahab ignores the Rachel's plea to help search for the lost boat. The tempo of the chase increases. At long last, the Great White Whale –Moby Dick-is sighted by Ahab. The first day harpoons are driven into Moby Dick but the furious whale smashes Ahab's boat. All the whale men are rescued, but Moby Dick escapes.

The second day the harpoons of all three boats find their mark in Moby Dick's huge sides and again Ahab's boat is capsized. But all hands are rescued save the Parsee, Fed Allah. The third day Ahab drives a harpoon into Moby Dick's side. Two of the boats, in danger, are ordered back to the Pequod. Ahab's boat remains alone fight the whale. The angered Moby Dick's drives his forehead into the side of the Pequod, splintering its bow. Ahab throws another harpoon into Moby Dick, but its rope catches Ahab about the neck and drags him into the depths. The Pequod sinks. Ishmael survives. Ishmael explains that he never goes to sea as a passenger not as a "Commodore, a Captain, or a Cook." instead, he prefers to go as a "simple sailor." He has never minded being ordered about because he knows that every one in the world is a slave to someone or to something else. Thus, he likes to go to sea as a simple sailor because he does not have to pay as do passengers; instead, he is paid. Also, the exercise he gets is quite wholesome and pure, but chief among his desires to go to sea is his curiosity about the giant whale.

CHAPTER II

THE CARPET BAG :

CHAPTER I

Only Ishmael survives Loomings:

Ishmael, the narrator of the story, tells the reader that when he or any person becomes bored or depressed, he will seek to buoy his spirits by visiting an ocean or, if he is an inlander, a lake or stream. One can often see men sitting on the shore of some water gazing pensively at the water and trying to restore peace to their troubled minds. Ishmael stuffs "a shirt or two in my old carpet bag," quits his good old home town of Manhatto and soon arrives in the famous port of New Bedford on a cold, windy, and icy Saturday night in December. But he does not plan to sail from New Bedford, but rather from Nantucket, and in a Nantucket ship, because that was the original great sailing port of America. But when he arrives at New Bedford, the little packet which would ferry him to Nantucket has already sailed so he is obliged to spend a night, a day and another night in New Bedford.

He starts to look for a place to eat and sleep. Finally he passes a sign on an inn called "The Crossed Harpoons" but it looks too expensive. He passes another, "Sword-Fish Inn," but this one looks too expensive also. Moving on, Ishmael come to a dim sort of light near the docks. The sign over the door says: "The Spouter Inn:- Peter Coffin." Ishmael thinks the house so dim, and the place so dilapidated looking, the perhaps he can afford to stay there. What a terrible place, Ishmael muses, yet it is better to be inside than face the icy teeth of the cold winter wind.

CHAPTER III He decides to enter and investigate the "Spouter".

CHAPTER III

THE SPOUTER INN:

Ishmael enters the Spouter-Inn. On one wall of the entry way hangs a large oil painting, covered with grime. Although the light is poor Ishmael is struck by its large masses of shades and shadows. He looks at it again and again. Soon he makes out the scene; a sinking ship with a huge whale poised nearby.

On the opposite wall are many types of implements used by whalers-monstrous clubs and spears. Ishmael then enters the public room and asks the proprietor, Peter Coffin says he has none left but Ishmael can share a bed with a harpooner. After supper, Ishmael decides he will sleep alone and asks to sleep on a bench in the public room.

CHAPTERS IV,V

The Counterpane Break Fast:

When Ishmael awakes the next morning he has an opportunity to observe the peculiar patch-work tattooing covering Queequeg's body and arms. Ishmael also observes that the harpooner has his arm firmly around Ishmael so that he cannot get out of bed. This reminds Ishmael of a childhood experience when his cruel stepmother sent him up to bed and he dreamed that a strange unseen force was holding him in bed until the sun rose. Finally Ishmael starts shouting at Queequeg and nudging him and finally awakes the big man. Queequeg studies Ishmael, then seems to remember the events of the night before. He gets out of bed, offers to dress first, then leave, before Ishmael gets up. This the harpooner does and while making his toilet shaves with the sharp-edged point of his harpoon. Fully dressed at last, Queequeg, harpoon proudly in hand, marches out of the room. Ishmael believes this barbaric looking man is perhaps more civilized and kind than he at first thought.

Ishmael dresses and descends to the parlor of the inn. Mr. Coffin, forever grinning, is still amused that he has tricked Ishmael into being the bedmate of the wild-looking harpooner. Ishmael says to himself that if one is the butt of a joke-well, take it good naturedly because the world seems to laugh so little.

The landlord cries "Grub, ho!" and the seamen enter the dining room and sit at the table. Ishmael notices that all of these men- of great enough courage and daring at sea -shyly look at each other sitting at the table. But not the Queequeg the-harpooner.

CHAPTERS VI; VII; VIII; IX: After breakfast Ishmael walks about the streets of New Bedford. Now here's a town -a rare town indeed -he believes. On its streets near the wharves can be

found all kinds of human beings. Cannibals and weaving drunken sailors; and New Hampshire and Vermont men, too-young and stalwart and green as the mountains they came from. All come to New Bedford to seek fortune and adventure in the fishery. There's even the small-town dandy-the bumpkin dandy-walking up the street wearing fancy bell-bottom trousers with will last but a moment in a tempest at sea!

Ishmael is troubled and fearful as he contemplates that perhaps the fate of those memorialized on the tablets will also be his fate. But some-how Ishmael throws off these forebodings and revels in thoughts of taking to sea from Nantucket. Three cheers for Nantucket, he muses, and the Devil do what he will with me. Ishmael has not been seated in the chapel long when there enters a fine old man who certainly must be the chaplain-the famous Father Mapple who was once in his youth a harpooner but later entered the ministry. Father Mapple takes off his coat, hat, and overshoes, dripping with melting sleet, and walks slowly to the pulpit.

The pulpit is a very lofty one. But there are no stairs to it as in ordinary churches. Instead there is a perpendicular rope ladder. Father Mapple, a vigorous man for his old age, climbs up the ladder, then pulls the rope ladder after him. There he stands, high above the congregation, as though he has removed his last connection with worldly beings. Ishmael wonders if this is a mere stage trick, then decides no-not at all. Here is a sincere man of God who sees in his pulpit a stronghold, a lofty place of faith.

CHAPTERS X XI, XII

A Bosom Friend:

Nightgown

Biographical

Ishmael returns to the Spouter-Inn and finds Queequeg alone, quietly whittling the face of his black wood idol.

Ishmael studies Queequeg closely and, despite the hideous face, sees in Queequeg a man of honest heart, a sort of dignity, and of great courage. And Ishmael admires the big man for not attempting to force himself upon other sailors even though he must be lonely, being 60,000 miles from his Pacific island home.

So Ishmael decides to befriend Queequeg. They talk, and finally smoke the pipe together. When the smoke ends Queequeg presses his forehead to Ishmael's, and clasps him around the waist. Queequeg says they are now married-meaning, they are bosom friends who would defend each other to the death. After supper they go to their room where Queequeg gives Ishmael half of all his possessions. And finally, although he was brought up a Christian, Ishmael joins Queequeg in the strange ceremony before the little black wood idol. After all, Ishmael tells himself, he is doing the will of God by being kind to a fellow man.

Queequeg and Ishmael to bed in the cold room but after napping a bit both grow wakeful and sit up in bed. Queequeg decides to smoke his tomahawk pipe and they visit, Queequeg telling Ishmael about himself and the island he came from.

Queequeg was a native of Kokovoka, an island in the South Pacific. His father was the King of the island and his uncle was the high priest. When Queequeg was a young man a whaling ship visited the island. He begged the captain of the ship to take him aboard so he could learn the ways of the Christian world. The captain refused. So Queequeg got in a canoe and paddled to some narrows through which the whaling ship must pass. As the ship passed, Queequeg paddles to tit and climbed aboard.

CHAPTERS XIII, XIV, XV

Wheel Barrow

Nantucket

Chowder:

The next morning Queequeg and Ishmael rent a wheelbarrow to cart their belongings to the dock where they are to board the Moss, a small ship sailing from New Bedford to Nantucket.

Aboard ship some bumpkins make fun of Queequeg's appearance, one of them in particular. Queequeg picks this fellow up, tosses him high in the air, catches him, and drops him to the deck. The ship's captain comes running, threatening Queequeg for his actions. At that moment, the stiff gale pulls a huge sail boom loose and as it swings across the deck the bumpkin is pitched into the sea. Queequeg quickly fastens the boom and then dives into the freezing water and rescues the bumpkin.

CHAPTER XVI

The Ship:

The next morning Queequeg informs Ishmael that the little black idol he carries in his pocket-named Yojo-has told the harpooner that Ishmael must go alone and choose the ship upon which they will sail. Ishmael protests but Yojo has insisted, and so Ishmael goes to the docks. There he finds three ships fitting for three years at sea: the Devil-Dam, the Tit-bit, and the Pequod- the latter named after a now extinct Massachusetts Indian tribe. He looks over each of the ships and decides he likes the weathered, yet noble and melancholy look of the Pequod. So he asks an imposing looking man on the deck where he can sign up. The man is Captain Peleg, apart owner of the ship. Captain Peleg quizzes Ishmael sternly and finally agrees to take him to Captain Bildad, the other owner of the ship, for "final inspection." Peleg and Bildad get into a violent argument about Ishmael's share of the ship's wealth, but finally agree on the "three hundredth lay."

Ishmael signs up for the voyage and volunteers to bring Queequeg. When Peleg and Bildad learn he is a skilled harpooner they urge Ishmael to bring him along. Then Ishmael asks to meet the captain of the ship on this voyage-Captain Ahab. But Peleg says Ahab does not wish to see anyone now. He assures Ishmael that although he has only one- leg the other having been chewed up by a ferocious whale- he is not as evil as his biblical name suggests.

CHAPTERS XVII, XVIII, XIX**The Ramadan****His mark****The Prophet:**

Ishmael returns to the Inn but not wishing to disturb Queequeg's fasting-called Ramadan – does not go up to the room until nightfall. Ishmael calls to Queequeg and knocks on the door. There is no answer. Ishmael, worried for fear some evil has befallen Queequeg rushes to the landlady and asks for a key. Mrs. Hussey goes upstairs with Ishmael and peering through the keyhole sees the harpoon. They decide he has killed himself, despite the sign at the desk demanding "No suicides." Mrs. Hussey's key is of no avail since the door is bolted inside. Ishmael, despite the lady's protests, forces the door open. There is Queequeg sitting calmly on the floor. The fast is continuing. The next morning Queequeg breaks his fast and Ishmael lectures him, saying lentils and fasts and Ramadan's are utter nonsense but Queequeg does not understand. They eat breakfast and start for the Pequod.

CHAPTERS XX, XXI, XXII**ALL ASTIR****GOING ABOARD****MERRY CHRISTMAS**

Since the Pequod will be gone for three years, it takes much time to repair her and bring aboard all kinds of things needed to keep the ship fit and to feed the crew. For days, cargo is carried aboard and stored. Helping in this work by bringing little things that would make life more comfortable aboard the ship is Bildad's sister Charity – Aunt Charity. Soon the work is done and Queequeg and Ishmael are told the vessel will sail The next day. But still there is no sign of Captain Ahab.

As they near the ship Ishmael sees several sailors, or shadows he takes to be Sailors, boarding the Pequod. As they draw near Elijah detains them and asks if they intend to board worship. They say of course they do and walk on. Elijah cries out that He has warned them and then asks if they saw the men boarding the ship. Ishmael says he saw them then Elijah says "See if you can find'em now...." They brush off Elijah and board the ship, but they see no sign of the mysterious figures they saw boarding earlier. They find the sleeping sailor who presently awakes and tells them that Captain Ahab Boarded the ship during the night and is now in his cabin.

The ship's riggers leave the Pequod and Captain Bildad and Peleg turn to ships first – mate Starbuck to inquire if all is ready. He says it is and they bid him call the crew together. The two captains order the men to get about the duty of hoisting anchor and setting the sails and the ship starts its way down the harbour with captain Peleg as the Pilot soon the vessel enters the cool grey ocean and a dark and misty Christmas day. A small sail-boat draws close and captains Peleg and Bildad, both old sea salts reluctantly Leave. Captain Ahab has not appeared.

CHAPTERS XXIII**The Lee Shore**

Ishmael looks about the ship and is surprised to discover the helmsman to be Bulkington, a mariner whom he had seen at the inn in New Bedford. Bulkington has just landed from a four-year voyage, and now with no respite at all, enters upon another long journey, battling the fates of the seas. Bulkington's journey, however, is a short one since he is soon washed overboard and is drowned.

CHAPTERS XXIV, XXV**THE ADVOCATE****POSTSCRIPT**

Ishmael pauses here to tell the reader that the whaling industry and whalers undeservedly are held in poor repute by landsmen. He argues that whaling has brought great wealth to the nations of the world. He explains that much of the world's great exploring has been done by whaling vessels. He explains that the whale has been "written up" by Job as a book in the Bible. He protests strongly that whaling is an honorable profession. He says that there is great dignity in whaling. And he concludes by saying that if, upon his death, anyone should find any precious manuscripts in his desk, he ascribes all the honor and glory to whaling. For, "a whale-ship was my Yale College, my Harvard". Ishmael is still not satisfied that he has bestowed enough dignity on the profession of whaling. So he adds another thought for the reader to consider. In England, when the kings or queens are crowned, their heads are first anointed with oil. And that oil is, of course, the sperm oil of whales. "Think of that, ye loyal Britons!" Ishmael cries. "We whale men supply your kings and queens with coronation stuff!"

CHAPTERS XXVI, XXVII**KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES (note both chapters have the same title)**

Our narrator, Ishmael, tells us something of the crew. There is Starbuck, the chief mate of the Pequod, a native of Nantucket and a Quaker by descent. But when he finishes his description and characterization of Starbuck (given in detail elsewhere in this edition of Notes), Ishmael makes it clear that he realizes many in the ship's crew are evil men, ignorant men. But not withstanding all this, he tells us that from time to time he will ascribe to these rough men such virtues as great courage, great dignity, great nobility. Why? Because, Ishmael says, all men have their moments of greatness.

This he ascribes to the wondrous ways of a great democratic God who enables men to stand, if only for a fleeting moment, in the spotlight of glory! Ishmael introduces us to more members of the crew. There is the happy-go-

As the days pass, and the weather warms, Ahab is seen oftener on deck, sometimes standing with his peg-leg anchored in the hole on the deck, sometimes sitting on a stool similarly anchored, or

sometimes walking unsteadily about the deck of the pitching ship. lucky Stubb, the second mate, who is never seen (except asleep without a sleep) Without a pipe in his mouth. The third mate is Flask, who seems to have a personal grudge against every whale in every ocean on the globe. Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask Are (next to Captain Ahab) the commanders of the Pequod and also the headmen of the three boats which hunt down the whales.

Each of them has a harpooner. Starbuck selects Queequeg, about whom we know. Stubb selects Tashtego, a New England Indian. Flask selects Daggoo, a huge " coal-black, Negro- savage".

CHAPTER XXVIII

AHAB

For several days after the Pequod leaves Nantucket harbor, the ship leaps through the water before a polar wind. But as it moves southward the icy air moderates. One day, as Ishmael enters upon his watch at noon, he looks toward the opposite end of the ship and there stands Ahab. He seems to be a man in good health, and Ishmael presumes that may be it is the cold gloomy weather that has kept Ahab in his cabin.

As Ishmael stares at him he notices first a huge white scar running down the side of his face- a face wreathed in wretched long strands of grey hair. The scar continues out of sight below the collar of his coat. There is something else. One leg is a white peg, anchored in a hole in the deck.

As the days pass, and the weather warms, Ahab is seen oftener on deck, sometimes standing with his peg-leg anchored in the hole on the deck, sometimes sitting on a stool similarly anchored, or sometimes walking unsteadily about the deck of the pitching ship.

CHAPTERS XXIX,XXX, XXXI

ENTER AHAB : TO HIM, STUBB

THE PIPE

QUEEN MAB

Ahab spends more time on the deck. Indeed, he is seldom in his cabin and the crew wonders when, if ever, the Captain gets his sleep. At night Ahab paces the deck and his wooden leg pounding on the deck creates such a noise some of the crew are kept awake. Stubb goes up to urge the Captain to go to his cabin, and thus spare the crew. Ahab calls him a dog and Stubb becomes angry. Ahab charges at him and threatens to do away with him, and Stubb goes below. In his cabin Stubb wonders what makes the Captain so irritable and restless.

After Stubb goes below, Ahab stands alone on the deck. He pulls out his pipe, lights it, and begins smoking - a favorite pastime. Then Ahab wonders : Why do I smoke a pipe, this is for serene persons. He flings the lighted pipe into the sea, and continues pacing the planks.

The next morning Stubb tells Flask of a queer dream he had in which Ahab kicked him with his ivory leg. And when Stubb retaliated the Captain turned into a pyramid

CHAPTERS XXXII,XXXIII, XXXIV ,XXXV**CETOLOGY****THE SPECKSYNDER****THE CABIN-TABLE****THE MAST-HEAD**

Ishmael believes it is time we learn of cetology- the science of whales. He admits that not too much has been written about the subject, and some of that is not reliable. But he embarks upon the subject anyway. A whale, he says, is a spouting fish with a horizontal tail. But there are many kinds of whales and he sets about grouping them. In the large whale group there are six: the sperm whale, the right whale, the fin-back Whale, the hump-backed whale, the razorback whale and the sulphur-bottom whale. Of these the largest is the sperm whale, and the only one which yields a most valuable oil known as sparmaceti.

CHAPTERS XXXVI,XXXVII**THE QUARTER-DECK****SUNSET**

One morning Ahab is pacing the after – deck more vigorously than usual, obviously in deep thought – the same thought which makes him so silent and foreboding the entire voyage. The Captain goes below to his cabin, but even there the clatter of his ivory peg leg can be heard pounding the floor. He returns to the deck and commands the entire crew to come before him.

Ahab tells the crew there is a prize of a Spanish ounce of gold for the man who sees a great white whale with a crooked jaw and three holes in his starboard fluke. The harpooners recognize the White Whale as Moby Dick. Ahab tells them it is Moby Dick who tore off his leg. Then he tells the crew that the Pequod will cruise from one end of the oceans to the other in search of Moby Dick. announcement. But Star-buck is silent. Ahab asks him if he is with the crew, and Starbuck replies that only the captain's vengeance and very little else will be served. But Captain Ahab has the Steward bring out wine, twice, and the flagon is passed around in a ceremony dedicated to the destruction of Moby Dick. Ahab is alone in his cabin. He gazes out as the setting sun turns the placid ocean into a sea of gold. But he cannot enjoy beauty of joy. It is iron I enjoy, not gold, he says, as he turns from the window. Then he takes comfort in knowing that all but one of the crew have cheerfully fallen in with his scheme to kill Moby Dick. You've knocked me down once, he says to Moby Dick in a mad conversation, but this time Ahab will win, will slay Moby Dick, and nothing, nothing at all, will swerve him from his purpose.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII,XXXIX,XL**DUSK****FIRST NIGHT-WATCH****MIDNIGHT, FORECASTLE**

Starbuck stands musing to himself at the mainmast. He hates himself for bowing to the will of the madman who is the ship's captain. Yet, seeing Ahab's impious end, he feels that he must help him to it. And then, Moby Dick, with all the oceans to roam in, may never face Ahab again. His thoughts are interrupted by shouts of revelry from the seamen's quarters. He reflects that the world is like that. The gay, Bold, and wild are sometimes forced to feed upon a diet offered by a quiet brooding thing like Ahab.

Stubb ponders the meaning of the Pequod's mission. He decides he must laugh about it. This is wisest because, after all, such things are predestined. And – so be it.

In the crew's quarters, under the influence of the wine passed out generously by Ahab, there is a scene of wild pagan revelry, song, and dance. Pip, alone, trembles at the thought of the chase and asks the white man's god to have mercy.

CHAPTERS XLI,XLII

MOBY DICK

THE WHITENESS OF THE WHALE

Ishmael learns much about Moby Dick . Some of it, he is sure, is pure fancy. But then there's more that seems to be fact. Moby Dick is larger than the ordinary sperm whale ; he has a peculiar snow – white wrinkled forehead; he has a deformed lower jaw. But there still more. When being pursued by whale boats he turns suddenly and maliciously attacks his pursuers, as on the day Ahab sought to toss a steel shaft into the creature and found his leg being sawed off at the hip by a whale who seemed to enjoy the cruelty. Yes, there is something unusual about this whale, something like no other whale, and all of the evil of the world is embodied in him, in Ahab's thinking.

This much we know, Ishmael says: Moby Dick, the Great White Whale, was symbol of the world's evils to Ahab, and thus something to be destroyed.

But the meaning of the whiteness to Ishmael is not nearly so clear. He points out that the color of white has many meanings to many persons. It can mean strength, such as that of the polar bear or the white shark. Or it can mean spirited leadership, such as the great white steeds which lee the herds of wild horses across the western plains of America.

CHAPTERS XLIII,XLIV,XLV

HARK!

THE CHART

THE AFFIDAVIT

Some of the seamen, one still and moonlight night aboard the Pequod, are passing buckets of water from the main vat to the water barrels in the after-deck, or captain's area of the ship. One pauses and says " Hist! Did you hear that noise?" The other pooh-poohs the idea . The first seaman says it was like a cough. The other still is unbelieving. The first seaman says, all right, so you don't believe me, yet there is somebody down there who has not yet been seen on deck.

Each night Ahab goes to his cabin, pulls out yellowed charts of the seven seas, and beneath the light of the swaying lantern, plots the places where Moby Dick may be found. Ishmael assures us that the great sperm whales follow fixed courses in the various seas and their routes, or "veins", are predictable with some accuracy. The only problem is that the sperm whales choose between several courses of travel and which of these courses is never known for sure. But Moby Dick has been seen at several places regularly. Surely if the Pequod stays at sea long enough Moby Dick will be sighted, and because of his unusual shape and size, there can be no mistaking him. Meanwhile, then, Ahab studies and dreams of his-great encounter with the Great White Whale, dreams which torment his soul with horror.

CHAPTERS XLVI, XLVII

THE MAT-MAKER

Even though Ahab's insane intention of destroying Moby Dick is the prime reason for the Pequod's voyage, and the crew has agreed to this, the Captain cannily concludes he must also seek other whales for the oil which would bring cash to the pockets of the crew. And it is for that reason he admonishes his crew to keep a sharp eye for whales.

One cloudy, sultry afternoon, as Queequeg and Ishmael are weaving a mat, and the rest of the crew is idly at work, Tashtego, the Indian, from his lookout perch issues the cry that electrifies a whaling crew: "There she blows!" "there !she blows!" A school of sperm whales is sighted. All is commotion aboard the ship.

The boats are swung out over the side, ready for lowering into the water. All stand eagerly ready for the chase as soon as the whales surface again. But at this very instant a cry is heard and all eyes turn to Ahab who is surrounded by five dusk phantoms that seem freshly formed out of air.

CHAPTERS XLVIII, XLIX

THE FIRST LOWERING

THE HYENA

The phantoms surrounding Ahab are really men who at Ahab's command instantly lower away the captain's boat. The three other boats lower away and the chase with the whales begins. Fedallah (the head of Ahab's strange crew.) Starbuck, Stubb and Flask exhort their crews to row faster and close in on the whales. As the boats near the whales a storm breaks. None of the whales is struck by the harpooners and Ishmael's boat is suddenly found to be in the path of the Pequod. The whalers spring into the sea and the boat is crushed beneath the hull. All of the seamen are rescued.

Ishmael, the last to be dragged up the side of the Pequod, stands upon the deck and asks if this sort of unfortunate lowering is common.

They all agree that it is, and that death and misfortune hover about whaling continually. Yet, in talking of it, Ishmael detects a gay sort of bravado which seems to pervade the thoughts of men who face great danger as a livelihood. So observing, Ishmael goes below, makes out his last will and testament with Queequeg the witness and executor. And now, Ishmael observes, here goes for a cool, collected dive at death and destruction as a whaleman.

CHAPTERS L, LI

Ahab's Boat and Crew

The Spirit-spout:

It is clear that Ahab wishes to be near the scene of action whenever the boats are lowered away to hunt the sperm whale. It is also clear that he has recruited a private crew of oarsmen and the harpooner Fedallah, and has secretly stowed them aboard the Pequod without the owner's knowledge. But at any rate they are an able boat crew and the other seamen of the Pequod accept them.

The day's pass without further sightings. But one moonlit night, when the aging Oriental Fedallah is in the lookout, a silvery jet is seen far ahead. Ordinarily whale men do not pursue their prey at night, but Fedallah cries out "There she blows!" All sails are spread and the Pequod speeds ahead. But the elusive silvery spout disappears by day, and is seen at intervals at night. But never can the Pequod come close to the mysterious spout. Soon the Pequod starts around the Cape of Good Hope and the wild seas and storms torment the ship. Throughout the passage, Ahab stands on the deck as if transfixed, string blindly ahead into the wind and sleet.

CHAPTERS LII, LIII

The Albatross

The Gam:

Southeast of the Cape the Pequod passes another Nantucket whaler called the Albatross, her sides bleached by a long absence from home. As they come abreast of each other Ahab calls, "Have ye seen the White Whale?" As the captain of the Albatross raises his trumpet to answer it suddenly falls from his hands into the sea.

Of all ships passing each other at sea, Ishmael tells us, the most sociable are the American whaling ships which often stop, exchange mail, and carry on a social visit trading information. But not Ahab. He did not always wish to carry on an extended game.

CHAPTER LIV

The Town-Ho's Story:

The watery region around the Cape of Good Hope is a place where you meet more travellers than in any other part of the oceans. Soon after speaking to the Albatross, the Pequod encounters another whaler called the Town-Ho. Ahab relents and there is a regular gam. The ship is manned mainly by Polynesians and the reason is found in this story secretly brought aboard the Pequod and never told to Captain Ahab. As the Town-Ho was sailing in the Pacific the ship sprung a leak. Forced labor at the pumps as the ship headed for the nearest island created a mutiny which was interrupted by the appearance of Moby Dick. The boats were lowered but the harpooner on the boat nearest him was devoured by the Great White Whale. The ship made harbor and most of the crew deserted for fear of encountering Moby Dick. Polynesians agreed to help sail the ship the rest of its voyage.

CHAPTERS LV,LVI,LVII,LVIII,LIX,LX**Brit****Squid****The Line:**

Ishmael protests loudly that no one has drawn a picture or painting of the sperm whale which even comes close to a resemblance. So, Ishmael argues, if you really wish to know what a great whale looks like you should go whaling. But then again you might be destroyed by the creature. So, he advises, don't be too curious!

Ishmael relents a little now. He confesses there are some whale pictures which almost capture the essence of the creature. And all of these are by French artists. Leave it to the French artist to show action-they are the best! He particularly likes the whaling scenes drawn by Garnery and by H. Durand.

The symbol for some of these terrors of the sea is seen in the giant squid which floats mysteriously through the middle of the sea. Furthermore, the squid is a symbol of bad luck. "Few whale-ships ever beheld it, and returned to their ports to tell of it.

CHAPTERS LXI,LXII,LXIII,LXIV,LXV,LXVI**Stubb Kills a Whale****The Dart****The Crotch****Stubb's supper****The whale as a Dish****The Shark Massacre:**

Some of the crew think the squid an evil omen. But Queequeg says that where there is a squid there is a sperm whale: The next day, hot sultry on the Indian Ocean, Ishmael can barely keep his eyes open from his perch on the foremast head. Then of a sudden, all of the crew see a huge sperm whale swimming lazily not 100 yards ahead. All the crew shout at the same time. The boats are lowered away and so as not to frighten the whale the crewmen paddle instead of rowing. Soon the whale is aware of the danger and starts ahead. The oars are brought into use. Stubb's boat is closest and soon Tashtego sinks his harpoon into the whale. It begins churning ahead, blowing huge clouds of spray from its spout, and generating great foam in its wake. The boat is drawn nearer and Stubb throws after dart into the great creature. Blood pours from its sides and the sea around it turns red. Finally the boat pulls alongside and Stubb drives his lance into the creature's side, twisting and turning it. Finally, the whale convulses and dies as the lance strikes its heart.

CHAPTERS LXVII,LXVIII**Cutting in**

The Blanket**The Funeral****The Sphynx:**

With the aid of huge blocks and tackles, harpoons and boarding-swords the crew sets to work, peeling the blanket of blubber from the whale, like the peeling of an orange, and the blubber is dragged into a room below decks.

The blanket of the whale, Ishmael explains, is the skin. And the skin, is blubber as dense as beef and as much as fifteen inches thick. It is the blanket which is cut into long strips, cooked, and the oil taken from it – as much as ten barrels of oil per ton of flesh.

When the blubber peeling is done, the heavy chains are relaxed and the still huge carcass floats away from the ship, attended by the ever-hungry sharks in the water, and the screaming hordes of fowl from above. What a doleful and mocking funeral, Ishmael muses.

The whale's head is about one-third of his bulk, and since it contains some element a whaler wishes to recover, it requires great skill with a harpoon, cutting through many feet of flesh, to properly decapitate it. Once this is done the head is hauled closer to the side of the ship. Ahab goes over to eye this creature, and muses what sights and sound the creature has seen in the great sea depths. And yet, Ahab says, he cannot utter one syllable of his experiences.

CHAPTERS LXXI**The Jeroboam's Story:**

At this moment a ship comes into view and is soon alongside the Pequod. It is the Jeroboam of Nantucket. Captain Mayhew of the Jeroboam refuses to come aboard because of an epidemic on his ship. But from his boat, tossed by a rough sea, he tells Ahab of seeing Moby Dick and how his mate Harry Macey has been killed by the whale. As he tells this story, mentally deranged seaman of Captain Mayhew's crew, who believes himself Gabriel, repeatedly warns that Moby Dick is a Shaker God reincarnated. Ahab remembers he has a letter for Macey and hands it to Captain Mayhew but Gabriel flings it back to Ahab crying out that Ahab would be going Macey's way.

CHAPTERS LXXII, LXXIII**THE MONKEY-ROPE****Stubb and Flask kill a right whale and then have a talk over him**

When the huge hooks are fastened to the whale it is usually the harpooner who goes down the side and accomplishes this difficult job on the slippery back of a dead whale plunging up and down in the sea. To prevent him falling away to the swarms of sharks, the harpooner is fastened with a rope to another seaman standing on the decks. In this case it is Queequeg and Ishmael. And as Ishmael struggles to keep Queequeg from harm he considers that the monkey-rope of life, the dependency of man, is a constant fact of human life.

Soon a right whale is sighted and two boats are ordered lowered to capture it, which is done under the command of Stubb and Flask. As the boat crews work to bring the whale to the side of the ship, Stubb asks why Ahab wanted a right whale, the oil of which is foul. Flask tells him that a ship with a sperm whale head hoisted on one side, and a right whale head on the other side, can, believe has it, never capsizes.

Then they talk of Fedallah, and Stubb says he believes him to be a devil in disguise who intends to do great harm to Captain Ahab. Stubb promises to keep a sharp eye on the old Oriental.

CHAPTERS LXXIV, LXXXV, LXXVI, LXXVII, LXXVIII, LXXIX, LXXX

The sperm whale's head-contrasted view

The right whale's head-contrasted view

The batteing ram

The freat heidelberg tun

Cistern and buckets

The prairie

The nut

With both heads lashed to the Pequod's sides, Ishmael points out we have an excellent chance to observe the heads of the only two types of whales hunted by man. The nobler of the two is the sperm whale. They are dissimilar in other ways, notably the eyes and ears. The sperm whale's eyes are on either side near the hinge of the jaw and no larger than a colt's but lash less. Between them is the vast void of the head. So Ishmael argues the whale sees two pictures on either side, but nothing straight ahead but blackness. And the ear is just as curious. It is a small hole, just behind the eye, which is no larger than the diameter of a lead pencil. The right whale's ears are located about the same but are covered with a thin membrane. The huge jaws are fifteen feet long and spike-like teeth line the jaws, upper and lanced with spades and then a block and tackle, like that used to remove tree stumps, is rigged up to pull teeth-all forty-two of them.

The chapter entitled "The Battering-Ram" prepares us for the final action of the novel. The whale uses the front of his head as a weapon by battering into the object it is trying to destroy. We should also remember that Ahab sees this blank face as concealing the mystery of the universe, but now we hear that it is also used as a simple weapon for defense. Ishmael presents the brow of the whale as being uncipherable. He simply says: "I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can."

CHAPTERS LXXXI

The Pequod meets the Virgin:

In due time the Pequod meets the ship Jungfrau from Bremen, Germany, Derick De Beer, master. Before the usual greeting formalities take place, De Beer lowers a boat and is hurriedly carried to the Pequod where he rapidly ascends to the deck. Although he speaks little English he convinces Ahab he has not seen the White Whale. What the German wants is oil, since they have

had no luck hunting whales. They give him oil and as De Beer nears his ship both vessels sight a pod of eight whales. De Beer's boat is set in chase and so are the other German boats. The Pequod's boats are lowered and the contest is on. In a wild chase the crews finally overtake a very old and cripple whale. They harpoon him first but oddly the whale sinks to the bottom and the crews return empty-handed. Suddenly the German boats are lowered again but the Pequod crew discovers the whales sighted are fin-backs, much too fast to be overtaken by boats. They have a good laugh as the perspiring Germans try in vain to catch up with them.

CHAPTERS LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV, LXXXV, LXXXVI

The Honor and Glory of Whaling

Jonah Historically Regarded

Pitch poling

The Fountain:

The Tail:

Ishmael wishes to remind us once again of the distinguished fraternity of whale men. He tells us how Perseus rescued the lovely maiden Andromeda from the very jaws of a Leviathan whale; of St. George and the Dragon (for Ishmael contends that the dragon was really a whale); of Hercules, Jonah and the Hindu god Vishnu who sanctified the whale. "There's a member role for you! What club but the whale man's can head off like that?" Ishmael asks.

Ishmael now argues with himself about the biblical story of Jonah being swallowed by the whale. He says an old whale man at Sag Harbor doubted the story because it would have been impossible for varying reasons for a man to survive in the innards of a whale. And on top of that old Sag Harbor could not understand how a whale could have made it up the Tigris River and vomited up Jonah near the city of Nineveh: Well, Ishmael says, he may have gone around the Cape of Good Hope and come up through the Dead sea.

CHAPTERS LXXXVII, LXXXVIII, LXXXIX, XC

The grand armada

Schools and schoolmasters

Fast-fish and loose-fish

Heads or tails

The Pequod now leaves the Indian Ocean and, through the straits of Sunda, is bound for the China Sea. This is an area where sometimes whales gather in "schools" or as Ishmael puts it, in the Grand Armada. They soon sight a grate number of sperm whales, heading for the China Sea. The Pequod is put under full sail, and fortunately too, for the savage Malay tribesmen are right behind them in pursuit. The Pequod outdistances the savages but gains little on the whales until suddenly they seem to become confused and mill about.

The boats are lowered and the chase is on. Ishmael's boat sinks its harpoon into a large whale which carries the boat right into the middle of the whales. They barely escape the thrashing leviathans and while they strike many of the whales. They barely escape the thrashing leviathans and while they strike many of the whales, they capture only one.

CHAPTERS XCI XCII

The pequod meets the rose bud

Ambergris

About a week after the abortive attempt to capture some of the grand armada of whales, the Pequod on a very still day drifts upon French ship with two dead whales tied to her sides. The stench is awful but Stubb mans a boat and rows toward the French vessel Bouton de Rose which he nicknames the Rose Bud.

He inquires if they have seen the White Whale and the answer is no. Stubb is invited aboard by an Englishman who is the only one aboard who speaks English. Eventually he meets the captain of the French ship, a greenhorn who is detested by his crew. Stubb repeatedly insults the captain but the Englishman translates his statements into a warning that they will catch a dread disease from the dead whales. So the whales are dropped in the water and the French ship leaves. Stubb discovers the whales are the ones harpooned by the Pequod a week earlier. He starts digging into the handfuls of very precious yellowish substance. Ahab demands that he return to the ship or they will leave without him.

CHAPTERS XCIII, XCIV

The castaway

A squeeze of the hand

Not all the crew of a whale ship takes to the boats when the leviathans are sighted. Some stay aboard and are called ship-keepers. They are good men and just as useful there, Ishmael tells us. Soon after meeting the French ship, one of Stubb's oarsmen hurts his hand so the little Negro named Pip—a gay, happy fellow for whom the year is filled with Fourth of Julys and New Year's days—goes into the boat. In chasing a whale he is lurched overboard by the jolt of a whale and saved by accidentally being tangled in the line. The line is cut and the whale escapes. Stay in the boat, demands Stubb, after loudly cursing him. Then it happens again and Pip is left in the wide expanse of the ocean. Fortunately the Pequod picks him up after a long period in the water. Pip is saved, but he henceforth appears to be an idiot.

In this chapter, and the four following, Ishmael tells us what happens after the whales have been dissected and hauled aboard the Pequod. The first task is for several seamen to sit around a large tub of sperm. The sperm, as it cools, tends to crystallize into lumps. It is the job of the seamen to squeeze, and squeeze the lumps back into liquid—a sweet and unctuous duty.

CHAPTERS XCV, XCVI, XCVII, XCVIII

The cassock

The try-works

The lamp

Stowing down and clearing up!

The sperm whale-men have a strange custom. One part of the sperm whale is a back conical piece of his anatomy which is skinned. The skin is removed, dried, and arm holes cut into it, and appears to be playing the role of high priest.

Each whale ship carries its own brick kiln, above which are two big shining pots. Insulated from the rest of the ship, the fire is kept roaring—shooting its flames into the night sky and creating strange and wondrous shadows-while the blubber melts into oil. On merchant ships the sailors work largely in darkness below decks because oil is precious thing. Not so on a whaler, there is oil aplenty and the whale -men keep many lamps burning, turning below decks into a literal fairyland of light.

CHAPTER XCIX

The doubloon

As Ahab places the deck from day his piercing glance fixes on some object. More and more he pauses to observe a doubloon made of pure gold, fastened into the main mast. There it is, surrounded by old timber, rusty nails and copper spikes turning green, but the coin forever remains bright and shiny the day it was minted in the mountains of Ecuador! And its figuration is clearly seen: three mountain peaks, surrounded by the circle of the globe. As Ahab and the crew pass it by from day to day they ponder its meaning. But no one of the crew, by day or night, is tempted to remove this coin, this shining navel of the Pequod!

CHAPTER C

Leg and arm, the Pequod, of Nantucket,

Meets the Samuel Enderby, of London

The Pequod meets an English whaler-the Samuel Enderby- and as always Ahab shouts, "Ship, ahoy! Hast seen the White Whale?" Have I, cries the man in the English boat, look at this, and he shows an arm of white whale bone. Ahab's boat is quickly lowered, but when he comes alongside the other ship he realizes that he cannot climb its plunging sides with just one good leg. The Enderby's captain senses Ahab's plight and lowers a large hook. Once aboard, the Englishman and Ahab cross their bone limbs instead of shaking hands. The man tells of seeing the Great White Whale while they were fastened to another whale. Moby Dick attacked their boat and a harpoon in his side (Ahab's harpoon) slashed his arm so severely that the ship's doctor was forced to amputate it. They could only say Moby Dick was on "The Line" (equator), his favorite spot in this season, and that they had seen him sailing off apparently still unharmed with two harpoons in his side. Ahab leaves the ship quickly and goes back to the Pequod to resume the hunt for Moby Dick.

CHAPTERS CI,CII,CIII,CIV,CV

The decanter

a bower in the arasacides**Measurement of the whale's skeleton****The fossil whale****Does the whale's magnitude diminish**

As the English ship sails out of sight, Ishmael is put in mind of the famous whaling and shipping firm which bore this same name. It was the Samuel Enderbys who fitted out the first English sperm whale ship in 1775, although the New England whale men had been sailing the North and South Atlantic since 1766. But it was the Ender by firm which first sent a whaling ground near Japan. Ishmael recalls boarding an Ender by ship with pleasure because of its fine provisions.

Up to this point Ishmael has told us a good deal about the great sperm whale. But, he says, he will tell us more about the "inside workings" of this whale. How does he know of this to speak with the authority of Jonah? Well, he explains, he once dissected a baby sperm whale brought aboard ship. But more important, he once spent a shore leave with the Chief of Tranque, one of the Arasacides isles in the Pacific. There he found the skeleton of a whale, a sperm whale, which had become a shrine for the natives. They had even devised a smoke pot which emitted from the spout. He spent time traversing the skeleton of this whale, studying it carefully and taking down all measurements which were tattooed on his arm so he could not forget.

Chapters CI through CV present again some of the largeness connected with the whaling industry. For example, the amount of provisions needed for a whaling voyage seemed tremendous in Melville's time. Likewise, the attempt to measure the whale's skeleton seemed equally a monstrous job and suggests the greatness of the whale man's job and danger. Then Melville turns to a consideration of the immortality of the whale. He believes that the whale will never diminish, that is, the whale is like life and neither the problems of life nor the size of the whale will ever diminish. Just as we can never solve the problems of the whale, never can we solve with any absolute certainty the problems we encounter in life.

CHAPTERS CVI, CVII, CVIII**AHAB'S LEG****THE CARPENTER****AHAB AND THE CARPENTER**

When Ahab hurriedly left the English ship Samuel Enderby, Ishmael recalls, he had the misfortune of giving his ivory leg such a shock that Ahab now considers it unfit for further service. So Ahab does what all practical men would do. He calls the ship's carpenter. The Pequod's carpenter, like many carpenters aboard a whaling ship, is much more than a carpenter working only with wood. He is expert at many handcrafts—wood, metal, ivory. But there are other skills. He can prepare a soothing lotion for sprains, pierce ears for earrings, pull aching teeth. But despite all these wonderfully useful talents, Ishmael finds him a man singularly devoid of personality, or more exactly, a brain. His brain. Ishmael says, must have slipped into his fingers.

Seldom does he speak to others, only to himself.

CHAPTER CIX

Ahab and starbuck in the cabin

In whale ships the whale oil is kept in casks which are periodically flooded deep in the hold to keep the casks damply tight. When the water is pumped out if there is much oil in it the crew knows the casks are leaking. This happens one morning aboard the Pequod and Starbuck enters Ahab's cabin to urge that the casks be removed to determine where the leak is a major project aboard a whale ship. Ahab, studying his charts, whirls on starbuck and refuses. Starbuck insists and then Ahab pulls a musket, aims at Starbuck, and orders him to leave. As Starbuck leaves he cries out, "Thou he outraged, not insulted me, Sir; but for that I ask thee not to be ware of Starbuck; thou wouldst but laugh; but let Ahab beware of Ahab; Beware of thyself, old man." Ahab considers this and then goes to the deck and orders that the casks be examined.

CHAPTER CX

Queequeg in his coffin

While Queequeg is down in the deep, dark, and slimy hold, wrestling the oil casks, he is seized with fever. He is taken to his hammock where his condition worsens. One day he asks that he be buried in a canoe with a coffin-like lid. The carpenter immediately builds it and it is brought to the savage. He is lifted from the hammock to the Canoe and his harpoon, food and duffle bag are placed beside him. He pronounces it a fine coffin and then is placed back in his hammock. Then, amazingly, he begins to recover, because, Queequeg explains, he remembers he has something to do ashore before he dies! In a few weeks, meanwhile eating more and more food, Queequeg pronounces himself fit for duty. Ahab, eyeing the savage one day, exclaims, "Oh, devilish tantalization of the gods!"

CHAPTERS CXI, CXII, CXIII, CXIV

The pacific

The blacksmith

The forge

The glider

The Pequod now enters the southern waters of the vast Pacific. The mid-most waters of the world, an ocean whose gently tossing swells must make this for every seafarer the sea of his adoption but for Ahab there is no serenity. The Pacific is the final destination. Somewhere in this soul-stirring deep there must be at this very moment the Great White Whale-Moby Dick.

Perth had been a well-to-do Englishman, with a loving wife and three fine children. But then, one time, a stranger entered Perth's home. The stranger was alcoholic drink. His wife died, then his children. And Perth took to the seas, the Pacific seas, beckoned there Ishmael tells us, by the mermaids of the deep who promise perth a watery gravestone. Why, Ishmael wonders, must the Bottle Conjuror choose this man, instead of a single soul with no family to destroy?

CHAPTER CXV

The pequod meets the bachelor

The Pequod soon passes the Nantucket ship the Bachelor. And what a single of revelry! The ship, it is said, is filled to capacity with sperm oil. And now, merrily the crew heads for home with a fortune aboard. As she passes the Pequod, the Bachelor's captain urges Ahab to come aboard but Ahab mutters aloud, "thou art a full ship and homeward bound, thou sayest; well, then, call me an empty ship and outward bound."

CHAPTERS CXVI, CXVII

The dying whale

The whale watch

As by some odd twist of fortune after meeting the lucky Bachelor, the Pequod comes upon good fortune and in one after noon captures four whales with which to fill more of its casks. As Ahab watches the whales slowly die, he notices each of them, in a final gesture, lurch around to face the setting sun. Three of the dead whales are brought to the side of the Pequod by nightfall, but the other is too far to reach. It is guarded by Ahab's boat. All of the boat's crew seems asleep but the parsee who sits awake watching the sharks flap the huge whale carcass. Ahab awakes suddenly and tells the Parsee he has dreamed of a hearse again, but the Parsee says he must see two hearses upon the sea, one not made by mortal hands, the other made of wood grown in America. The Parsee says he must die before Ahab so that he can pilot the Captain after death, and further the Parsee adds, "hemp only can kill thee."

CHAPTERS CXVIII CXIX

The quadrants

The candles

The Pequod now heads for the line (the equator) where it is that Ahab hopes to find Moby Dick. With the quadrant he is taking the ship's position with the sun. Then he looks again at the sun and says it can tell him where he is, but can it tell him where he is, but can it tell him where he shall be, and further, where Moby Dick is-for as the sun looks at him so also he looks upon Moby Dick. In a fit of rage he drops the quadrant and stamps it to pieces and cries out that he will sail henceforth by dead reckoning. He shouts to the crew and the pequod lurches into a new course.

In the Pacific the worst of all sea storms- the typhoon-can come upon a ship within an hour. And so it does with the Pequod. A fierce gale, huge waves, and a drenching rain bear down upon the frail whaling ship with all their might. The sails are torn, the smaller masts broken, the crew all but washed from the plunging ship. Lightning bolts grow fiercer. Finally fire glows with an unearthly pallor from the tips of the three main masts, and Ahab's whaling boat is bashed in but his harpoon is undisturbed although its tip glows with fire. The crew is in mortal terror. They beg Ahab to turn the ship about and sail homeward. Stubb and Starbuck see in all these things evil omens. But Ahab will not be moved. The crew, he cries, is pledged with him to hunt down Moby Dick and this evil storm surly is carrying the Pequod to the White Fiend!

CHAPTERS CXX, CXXI, CXXII, CXXIII, CXXIV**The deck towards the end of the first night watch****Midnight- the fore-castle bulwarks****Midnight aloft thunder and lightning****The musket****The needle**

The storm continues. Starbuck urges Ahab to order the main top sail be struck. But Ahab adamantly refuses: "Strike nothing; lash it." He sees the storm as a necessary malady.

The storm abets slightly. New sail is fitted, and the helmsman, who has been thrown to the deck again and again at the height of the storm, can now steer the craft on its designated course. Starbuck, as is the custom, goes below to inform Ahab of the change. He stands before the door and eyes the musket with which Ahab once threatened his life. Starbuck tremblingly reaches for it. Shall I, he muses, end this madman's life and head the Pequod for home and to my wife, Mary, and my boy? Or shall I chain him up? No, Starbuck thinks none of these things will lift the evil spirit from the Pequod. He lays the musket back in the rack and goes on deck.

CHAPTERS CXXV, CXXVI, CXXVII**THE LOG AND LINE****THE LIFE-BUOY****THE DECK**

Some seamen, who assist in determining the speed and direction of their ship, have a log attached to a long line which follows the ship from its stern. The Pequod's log and line, never used, has been rotted by sun and water. But Ahab suddenly wishes it used. It is tossed over the stern of the ship and suddenly the line breaks. Ahab orders the line repaired and a new log attached. Ahab cries for some of the crew to assist in this and Pip volunteers. The crewmen, aware of his wandering mind, shoo Pip away. Ahab takes an interest in Pip. He asks Pip who he is and Pip gives an incomprehensible answer. Ahab is struck with pity for "this luckless child," and swears that the dark little man shall never leave Ahab's side and shall live with him in his cabin. As they walk away one crewman says, "there go two daft ones now. One daft with strength, the other daft with weakness."

CHAPTER CXXVIII**THE PEQUOD MEETS THE RACHEL**

The next day a large ship, the Rachel, bears down upon the Pequod. Ahab cries out "Hast seen the White Whale?" The commander of the Rachel replies, "Aye yesterday. Have ye seen a whaleboat adrift?"

Ahab suppressing his joy, answers no. The commander of the Rachel comes aboard and Ahab asks excitedly, "Where was he? - not killed! - not killed! He was it?"

The captain of the Rachel says three of their boats were chasing a group of whales when the white head of Moby Dick appeared on the surface. The Rachel's fastest whaling boat was lowed. It was thought that the boat had fastened to Moby Dick but the Great White Whale pulled the boat at great speed and it was thought plunged it into the sea. But perhaps not. The captain of the Rachel beseeches Ahab to help search for the boat because, he adds, his young son is init. He will pay Ahab for his time. He begs Ahab to help. But Ahab icily says no, orders the Rachel's captain to leave, and the Pequod, with all sails set, plunges forward after Moby Dick!

CHAPTERS CXXIX,CXXX,CXXXI,CXXXII

The cabin

The hat

The pequod meets the delight

The symphony

Ahab prepares, a little later, to go on deck. Pip seeks to follow him. But Ahab says no- he must stay in the cabin because "there is that in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady. Like cures like; and for this hunt, by malady becomes my most desired health."

The hunt is on. Ahab paces the deck grimly day upon day. All joy has left the crew. The Pequod is grim. And day after day the Parsee and Ahab exchange glances. After four days pass Ahab, believing the crew has not called out when Moby Dick is about, decides to mount the crow's nest himself. High above the ship he scans the seas unmindful of a hawk when it swoops down and plucks his hat from his head.

CHAPTERS CXXXIII,CXXXIV,CXXXV

The chase-the first day

The chase-the second day

The chase- the third day

The night Ahab comes up on deck and standing at the rail catches the odor of a whale. The course of the ship is altered. The crew is roused, all sail unfurled, and Ahab is rapidly being raised to the crow's nest. Almost there, peering ahead, Ahab in a piercing cry, "There she blows!- there she blows! A hump like a snow hill! It is Moby Dick!"

The sighting of the whale, Ahab cries, was meant for him, and then he is lowered to the deck. The boats are lowered. They leap silently through the water as the whale seems to glide rather joyously along in the water. As they near him he dives, or sounds. After nearly an hour, a flock of white birds circle over Ahab's boat. Ahab peers down and in the murky blackness sees the huge mouth of the whale rising toward him. The boat is whirled about by the crew, but the whale changes his course and suddenly his huge jaws bite the boat in two parts.

EPILOGUE

Ishmael, an oarsman in Ahab's boats on its final and fatal assault upon the White Whale, is pulled towards the vortex of the sinking Pequod. But the vortex fills as he nears its inner circle. Up shoots the coffin-like buoy to which Ishmael clings for nearly 64 hours. Rachel, still searching for its missing whale-boat crew, rescues him.

6.6. A CRITICAL EVALUATION

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

No book written before Melville's time compares in form with *Moby Dick*. It is, simply a work of art that has delighted and perplexed literary scholars. *Moby Dick* is a good novel in which Melville has skillfully combined a reportorial style found in his earlier books with a masterful drama of life at sea. How is it, we may ask, that a book which has been likened to a compendium of the whaling industry has emerged as one of the great poetic epics of world literature?

The key to Melville's structure, of course, is the voyage of the Pequod. From almost the very beginnings of the book to the very last page we are reminded again and again that the ship and its crew are predestined to catastrophe. Yet in sometimes simple, sometimes elaborate language, Melville skillfully combines fact and fiction. Once the Pequod has left Nantucket and entered upon the cold Atlantic, Melville's frame for writing becomes on the one hand an immense canvas of the sea, and on the other, the particular world of the Pequod.

More specifically, Melville gives us these primary elements: (1) the vastness of the seas, the terror of the typhoon, the idyll of the calm, the burning sun; (2) the world of living creatures, particularly the vast variety of life which inhabits the seas and the crowning achievement of the creation of the whale; (3) man's world and comparisons he finds he can make with the whale and other creatures of the ocean depths; (4) the immensely complex workings of a whale ship, whale boats, and whaling weapons and whale oil recovery methods; (5) the skills demanded of the men who go to sea in search of the whale's wealth; (6) man's organization of the whaling industry and the station of each man in the social structure aboard a whaling ship; and (7) the fable or story which ties these diverse elements together.

Melville has combined these basic elements together very conveniently with the literary device of Ishmael, the narrator. But we must not be misled by this device. Indeed, when we look again at the pages of this great book we find Melville speaks to us in three ways. First there is the journalistic or reportorial technique—just plain exposition. For example, when Ishmael is describing the differences between a sperm whale and a right whale: "If you are an entire stranger to their race, you might hunt over these two heads of hours, and never discover that organ. The ear has no external leaf whatever; and into the hole itself you can hardly insert a quill, so wondrously minute it is".

Second, Melville's passages often rise to the level of epic poetry. Consider Ahab's comments as he sees the dying whale turn sunward: "He too worships fire; most faithful, broad, baronial vassal of the sun! Oh that these too-favoring eyes should see these too-favoring sights."

And then finally, Melville, from time to time, gives a quick taste of the seaman's colloquial language, as when Ishmael is shouted at by Captain Peleg: "spring, thou sheep-head; spring; and break thy backbone! Spring! Why don't ye spring!"

But we must now probe deeper. *Moby Dick* is certainly not written in the classical form of the novel. It does not, for example, have the unified "high style" of *The Scarlet Letter*, which Hawthorne wrote shortly before Melville began *Moby Dick*. Melville is content to let his story flow and ebb. By this we mean that instead of a single plot, there are several elements in the story— one is the reportorial-about whales and whaling, another is the meetings with the ships, and a third is, of course, the developing fury in Ahab for the whale.

In presenting this information to the reader we see two unusual devices. The first is the drama form as when Ahab exhorts the crew to join him in a search for Moby Dick, or the "scene" in which the candles erupt from the main masts during the typhoon; or Ahab's conversation with Pip as he prepares to seek out Moby Dick in the final chase. Some critics have held that Melville was reading much of Shakespeare's plays in these scenes. The second device is the sermon or lecture form. Of course we know of Father Mapple's famous sermon and that of Fleece, the Negro cook. But there are many more which have the solemn protestation quality of a Calvinistic sermon, including many of Ishmael's lectures on the high calling of whaling.

We have said earlier that *Moby Dick* is not a "hard book" to read, and that the writing is clear and lucid. But what is it that gives particular sentences and paragraphs the quality of exciting reading? Here we must again look at how Melville constructs what he has to say.

Throughout the book Melville has given his sentences and paragraphs and chapters a special intensity. For lack of a better description, we could say that Melville repeatedly uses certain "tonal" words. Consider for a moment "wildness", "moodiness", "mystical", etc. You can count them by the dozen. Another device is verbal nouns— "wanings", "allurings," and "leewardings". And there are the many nouns constructed with the suffix "ness", such as "localness", etc.; and similarly the participial adjectives such as "cymballed", "cindered," and "paupered"; and the participial adverbs such as "gallopingly," or "sulkingly"; and then finally the vast array of compound such as "valor-ruined," or "god-bullied." Now the importance of these uses of words is simply this: without them, *Moby Dick* could not be the great work it is. For, we may ask, who else but Ahab would say of the Great White Whale, "he asks me he heaps me?" And who but a great craftsman such as Melville in this book would have invented his own verbs?

THE CHARACTERS: Herman Melville's characters in *Moby Dick*, as we have seen, are not only recognizable blood-and-flesh individuals but are also symbolic of the varying degrees of strength and frailty in man. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that all of Melville's characters are constants. By this we mean that an evil man, such as Ahab, was not always evil; and that a mild man, like Starbuck, was not always mild. Indeed, this is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Melville's books. His characters are not "dished up comfortably for the yawning reader." So, when we talk about the individuals in *Moby Dick* we must realize that in many instances we speak not of black and white but grey.

THE CRITICISMS

Moby Dick was first published in London, England, about the middle of October, 1851. The first reviews, therefore, appeared about a week later. Published under the title of the Whale, the book was reviewed by a half-dozen periodicals. Three were unfavorable, two favorable, and one a little of both. But it was the unfavorable reviews in the two leading literary journals of England of the time— the

Athenaeum and the Spectator-which crushed Melville. Both papers denounced the work as just so much trash.

The book was published under the title of *Moby Dick, Or The Whale in America* in mid-November, 1851. A majority of the newspaper reviews were favorable, but early the following year magazines, literary journals, and some newspapers generally took unfavorable notice of the book and Melville's rising star suddenly began to drop. It should be remembered, in this connection, that English reviewers took a condescending view of American Writers and further that English reviews influenced American reviewers.

Nonetheless *Moby Dick* disappeared from all discussion. Literary scholars re-discovered Melville's great work in the early 1920's.

6.7. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the primary elements with which Melville constructed *Moby Dick*.
2. Write a note on the characterization in *Moby Dick*.
3. Describe various images and symbols in *Moby Dick*.
4. Does *Moby Dick* follow the classic form of the novel as it was being written at the time Melville wrote it?
5. Substantiate your answer.
6. Attempt an essay on the structure and style of *Moby Dick*.

6.8. SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*.
2. American Literature, An Anthology. ed. Egbert S. Oliver, Eurasia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994.
3. Student's Handbook of American Literature. ed. C.L. Narasimhaiah, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1997.

Lesson Writer

Dr. K.sandhya

7. THE GLASS MENAGERIE

(Tennessee Williams)

Contents:

- 7.1. Objectives
- 7.2. Background of the writer and the period
- 7.3. William's works
- 7.4. Analysis of the text
- 7.5. A Critical Evaluation
- 7.6. Characters and Characterization
- 7.7. Sample Questions
- 7.8. Suggested Readings

7.1. Objectives:

Tennessee Williams was persistently occupied with the pathos of human failure. He has centered his attention upon the inner life; the psychology of adjustment necessitated a tender inner vision of glory. The objectives of this essay are to focus on the background of the author and the literary period of his time; his life and works and in particular the play The Glass Menagerie, its summary, his style and a critical evaluation of the play. Out of his background of emotional and economic insecurity has come the hard center of realism found even in his most imaginative passages. He calls himself "that most common American phenomenon, the rootless, wandering writer". This play also discloses the rich use of resources of the theater by Williams more fully than any other young dramatist of the forties.

7.2. Background of the writer and the period

Tennessee Williams was born on 26th March 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi. His original name was Thomas Lanier Williams. He was the second child and first son of Cornelius Coffin Williams, a traveling salesman for a shoe company and Edwina Dakina Williams, the daughter of the local Episcopal minister. On account of the long absences of her husband due to his professional demands, his mother lived with her own family and therefore the boy grew up in his grandfather's successive rectories in small, rural communities. When Williams was eight years old, his father got promoted as a manager and he was not required to travel much. The family had to settle in St. Louis, Missouri. Williams was not very happy with the move of his parents and his sister Rose, who was two years older, also resented the new Midwestern environment. They felt the new atmosphere stifling and hostile unlike their leisurely southern existence. At school all other children made fun of them because of their southern accents and manners. At home, the constant presence of their dominating father terrified them. The brothers and sister became each other's refuge.

But when the boy was about eleven, his sister attained puberty and the private world they had built together was shattered. Rose lost her mental balance and drew farther and farther away from her brother and from her own sanity. Williams then "discovered writing as an escape from a world of reality in which he felt acutely uncomfortable. It immediately became his place of retreat, his cave, his refuge".

Williams graduated from high school in St. Louis in June 1929 and entered the University of Missouri in the autumn. He was not a bright student and as a scholar he was a disappointment. By that time he had a few published essays and articles to his credit. Because of the existing Great Depression in America, his father forced him to take a job as a clerk with his own shoe company at sixty five dollars a month, much to the displeasure of Williams who described the period of job as 'a living death'. To escape from the dull routine of the job which he did not like and fare well, he began writing poems and short stories after work, often late in the night. Though such a life helped him as a writer, it affected his health adversely. He has a nervous breakdown, which he mistook for serious heart trouble. He was sent to his grandparents in Memphis, to recuperate. During that summer in 1935, he wrote his first play, Cairo, Shanghai, Bombay ! a comedy that was successfully produced by a local troupe. After coming back to St. Louis, he entered upon one of his most productive periods in which he studied voraciously various authors, like Arthur Rimbaud, Anton Chekhov, Rilke, Lorca, Hart Crane and D.H. Lawrence. He wrote much and enrolled himself at Washington University where he was associated with a group of politically – oriented amateur actors called 'The Mummies' who produced his next two plays Candles in the Sun and Fugitive Kind. Academically, he was poor. In 1937 he shifted to the University of Iowa from where he graduated as a Bachelor of Arts in 1938.

At home, the situation worsened with his sister Rose having undergone a delicate brain operation which calmed her down but maimed her for life. His parents, after the birth of a third child, got completely estranged. At the end of 1938, Williams severed his ties with St. Louis and moved to New Orleans, Louisiana. He lived there for a year, sharing board and lodgings with bohemian and bizarre characters with whom he began feel a strong sense of kinship.

7.3. Williams's works:

In the meantime Williams had submitted his early writing to a Group Theatre Contest. The judges rewarded him with a substantial cheque and a citation. He acquired his first agent, Aundrey Wood who secured for him a Rockefeller fellowship of a thousand dollars. With that he could enroll himself in the advanced playwriting seminar of John Gassner and Theresa Helburn at the New School for Social Research in New York. There he completed Battle of Angels, which was produced by the Theatre Guild in Boston in 1940; it became a critical disaster. For the next couple of years he did odd jobs to support himself. In 1943 his agent got him a six-month contract as scriptwriter with one of the leading Hollywood film companies. Though his proposals of new projects were rejected, he somehow managed. Among the rejects was a scenario entitled The Gentleman Caller. It became The Glass Menagerie, which opened in Chicago at the end of 1944 and moved to Broadway in March 1945. It won several prizes and launched Williams's Career in the commercial theatre. The shock of the sudden notoriety, which Williams has described in the essay the Catastrophe of Success forced him into retreat to Mexico, where he completed You Touched Me, an adaptation of a D.H Lawrence's story, and where he did most of the work on "A Streetcar Named Desire" which won

for him a second New York Drama Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer prize in 1948. It was made into a memorable film. From then, onwards, for more than a decade, Williams had a play on Broadway nearly every other year. Some plays were praised and some others criticized but none met with indifference.

Summer and smoke (1948), The Rose Tattoo (1951) Camino Real (1953) Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955, which got him the third New York Drama Critics Circle Award and a second publisher prize), Orpheus Descending (1957 – a remake of Battle of Angels), Suddenly Last summer (1958) Sweet Bird of Youth (1959) and Period of Adjustment (1960). During all these years, Williams also continued to write one –act plays (27 Wagons Full of Cotton and other plays in 1946) novellas (The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone in 1950) short stories (One Arm and Other Stories in 1948), Hard Candy in 1954 and poems in the Winter of Cities in 1956). Many of these were preparatory sketches or blue prints for full length plays; they served literally as Williams's workshops.

The work of the first two decades was deeply rooted in Williams's experience of the American South. Drawing on this score, he had created some of the most memorable characters of contemporary American drama and had enjoyed some of the greatest successes of legitimate theatre. The Glass Menagerie ran for 561 performances, A Streetcar Named Desire for 855. In 1961, The Night of the Iguana ran for 316 performances on Broadway. This was to be Williams's unqualified success. In 1957 he sought to alleviate his anxieties and frustrations through psycho-analysis. In 1966 he wrote Slapstick Tragedy, in 1968 The Seven Descents of Myrtle, also entitled Kingdom of Earth and a further collection of short stories entitled the Knightly Quest (1966). With the seventies, he seems to have ventured in new directions with renewed energy. During the last decade a number of plays have been performed and published: Small Craft Warnings (1972), Outcry (1973), Vieux Carre (1979), a Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur (1980). There are some plays staged but unpublished like This is (An Entertainment – 1966); The Red Devil Battery Sign (1975), Tiger Tail (1978) and Will Mr. Merriwether Return from Memphis? (1960s). The other play was Clothes for a Summer Hotel, short story Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed (1974), novel, Moise and the World of Reason (1975), poetry, Androgyne, Mon Amour (1977) and an auto biography entitled Memoirs (1975). His literary stature is firmly established with academic critics and scholars His international reputation has grown steadily and his works have been translated into all major languages. The Glass Menagerie has a number of published versions with minor variations.

7.4. Analysis of the text:

Summaries

More than any other American playwright of his generation, Tennessee Williams believes in the 'magic' of the theatre – in a drama written primarily to be enjoyed in production rather than read in a study or a classroom. His personal views on the overall effect that the play should have in performance are expressed in an unusually large number of stage directions. His extensive and detailed notes contain not only descriptions of the set and of the physical appearances of the characters – a feature to be found in virtually any play – but also specific instructions regarding posture and facial expression, positioning of actors on the stage, and even the colour, size, and texture of properties and costumes. They also concern more technical aspects such as musical accompaniment, sophisticated lighting effects, and the use of unexpected devices such as screens and projections.

A general summary

The Glass Menagerie presents the story, told in retrospect, of a young would-be artist who breaks away from a domineering mother and a shy, introverted sister after failing to find a suitable husband for the girl. It is rooted in the author's own family experience but is not, as his mother pointed out much later in her memories, a faithful portrait of it.¹

Tom, the narrator-hero of the play, is a poet with a job in a shoe warehouse. He works as a clerk by day, and at night writes poetry in his tiny room or goes to the movies. Tom feels materially responsible for the family because, years earlier, his father deserted it, leaving behind only a blown-up photograph that 'ineluctably' smiles down on the dingy living quarters.

Amanda, the mother, 'a little woman of great but confused vitality', desperately tries to reconcile her dreams of the past – her memories of a genteel South, of gentlemen callers and elegant parties – with the reality of her daily life. Amanda does not let nostalgia interfere with current circumstances, however; she is practical and knows that steps have to be taken to cope with the changed conditions of life. Amanda which impair his efficiency at work and jeopardize his position at the warehouse. But she is considerably more anxious about Laura, her crippled daughter, who has given up the fight with real life and has retreated into a dream world of little glass animals and scratchy old records. Laura's involvement with the glass figurines is so intense that she has become like 'a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf'.

A first attempt to substitute reality for dreams has misfired. Laura registered for a secretarial course in a business school but dropped out shortly after the beginning of the year because she could not stand confrontation with real people. Deeply upset both by the disappointing outcome of her plan and by the financial loss it represents, Amanda has come to the conclusion that, for Laura, there is only one solution: a suitable husband must be found to provide material and emotional security. It will be Tom's delicate task to select the eligible bachelor and to invite him to dinner.

Tom is unwilling and skeptical at first, but Amanda eventually persuades him to bring home a gentleman caller, a fellow employee at the warehouse, called Jim O'Connor. Jim happens to have been Laura's secret idol in high school, where they took a singing class together, and when the girl learns who the visitor is, she is so upset that she cannot bring herself to come to the table for dinner.

The evening nevertheless proceeds beautifully, with Amanda entertaining the guest in true Southern fashion until the lights go off because Tom has failed to pay the bill, using the money instead to join the seamen's union. Alert to opportunity, Amanda sends Jim, with a lighted candelabrum, into the living room, where Laura has been lying tensely on the sofa. Jim's simplicity and warmheartedness soon overcome Laura's extreme shyness, and after a few minutes of awkward embarrassment she starts chatting more confidently.

He tells her about his ambitions for the future, his night school courses in public speaking and electrodynamics; she relates her fanciful dreams involving the figurines of her glass collection and dwells in particular on her favourite among the tiny animals, a crystal unicorn. A moment later, while dancing with Laura, Jim inadvertently bumps against the table, and the unicorn falls and breaks its horn. Laura musingly picks it up, commenting that it is now normal like others.

Inexplicably moved by this strange girl, Jim diagnoses Laura's odd behaviour as the result of an inferiority complex which he imagines he can cure with a kiss. For a brief moment Laura emerges from her dream world. Appalled at the feelings he has awakened in her, Jim clumsily reveals that he is already engaged and is to be married soon. Laura, unable to speak, gently takes Jim's hand and carefully places the broken unicorn in it. Then Amanda, laughing gaily, returns carrying a pitcher of lemonade. When she invites Jim to come back for other visits, he goes through the embarrassing explanation again and then hastily leaves.

Amanda spitefully turns to Tom, reproaching him for his stupidity and his ignorance of reality. Tom stalks off to the movies. Before comforting her daughter, who has now withdrawn for good into her private world, Amanda screams after him that he can 'go to the moon', being nothing but a selfish dreamer.

In the closing scenes Tom, as narrator, explains that shortly after the gentleman caller disaster he was fired from the factory and escaped from the house to follow in his roving father's footsteps. While he thus addresses the audience, Amanda is seen in the living room, as though through a sound-proof glass, soothingly talking to Laura. Tom sadly acknowledges that the diversions of the outside world have not erased the memory of his fragile sister. The whole play portrays Tom's unsuccessful attempt to come to terms with a past that haunts him. As the scene dissolves he addresses the candlelit figure of Laura and half-pleadingly, half-commandingly says: 'nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura – and so good-bye.'

Detailed Summaries

Scene One

Tom Wingfield enters, dressed as a merchant sailor, and while lighting a cigarette addresses the audience across the footlights. He introduces himself as the narrator of the play and, at the same time, a character in it. He claims that the story he is about to unfold is not a fiction but the truth presented under the pleasant disguise of theatrical illusion. Sketching in the social background of his tale, he invites the audience to return in imagination to the time of the events, the 1930s, when Spain was rent by civil war and the United States witnessed labour disturbances in major cities such as Chicago, Cleveland and St Louis. The play being a recollection, it will be dimly lighted to suggest distance in time; and it will be accompanied by music, because memory sentimentalises past events.

Tom now introduces the other characters: his mother, Amanda; his sister, Laura; and a gentleman caller, Jim O'Connor, who appears in the last two scenes and who represents a world of reality unknown to the Wingfields. Finally he points to a large photograph over the mantelpiece – a picture of his father, who never appears on the stage but of whom we learn that he held a job with the telephone company until one day he deserted his wife and children to roam the world. The last communication the family received from him was a picture postcard from Mexico without an address.

During Tom's first speech, Amanda and Laura are seen through the apartment's transparent fourth wall, which ascends out of sight as the action of the play proper begins (for a discussion of lighting, music, and effects see Part 3, 'The set'). They are seated at a small dining-room table, waiting for Tom to join them for grace before dinner. Once they start eating, Amanda constantly

criticizes Tom's table manners. She recommends that he should push his food onto his fork with a crush of bread instead of with his fingers, and that he should eat in a leisurely way; unlike animals, which digest without masticating, human beings must chew before swallowing in order to give their salivary glands a chance to function and to appreciate the subtle flavours of a well-cooked meal. Tom is disgusted with his mother's physiological talk and her constant nagging about his behaviour. He leaves the table abruptly to fetch some cigarettes from the kitchen. Laura offers to bring in the dessert but her mother will not let her play the servant; she wants her to look fresh and pretty for possible visitors. When Laura protests that she is not expecting any, Amanda reminisces about the time when she, as a young girl, did not expect gentleman callers either and no less than seventeen appeared on the same Sunday afternoon.

Although Tom and Laura have heard his story many times before, they humour Amanda as she describes at length how she entertained her callers. Amanda recalls the graceful afternoons in the Southern community of Blue Mountain, when girls like her made witty conversation with their gallants. The gentlemen Amanda knew were all rich young planters, many of whom have since died, leaving their widows well provided for. Her recollections come to a sudden halt when she remembers that she had a chance to marry any one of them but chose Mr. Wingfield instead. Laura now offers to clear the table but again Amanda refuses, asking her, as she takes in the dishes, how many gentlemen callers will show up. When Laura replies that she is not expecting any, Amanda exclaims from backstage that there must have been a flood or a tornado that is preventing them from calling. Almost to herself Laura explains that she is simply not so popular as her mother once was; to Tom, as if to apologise for Amanda's unrealistic expectations, she says, 'Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid'.

Scene Two

Some time has presumably elapsed since Scene One. When the lights come up, Laura is alone in the apartment washing and polishing her glass collection. As she hears her mother's footsteps, she hurriedly puts the little figurines away and pretends to busy herself with a diagram of a typewriter keyboard. When Amanda comes in it is immediately apparent from her face and weary attitude that she has had an unpleasant experience. Laura greets her nervously but Amanda pretends for the moment not to hear her, and slowly takes off her gloves and hat. When Laura wishes to know about the meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution that her mother had planned to attend, Amanda curtly reports that she could not go after all and then moves to the typewriter keyboard diagram, which she tears in two pieces. Starting reproachfully at Laura, Amanda seizes the chart of the Gregg Alphabet and sorrowfully tears it up also, before sinking down on the sofa.

Laura is now puzzled by her mother's behaviour, so Amanda describes her visit to Rubicam's Business College. She had intended to apologise for her daughter's absence that day, but when she introduced herself as Laura Wingfield's mother she was told that they had no student by that name in school. On Amanda's insistence they checked the attendance book and discovered that Laura had indeed gone to the school for a few days early in the year but that she had dropped out, definitively they assumed, after a speed test in typing which had made her sick. Laura diffidently gets up and attempts to play the victrola but her mother sternly orders her to stop, and cross-examines her about her actions of the last six weeks. Laura reveals that to spare her mother disappointment, she had preferred to talk in the park in spite of the winter season and her light clothing

rather than to admit that she could not face the demands of the business school. She would warm herself at the art museum or in the buildings that housed the tropical flowers and birds at the zoo. Amanda is momentarily shattered by the extent of the disaster. What is to become of Laura? Is she going to sit there for the rest of her life playing with glass toys and worn-out gramophone records? Is she going to be one of those old maids that live of their reluctant relatives, a 'little bird-like woman without a nest'? When Amanda enquires if her daughter has ever liked a boy, it turns out that indeed Laura had secretly admired a Jim O'Connor whom she used to know in high school, and whose picture she has recently contemplated again in the school yearbook.

Amanda is disappointed by the answer, but Laura goes on to tell her that she had Jim O'Connor had a special relationship: once after she had been absent from school with pleurosis he had asked her what had been the cause and, misunderstanding the name of the disease, had henceforth nicknamed her 'Blue Roses'. Laura, however, thinks that he must have married the girl to whom he was reported in the yearbook to be engaged. However old and uninteresting the story, it restores Amanda's enterprising spirits, and over Laura's feeble protestations that she is crippled – a word Amanda has banned from the Wingfield vocabulary – the mother promises her daughter that she will get married and compensate for her physical defect by personal charm, a trait she may have inherited from her profligate father.

Scene Three

After the failure of the business college report, Tom tells the audience directly, Amanda's preoccupation with finding a suitable husband for Laura turned into an obsession. To get the extra money needed to redecorate the apartment and buy new clothes for her daughter, Amanda undertook to sell subscriptions to ladies' magazine. As the lights come up on the apartment, the mother is engaged in a telephone conversation with one of her friends. She first feigns an interest in the lady's health but soon comes to the real object of the call, the renewal of the subscription. After listening to her briefly, the woman pretends to have food in the oven and abruptly hangs up, leaving Amanda baffled at her rudeness. The lights dim.

Before the lights come up again, Tom and Amanda are heard quarrelling. Laura, who is in a spotlight throughout the incident, is crouching in a panic near her glass collection. Amanda, in bathrobe and curlers, must have interrupted Tom's nightly literary endeavours; the type-writer is set up on the table and manuscripts are strewn all over the floor. Tom represents her intrusion, as he represents the lack of privacy in a family of which he is, after all, the only source of financial support. Amanda reproaches him with going to the cinema every night and coming home too late to get a decent rest, thus jeopardizing his position at the warehouse. Tom bitterly retorts that he is not in love with his job at Continental Shoemakers and that he envies dead people when he hears his mother's call to 'rise and shine'. If he were the selfish person Amanda suspects him of being, he would long ago have followed in his father's footsteps.

When Amanda accuses Tom of lying about his constant visits to the cinema, he acquiesces: it is not there that he spends his time, he says in a grotesquely ominous manner, but in the underworld of the city, with gangsters, and assassins; and one day, he predicts to his petrified mother, his enemies will dynamite the apartment and she will go up on a broomstick over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers as the 'ugly-babbling old-witch' that she has become. Tom tries to put

on an overcoat but his arm catches in the sleeve and, in a rage, he hurls the coat across the room. It strikes the shelf on which Laura's glass collection stands, and several little figurines fall and break. Amanda is stupefied by the insulting comparison with a witch and vows not to speak to Tom again until he apologises. Tom quiets down and slowly goes to frightened sister to help her to collect the fallen animals, as the lights again dim.

Scene Four

Much later that night – the neighbourhood church bells are heard striking five – Tom comes home. He has obviously drunk too much, and as he tries to insert his key it slips from his fingers into a crack of the fire-escape landing. Laura appears in her nightdress to open the door. When she softly questions him, he says that he has been to the cinema and describes to her the evening's entertainment, particularly a magic show which has impressed him very much because Malvolio, the magician, asked him to come on stage to help him and then gave him souvenirs after the performance. What Tom remembers most vividly is the part of the act in which the magician escaped from a nailed coffin without removing a single nail. That, he feels, is a trick with which his father must have been familiar, and which would become in handy in his present situation. Then he falls drunkenly asleep as the lights dim.

Almost immediately the church bell is heard striking six and Amanda's voice orders Laura to tell her brother to get up. Laura entreats the half-awake Tom to apologise for his insulting words of the previous night and then hurries on an errand. As she steps out on to the fire escape she slips and falls, which brings Tom and Amanda rushing to rescue her. Laura is not seriously hurt, and after an awkward moment of silence Tom apologises for calling his mother a witch and Amanda in turn tells him that her nervousness is due to her apprehension that he might be turning into a drunkard like his father. She insists that he eat some breakfast in order to be able to put in a good day's work, but Tom refuses. In any case, Amanda confides, had he not spoken first whom she had found in tears a few days earlier. The girl feels confusedly that Tom is not happy at home and wants to leave them. Amanda promises that she will not prevent him from joining the merchant navy and satisfying his thirst for adventure in the wide world, provide Laura is financially settled. The only way this can be accomplished, now that the business school venture has failed, is to introduce Laura to eligible young bachelors. Amanda begs Tom to look around at the factory and invite some clean-living fellow worker home to dinner. Tom does not approve of the scheme, but because he is anxious to avoid being late for work he vaguely promises to try. Moments later, Amanda is at her telephone again trying to sell another subscription to her magazine.

Scene Five

The Wingfields have just finished supper and Tom steps out on to the landing for a smoke while the women remove the dishes from the table. Addressing the audience, Tom describes the dance hall across the alley from the apartment. The young people who gather there are looking for sensual compensation for their dull and senseless existences. But change and adventure, Tom knows, are right around the corner: in Spain civil strife is coming to an end, but in Germany and England the first rumblings of the Second World War can be heard. When Amanda joins him to make a wish on the new moon, Tom half-teasingly tells her that he can guess what she has in mind and announces that he has invited a young man from the factory for supper the next day.

Amanda is overjoyed, but the short notice will not allow her to do much redecorating or looking around for new clothes. When she hears that the young man's name is Jim O'Connor she does not connect him with the school-mate mentioned earlier by Laura. To her the name means that the prospective caller is of Irish descent and therefore presumably a Catholic, which in turn implies that she should prepare fish, the next day being a Friday. But his name also makes Amanda suspect that he might drink, which is the last thing she wants for her daughter's future husband. Tom points out that the boy has not even seen Laura yet, but this does not deter Amanda from questioning him further about O'Connor's position at the warehouse, his salary, and his background. This is how things were done in her day, and by this method girls were prevented from making serious mistakes. Tom wonders how she could then, have married Mr. Wingfield and Amanda acknowledges that the man's charm had fooled everybody. She hopes, therefore, that without being downright plain, Jim O'Connor is not too good-looking. Tom reassures her: Jim is covered with freckles and does not have too much of a nose. When he adds that Jim takes night courses in radio engineering and public speaking. Amanda decides that he is a young man with visions of advancement in the world. Tom warns his mother that he has not told him that he has a sister because, while Laura may be very dear and special to both of them, he knows that the outside world will view her only as a shy, crippled girl who has retreated to a world all her own. Amanda shudders at the word 'crippled', but before she is able to comment, Tom is gone for a night at the cinema.

Full of vitality and optimism again at the prospect of having a gentle-man caller, Amanda calls Laura out of the kitchen, where the girl has been drying dishes, and bids her look at the new moon and make a wish. Laura does not know what to wish for and so her mother, 'her voice trembling and her eyes suddenly filling with tears', exclaims, 'Happiness! Good fortune!' as the lights dim.

Scene Six

From the landing of the fire escape, Tom describes Jim O'Connor directly to the audience. In school Jim was Tom's friend, but unlike Tom he was one of the bright stars there. An excellent sportsman, popular with his mates, intellectually and artistically gifted, Jim seemed bound for early success. Yet six years after graduation he is still holding a job that is only slightly better than Tom's. At the warehouse he is Tom's only friend and indulges the idiosyncrasies of the aspiring poet, whom he good-humouredly nicknames 'Shakespeare'. Tom remembers that Jim and Laura used to know each other, but it is only when Tom asks Jim to dinner that Jim seems to become aware that Tom has relatives. His visit to the Wingfield apartment therefore holds a surprise in store.

The late spring afternoon light reveals Amanda's preparations for the gentleman caller's visit. The apartment has been spruced up and Laura is trying on her new dress. Amanda stuffs two powder puffs into her daughter's bosom, which makes the girl even more ill at ease than does all the fuss surrounding the visit. Amanda herself dons one of the long dresses she used to wear as a Southern debutante. As she demonstrates to Laura how she led the cotillion at the Governor's ball in Jackson, Mississippi, she reminisces about that spring long ago when she had gone from one party to the next in spite of a persistent malarial fever. That was when she had become known as an insatiable gatherer of jonquils; that was also when she fell in love with Mr. Wingfield at first sight. This sobering thought brings her back to the present and the imminent arrival of Tom with Mr. O'Connor.

Hearing the visitor's name is a shock to Laura. Could this be the Jim O'Connor she had idolized in high school? If so, she tells her mother, she cannot be counted on to come to table or even to answer the door. But before Amanda disappears to the kitchen to prepare supper, she flatly informs her daughter that she is not going to humour this kind of silliness. Laura is left by herself in the penumbra of the living room, sitting stiffly at the edge of the sofa. After a while Tom and Jim appear on the steps of the fire escape. Tom has forgotten his key and rings the bell. Laura implores her mother to go and let the visitors in herself, but Amanda is adamant and forces the girl to the door. Tom briefly introduces Laura to Jim, but Laura is so moved by the young man's presence that she darts out of the room.

The two men start reading the newspapers, but Jim wants to talk to Tom while they are alone. He advises him to follow his example and take night courses in public speaking so that he will one day be able to escape the drudgery of the warehouse. He also reveals that the foreman, Mr. Mendoza, has expressed dissatisfaction with Tom, and that Tom might soon be out of the job. Tom, in turn, reveals to his friend that he is about to leave this kind of existence; he has joined the Union of Merchant Seamen and has paid the mother's dues with the money his mother gave him for the light bill. Jim enquires how Tom's mother feels about the project, but it turns out Tom does not intend to tell her: he will follow his father's example. When Amanda appears in her girlish frock, Tom is embarrassed and even Jim is surprised, but Amanda's gay laughter and Jim's warm response soon overcome the initial awkwardness. Amanda chats about the hot weather and appropriate clothes for the season by way of explaining her incongruous attire. She pretends that Laura is in full charge of supper because she herself was never the domestic type. In the South of her youth, people from her walk of life had plenty of servants; so she never dreamed that some day, having been abandoned by Mr. Wingfield, she might have to do the housework. Time has come for supper, and when Tom confirms that the table is set, Amanda insists that Laura join them before they say grace. Laura comes in, but she is obviously unwell and stumbles before she reaches the table. Tom and Amanda rush to her rescue and help her onto the sofa in the living room. Covering up to Jim, Amanda explains that preparing the meal in the hot weather has been too much for Laura. When Tom joins his mother and the gentleman caller at the table, they start to say grace. Outside, the storm that has been gathering all evening finally breaks into rain, as the lights dim.

Scene Seven

Dinner is almost finished and Laura is still lying on the sofa in the living room. Suddenly both the rooms are plunged in darkness. Amanda immediately lights the candles that decorate the dinner table and asks Jim if he can tell a burnt-out fuse. Upon examination it appears that the fuses are all right but that the company has discontinued the service because the bill has remained unpaid. Amanda scolds Tom and forces him to help her in the kitchen as penance for his negligence; at the same time she gently persuades Jim to go and keep Laura company. As he enters the living room with an old candelabrum, Laura sits up nervously, but after a while she relaxes, overcome by his warmheartedness. Jim sits down on the floor next to the source of light and invites Laura to join him; he offers her chewing-gum and muses on the fortune made by its inventor.

When Jim starts talking about her shyness, Laura hastily turns the conversation back to him, enquiring if he has kept up his singing. Jim's memories of high school now all come back to him: he remembers having met Laura when they took singing-class together, and Laura reminds him also of the reason for her nickname of Blue Roses. She shyly confides that her physical defect

and the brace, and the noise she thought it made, were so many obstacles to her making friends, but Jim does not seem to remember any noise. She should not have been so bashful; people are not so dreadful and all have problems of some kind or another, including himself. When he mentions the school's yearbook Laura takes it down from her shelves and they left through it together, reminiscing about Jim's beautiful performance as the baritone lead in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Laura never dared to approach him in those days to get him to sign her programme, so Jim now takes the book from her hands and, although he is aware that his signature is not yet worth much and is maybe even less valuable now six years ago, he signs the programme with a flourish. Laura wants to know what happened to Emily Meisenbach, the girl that Jim was to marry according to the yearbook, but Jim assures her that their 'engagement' was never more than wishful thinking on Emily's part. When he tries to find out what Laura has been up to all these years, she murmurs something about a business course that turned out badly, and the care she takes of her glass collection.

Jim abruptly diagnoses her as suffering from an inferiority complex. Although he is not a doctor, he says, he is something of a psychologist: what Laura should do to overcome her sense of unworthiness is think of herself as in some way superior. Taking himself as an example, Jim describes his interest in electrodynamics and public speaking. He is obviously preparing for a career in television. He wants to be ready when the industry itself gets under way. When he expresses interest in Laura's collection she hands him the little unicorn, confessing that it is her favourite among all the glass animals.

But Jim's interest in the figurines is short-lived: he puts the little horse with a horn on a side table and opens the door on the fire escape for fresh air. Music pours in from the Paradise Dance Hall and Jim playfully invites Laura for a waltz. The girl is reticent and moves awkwardly at first but lets herself be swept along by Jim; as they dance around the narrow room she relaxes and laughs. When they knock against the small table, the unicorn falls, breaking off its little horn. Jim is very sorry but Laura seems to view the incident in a different light: now the unicorn will feel more at home with the 'normal' horses. Jim is strangely moved by Laura; he feels that she is different from the girls he has known so far and that all she needs is somebody to build up her confidence and make her proud of herself. In a spontaneous gesture he kisses her on the lips, unleashing in Laura a store of long-repressed, hidden feelings.

He immediately regrets the kiss, explaining that he will not be able to come back. He has been going steady with Betty, a girl of Irish Catholic background whom he met on a boat trip the summer before and whom he is to marry in a month or two. Betty is out of town visiting a sick relative; that is why Jim accepted Tom's invitation for dinner. Laura is visibly shattered by the revelation and cannot utter a word, but she picks up the broken unicorn and gently places it in Jim's hand as Amanda comes in, cheerfully announcing that she has made some lemonade for the young people and expressing the hope that Jim will henceforth be a regular visitor to the apartment. Jim, however, declines the kind offer, repeating the admission about Betty. Amanda mechanically wishes him luck and happiness and success before he leaves with his little, broken souvenir, to pick up his finance at the bus depot.

As soon as Jim has disappeared, Amanda calls Tom into the living room. What is this joke he has perpetrated on them? All the expense, the preparation, was to entertain a man who is already

engaged. Amanda accuses him of never knowing anything, of neglecting his deserted mother and crippled sister because the only thing he is really interested in is himself. Tom smashes the glass he is holding and storms off to the cinema. As he reaches the fire escape, he grips the rail in desperation. Then, addressing the audience for the last time, he tells them that he lost his job shortly after the gentleman caller disaster and left mother and sister for good in an attempt to forget them and their situation. But his intensive travels with the merchant navy have been of no avail in obliterating his sense of guilt. Whenever he passes in front of a shop window with tiny transparent bottles of coloured glass, he is reminded of the fragile beauty of his sister and her menagerie. Throughout Tom's final speech to Laura. Her words bring smile to Laura's face which is illuminated by the flickering light of the candles brought in earlier by Jim. As he reaches his conclusion, Tom beseeches Laura to blow out her candles. When she does so, the scene dissolves.

7.5. A Critical Evaluation

The Glass Menagerie has been described as the most consciously biographical of all Williams's dramas. It represents the author's effort to come to terms with his past and to transcend or exorcise it. As a 'memory plays' it chronicles the story of Williams's last years in St. Louis. The playwright's childhood relationship with his sister Rose provided the basis for the emotional ties that bind Tom and Laura. Although the girl's name has been changed, the nickname, 'Blue Roses' recalls the real life character. Further the glass animals that provide the title of the play and a good measure of its symbolism were among the Williams's children's toys.

In real life also Rose took a course in secretarial school but ended up in the park, the museum, and the Zoo instead of the classroom. In the play Laura has a physical defect: she is 'crippled'. In real life Rose had lost her mental balance and a delicate brain operation maimed her for life. Tom is also in part a portrait of Williams. The autobiographical element runs throughout the play, even in its drab setting reflecting Williams's horrified reaction to the new unfriendly St. Louis environment. But not all the material is purely autobiographical; Williams selected the raw materials of his immediate experience and modified them.

Structure and narrative device

The Glass Menagerie is described by Williams as a 'static' play by which he means a drama that has little organic movement other than that of its chronological development. The play is, in effect, a picture of a situation; the interest depends neither on incident nor action. Williams also says that the play is 'episodic' – that is, it is a play in which the various elements of action are perceived and presented as units distinct and separate from each other rather than forming a continuum or composing a unity. The division of the play into seven scenes of varying length also contributes strongly to the static and episodic nature of the play. Williams has made use of a number of theatrical devices to overcome a damaging impression of fragmentation or stasis, the flexible set, the musical leitmotif, and imaginative lighting effects. The use of a narrator is, more effective than these devices. In the play Tom Wingfield appears in a double capacity as both narrator of the play and a character in it. Williams carefully establishes the difference between the two functions. As narrator, Tom always addresses the audience directly. As narrator he is sometimes costumed differently from Tom the character in the first and last scenes, he appears dressed as a merchant sailor. In scenes three to six, Tom the narrator speaks from a particular place on the stage.

The narrator fulfils at least two clear functions. He is a convenient means of exposition, both supplying information and setting the tone and style of the production, and he provides easy continuity between events otherwise disconnected in time. Although the two functions are not consistently distinct, it is easy to determine that Tom is essentially narrator-expositor in Scenes One, five and six and more of a temporal link in Scene three. In his last appearance, in Scene Seven, his roles as narrator and character finally merge. He also introduces character. His early comments tell us what kind of a play we are witnessing providing an exposition of the play itself and its methods. As he steps in and out of the frame of the play proper, the narrator indicates that we are dealing with two periods distinct in time – the immediate present of the spectators, and the past of the play's events. He also draws attention to the artificiality of the presentation to encourage us to direct our attention to the emotional truth behind it.

By choosing the narrator from among the characters Williams integrates this figure more closely into the fabric of the play's events. As a character Tom is also a participant. His report therefore acquires the ring of authenticity of the eyewitness account. With a narrator who is also a character, we feel closer to the reality of events. In all fairness, it should be said that the play emphatically rejects realistic conventions, and that this kind of logical objection should not therefore be raised against it.

7.6. Characters and Characterization:

The Glass Menagerie belongs to the broad category of psychological drama. It does not start out with a message. It does not purport to demonstrate a point.

It does not conclude with a firm recommendation or a verdict. The strength of the play is its sensitive creation of characters with which audience; the world over can identify or sympathize. The playwright is not a preacher and does not sermonize through his play. Through his character and their story, he raises questions like: How do we live? What are our values? Why do we act the way we do? Can we be true to ourselves and considerate of the needs of others at the same time?

The whole play should be viewed not as a realistic or naturalistic 'slice of life' but as an imaginative and poetic reconstruction of personal memories. The father of the Wingfield family does not actually appear on the stage, but he is present in the text of the play from the narrator's introductory words. His physical absence is compensated by references to him and also by the cloven, up photograph of his in the living room, in a doughboy's First World War Cap.

In the course of the play, Amanda stops in front of the picture many times and recollects about her husband's charm and her love for him. She is the denominating figure of the play. Her name, the Latin word for 'worthy of being loved' expresses one of her essential traits, her need to give and receive love. The contemporary social and economic milieu in the Depression Days also comes out alive in the play.

Tom Wingfield is a portrait of the artist as a young man. Williams's description of him. His nature is not remorseless, but to escape from a trap he has to act without pity, provides the key to his whole personality. From prologue to Epilogue Tom emerges as a dreamer whose romantic visions although destroyed by reality, linger hauntingly in his consciousness.

Laura Wingfield is the most pathetic figure of the play. The nickname 'Blue roses' suggests the atmosphere of sadness and melancholy that envelops Laura's slight, hardly real person. Her strangeness vulnerability is presented as the accelerated factor of her separation from the world. Laura's brace is the mechanical device that remedies the physical defect but aggravates the moral damage.

The gentleman caller: Jim O' Connor

The name itself establishes him at the very start as an Irishman. He is described as a nice, ordinary. Young man. He is a great believer in self-improvement through education and enrolls himself in public speaking course. His advocacy of the American Dream is full of ironic touches.

The Set

The Glass Menagerie is set in St. Louis, the principal city of Missouri. The picture of urban life presented in the play bears clear traces of Williams's aversion to big city existence. The dim tightly throughout the play, the dusty curtains and the shabby-genteel furniture reinforce the overtones of poverty in the middle-class city prison. The unhappiest of the device used by Williams to create his 'plastic theatre' was a screen on which images or titles were to be projected. Williams also provides ample stages direction in his 'Production Notes'.

Conclusion:

Critics have often used the word 'tragic' to describe the characters and events of the play. The end of the play lacks tragic grandeur. It offers no solution. It is a world of unalleviated gloom, not of tragic exaltation.

The Glass Menagerie indicates Williams' interest in the plight of the ill adjusted woman, often middle aged, which remembers a myth of gracious living. But is defeated by the impinging realities of the present. The characters unfold from within a pathetic self-revelation as Williams avoids the straight realistic play. He reminds that "when you look at a piece of delicately spun glass you think of two things. How beautiful it is and how easily it can be broken". The play engaged a successful revival on Broadway in 1965.

It is based on memory partly and autobiographical element partly. It executes around sentiments also. Nevertheless, it is acclaimed as one of the best works of Tennessee Williams.

7.7. Sample Questions:

1. Consider the criticism that The Glass Menagerie is a sentimental play.
2. "The Glass Menagerie is a clever juxtaposition of scenes rather than a unified play". Discuss.
3. Discuss the significance of the title "The Glass Menagerie".

7.8. Suggested Readings:

1. Williams, Edwina Dakin. Remember Me to Tom, Putnam, New York, 1963.
2. Nelson, Benjamin, Tennessee Williams. The Man and His work, Ivan Obolenky, New York, 1961.
3. Stanton, Stephen S. (Ed) Tennessees Williams. A Collection of Critical Essays, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1977.
4. Seven Plays of the Modern Theater Ed by Walls McCormick. American Book Company, New York, 1950.
5. American Literature 1890-1965. An Anthology Ed. Dr. Egbert S Oliver, Eurasia Publishing Housing (Pvt) Ltd. New Delhi 1967.

Lesson Writer :

K.Sandhya,

8. WALDEN

(Henry David Thoreau)

Contents:

- 8.1. Objectives
- 8.2. The Background and Life of Thoreau
- 8.3. Works of Thoreau
- 8.4. Summary of Walden
- 8.5. A brief Synopsis
- 8.6. A Critical Evaluation
- 8.7. Sample Questions
- 8.8. Suggested Readings

8.1. Objectives: The objectives of this essay include an introduction to the *Walden*, a synopsis of the text and the author *H.D. Thoreau's* main ideas presented in the text. *Walden* is one of the great classics of world literature which discloses Thoreau's ideas on various topics with a moral temper and a philosophical outlook. This essay also attempts to portray the style and structure of *Walden* besides giving a critical evaluation.

8.2. The Background and Life of Thoreau

H.D. Thoreau, born on July 12th, 1817 was the son of John Thoreau, a store keeper. His ancestors were the natives of the Channel island of Jersey and served as captains and merchants. Thoreau had the fortune of possessing parents with prudence diligence and independent mind. He was sent to Harvard College in 1838 as to join some good profession. He cultivated the habit of reading books.

Thoreau joined the Public Grammar School as a teacher and shortly later left the job in protest against the corporate punishment given to students. He had to work in his father's business of making pencils, the best ones possible. He along with his brother opened a school in 1838 on the principles he believed in. His approach was student friendly. His brother's death in 1841 made him close down the school.

Thoreau became close to Emerson in whose home he stayed. Emerson introduced him to Indian scriptures like Manu Smriti, Vishnu Purana, Bhagavad-Gita and other epics which had a profound influence on the latter. He built a hut near the Walden Pond in 1845 where he lived for a about two years.

8.3. Works of Thoreau : Thoreau's first work, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers appeared during his stay in this hut. His life in solitude led to his success as a writer. He had begun to work on self realization. His arrest, for non-payment of taxes and release later on, made him write "Civil Disobedience". He gave up his stay in the hut because he wanted to experience life in other aspects also. He began to gather all his experiences in Walden Pond and composed it under the title Walden. He began to lecture on various topics later on like on Captain John Brown. He also wrote essays like "Life without Principles", "Slavery in Massachusetts" and "Cape Cod". His health started deteriorating from 1860 and he died in 1862.

Emerson paid rich tributes to him in his funeral speech and described him as a person with a dignity of zeal made for the noblest society. He said, "Wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home." To illustrate this from his works written., A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers is full of thought and philosophical speculation symbolically depicting the journey of the soul. It pivots around the Hindu thought while Walden reports his own life experiences. The Maine Woods deals with woods and a life of camping while Cape Cod is partly historical with interesting stories. His Journal encompasses human interests and life while Civil Disobedience is a reflection of philosophy of rebellion against the social and political evils. The other works such as Natural History of Massachusetts, "A Walk to Wachusett", "The Land Lord", "A Winter Walk", Paradise to be regained, "A Plea for captain John Brown" have also their own literary value like protest against mechanization, materialism, slavery and so on. His philosophy of life is summoned up in "Life without Principles."

8.4. Summary of Walden

1. Economy

Thoreau gives an account of his stay near Walden Pond very earnestly in response to queries from friends and townsmen. "If I am to speak truthfully, I must speak of myself because I am the only person thoroughly known to myself." The townsmen were anxious to know various things such as his mode of life, which some would call impertinent, but considering the circumstances very natural and pertinent, what he got to eat, about his lonesomeness, fearlessness, and so on; some were interested in knowing about his charity." In fact, Thoreau feels it is better that such things are spoken in a simple and sincere way.

He has travelled a good deal in Concord and everywhere, the inhabitants seem to be doing penance in a number of ways much harder than the Brahmins and Hercules. His townsmen have acquired farms, barns, cattle and farming tools and unfortunately have no chance to sit in the midst of nature and see with "clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in". Men are burdened only with the task of earning their livelihood labouringly. "the better part of the man is soon plowed into the soul for compost. It is a fool's life as they will find when they get to the end of it." The laboring man has no leisure for a true integrity day by day. He has no time for man-to-man relations. He has no time to be anything but a machine.

Thoreau wonders how man can be so frivolous. He exclaims how man can be so indifferent towards the prevalent burning issue of "Negro slavery". The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed resignation. Even games and amusements of man are filled with a concealed despair. "There is no play in them for their comes after work."

Even the older men are not able to guide and instruct the younger men because of their own failures and limited exposure and experiment. The abilities of man are not yet measured as man is preoccupied with his dull routine. According to Thoreau, a primitive life, a frontier life is preferred to that of a civilized one. Civilization has improved the material but not men.

The most essential thing to be preserved in man is his vitality. All the luxuries are only peripheral. The ancient people seem to be richer inwardly than their modern counterparts. Life has to be understood from the perspective of poverty. A philosopher who loves wisdom leads a life of simplicity, trust, magnanimity and independence.

Thoreau advises the weak and discontented, though rich but enchained on how to keep the vitality of the inner self, not the outer shell. In the three basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing, simplicity is to be followed. In education, the student should learn the art by actually experiencing it and living it practically. The rich crave for fashions, status, the heathen for temples. Thoreau states the Bhagavad Gita is more powerful than all these pseudo relics of culture. Man must not labor but earn his food as a pastime.

2. Where I lived and what I lived for

Desire for possession is wrong. It makes no difference whether you are committed to a farm or the country jail. He says, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential fails of life." Simplicity is the basic principle to be observed. Man must learn to be contented with what he has. Thoreau says that we live in hurry and waste our lives. The rail-roads, built unnecessarily according to him, have begun to ride over man. The post-offices, newspapers are only useless accessories of the modern, civilization. The newspapers repeat only things which happen like thefts, murders accidents and so on. To a philosopher all news is gossip and people who follow it are like old people. The letters we write are a waste. Man must learn to face realities. Unfortunately man has no time for this. Man leads his life with his limited vision. We think that is which appears to be. But in eternity there is something higher, nobler and truer. He says "Let us spend one day as deliberately as nature and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails."

3. Reading:

Man is mortal and acquires estates and property, fame and family. Man can deal with truth immortally and fearlessly. His "residence was more favorable, not only to thought, but to serious reading than a university."

Man has so many remarkable books such as Homer's *Iliad*. We must read these heroic books which can be represented into our mother tongue. We must try to understand each and every word as they are fraught with volumes of meaning. Classics presented the noblest thoughts of men and those will not become stale or old. They contain solutions even for modern problems. To read true books is a noble act. Books must be read deliberately and reservedly. The authors of the oldest and the best books influence man more than the rulers. The orator's art is great but the writer's art is greater, deeper and more permanent. The orator's influence may be momentary but a writer's is continual. He speaks to the hearts and minds of men of all ages.

The book can not be dull; but a reader can be. Villages should be our universities! The villagers should take the place of the noblemen of Europe they should become the patrons of the arts. They need to be more magnanimous and refined.

4. Sounds

Little is printed though a lot is spoken and published and so books cannot tell us everything worth telling. We must not confine ourselves to mere reading but must become seers and have a vision into future.

Thoreau sits in his doorway from morning till noon, lost in contemplation. He listens to the sounds of the birds, the fish and the rail-road. He feels mechanization is suppressing the manual labor. "Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth, up comes the silk, down goes the woollen". When he goes to the village, people mistake him to be a railway employee. He says, "And so I am; I am a track repairer somewhere on the orbit of the earth." He also says, "Like the train let us keep to our tracks because every path but your own is the path of fate. Keep on your own track".

Thoreau likes commerce for "its enterprise and bravery". He hears the bells from Concord and Lincoln sometimes. In the evening he hears the chanting of vespers, which sound with a clock-like precision and regularity. The hooting of the owl reminds him of man's melancholy. The owl hooting represents the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts of men. There are other sounds, also of wagons, cows, frogs and so on. Thoreau has no pets at home. He has never heard the cock. Thoreau feels this wild Indian cock would teach mankind to rise early to become healthy wealthy and wise.

5. Solitude

Sometimes Thoreau felt delight and thought himself to be a part of nature, sometimes he had visitors, but mostly his life had been solitary. He says that there is adequate space around us. Some people may not like loneliness, but to one who is friendly with nature and its changing seasons, life is not boring even in solitude. Man likes to be close to the places he often goes to such the post-office, the bar-room, the school or the grocery and so on. He is not engrossed in nature. He lives his life as a spectator watching it and not

living it fully. To be alone the greater part of time is wholesome. There is no "companion so companionable as solitude".

Once Thoreau had a visitor- an old settler and original proprietor who was believed to have dug Walden Pond and stoled it, and hemmed it with pine-woods. Both of them met several times and Thoreau enjoyed his company.

6. Visitors

Thoreau did not dislike the society. He says, "I think that I love society as much as most, and am ready enough to fasten myself like blood sucker for the time to any full blooded man that comes in my way. I have three chairs in my home, one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society.". His best room was the pine-wood behind his house. If one guest came, he shared his simple meal "But if twenty came, there was nothing said about dinner. You need not rest your reputation on the dinners you give", he says. He was far from the people who made a parade about dinner. He had more visitors in the woods than at any other period of his life. Thoreau treated the Canadian wood chopper who led a contented life ever in solitude as his model for a man. This was because he had to fend for himself and the family after leaving his father's home. He found wood chopping interesting. He liked the work he did. He was content, self contained and liked the world as it was. He was very genuine and unsophisticated and did not want the world to be changed though he might not take a spiritual view he suggested that men of genius could be found even in the lowest grades of life. He made a deep impression on Thoreau "because he was so quiet and solitary and so happy withal; a well of good honor and contentment which overflowed at his eyes. His mirth was without alloy."

Thoreau got some poor people of the town as his visitors. Many travelers came to see the inside of his hut. They wanted water as an excuse and Thoreau directed them to the pond. He had the annual visit of the April Fool. Girls and boys and young women frequented the wood.

7. The Bean Field :

Thoreau asks, "what have I to learn from beans or beans from me?" the length of the row of beans was seven miles. He learnt to work hard and wait patiently for a reward. He came closer to the earth.

When he was four, he was amid the woods and later amid fresh soil removing weeds and planting beans. He remembered people who had lived and died there. Thoreau used to hoe beans from five o'clock till noon and often came across the wild grass which was an enemy to beans. He decided to save beans by removing the grass.

Cultivation of beans motivated him to cultivate his own self and instead of sowing beans, he would sow sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith and innocence.

8. The village :

Thoreau used to visit the village after his work and study. He would engage himself in trivial talk which he enjoyed as a pastime. There was often gossip in course of that talk when conversation became serious. The topics like war and peace he dropped into the woods furtively. He always enjoyed his travel into the forest and for company he had his happy thoughts with him. In the night it was hard to find his path. Sometimes he had to see some visitors off till the road. One afternoon he went to the village to get his shoe repaired and he was arrested by the police for non payment of taxes. Later he was released when his aunt paid his dues. His house was always open to visitors who could rest or read in his absence. He did not lose anything but a volume of Homer. He says, "I am convinced, that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown."

9. The Ponds :

Thoreau would sit in the boat playing his flute on warm evenings. He had visited the pond several times during the summer, sometimes with a companion. He fished in the pond with an old man who was an excellent fisher. Thoreau reminisces his earlier visits to the pond when he was only a boy or a young man. He felt a stranger may not be aroused by the scenery of Walden. The Pond has depth and purity. Thoreau then goes on to describe the water of the pond and the "the shore composed of a belt of smooth rounded white stones". The pond had various kinds of fish, frogs, tortoises, turtles, musk rats and one loon coming annually. Thoreau goes on to giving a graphic account of the pond further. The spectacular beauty was gradually getting ravished by mechanization, here a reference to railway engine. As the Walden pond lost its sacredness with the encroachment of the railroad, the second most attractive pond is the white pond. Ponds, according to Thoreau "are more transparent than our characters."

10. Baker Farm

Once Thoreau had to take shelter under a pine in rain, when he went fishing. He rushed to the hut of John Field, an Irish laborer. The hut was leaking. He heard the hard story of John field's struggle for life. Thoreau suggested that if he lived wisely, he could lead a better life. Field came to America where work could be found aplenty. Thoreau felt "the true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do". He believed that a man was responsible for his poverty.

11. Higher Laws :

After Thoreau returned from fishing one evening, he sighted a wood church which he wanted to "devour raw" not because of his hunger but because of the wildness involved in the act. There is a coexistence of spirituality and savage in man. Hunting brings men into contact with nature. The hunter is concerned more with philosophy than with his feelings. Through hunting a young man got initiated into the forest. Wood-chopping, ice-cutting and fishing were the occupations of the townsmen.

Thoreau stated his likes and dislikes in matters of food. He thought it befitting for humans to give up eating animals as the savage tribes gave up eating each other in primitive stages of life. Thoreau disapproved of intoxication. Water is the only drink for a wise man and wine is not so. Our life itself is a moral. "Goodness is the only investment that never fails". "Our purity inspires and our impurity casts us down. The Hindu law giver prescribes rules even for the smallest functions of the body. Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body to the god he worship is after a style purely his own".

12. Brute Neighbors :

Thoreau gives the conversation between the Herent(himself) and the poet. E.E. Cummings a friend of his. In his hut there were wild mice which became tame later on. The forest was infested with wild creatures known only to hunters.

Thoreau rested for sometime after planting and read his books. He was always watchful of the events happening around him and was meticulous in observing the creatures. He was curious to watch the fighting of the ants. During autumn, the loon came. Many townsmen arrived to hunt it but in vain.

13. House Warming :

During October, Thoreau engaged himself in tending grapes. His senses were fully open to notice even the minutest scene all around. "the wasps cause by thousands to his lodge in October". He was happy with them and never felt uncomfortable with their presence. He built a chimney. He plastered his house and passed evenings cheerfully. His house was small but he could get absolute privacy in it. He had only one room utilized as kitchen, chamber, parlor and store-room. The roof was very high. In spite of the house being small, any stray traveler was always welcome. Thoreau says sarcastically, "Nowadays the host does not admit his guest to his hearth" and "hospitality is the art of keeping him at the greatest distance" in his dig at the modern civilized population. He maintained secrecy in cooking. In winter, the pond water froze and the first ice was very dark and transparent. Thoreau stated that cutting down forest was heinous. Forests are essential to man in many respects. "In most parts of the world the prince and the peasant, the scholar and the savage, equally require a few sticks from the forest to warm them and cook their food".

14. Former Inhabitants and Winter Visitors :

Thoreau imagined the former inhabitants of the wood. In the place of his hut, many people lived. He presumed a number of people who might have lived there in different corners of the wood. In winter, because of the thick snow Thoreau had no visitors. He lived lonely. Once a poet visited him in winter. Thoreau appreciated his courage for braving the snow "A hunter, a soldier, a reporter, even a philosopher may be daunted, but nothing can deter a poet for he was actuated by pure love". Thoreau and he "made that small house

ing with boisterous mirth and resound with murmur of much sober talk making amends for the long silence of the Walden vale".

A philosopher came then. There was also the visitor who never come: Thoreau refers to Vishnu Purana: "the house holder is to remain in his court yard and at even tide as long as it takes to milk a cow, or longer if he pleases, to await the arrival of a guest".

15. Winter animals :

On winter nights, he heard owl hooting and goose honking. The whooping of the ice in the pond was also audible. Sometimes the foxes howled "in search of a partridge or other game and bark demonically like forest dogs." Thoreau felt there must be a civilization going on among animals just as among men. There were a red squirrel making noise, a vulture barking, rabbits ran along, the chickadees in flocks, the partridges and so on.

Once Thoreau got a man to his hut inquiring after his bounds. The man was so surprised to see one single man living in the midst of woods as to repeatedly ask Thoreau: "What do you do here ?"

16. The Pond in Winter :

Thoreau had so many questions in his mind in the forest. But nature had none. When he watched nature, he was able to identify it with God.

Early mornings men lower lines for perch and pickerel into the snowy fields. The anglers practiced with things not known so popularly. Thoreau goes on to describe the pickerels: "they are not green like the pines nor grey like the stones, not blue like the sky. But they have to our eyes yet rarer colors like flowers and precious stones as if they were the animalized crystals of the Walden water".

Thoreau surveyed the Walden pond. He could determine the shape of the bottom surface. It was regular conforming to the shores and the range of the neighboring hills. He drew the maps of the Walden Pond and was amazed to find that the line of greatest breadth cut the line of greatest length exactly at the point of greatest depth. The law of average is true of ethics too; if human behavior were to be mapped, the lines intersecting would be the height and depth of his character. There are no outlets or inlets to Waldens except rain, snow and evaporation "If our instruments were delicate enough one might even detect an undulation in the crust of the earth. He felt that the waters of the pond merge with the sacred water of the Ganges.

17. Spring .

Walden is fresh in the first week of April. The wintry effect being over, Walden sports a new garment. Thoreau wanted to see the spring setting in "to hear the chance note of some arriving bird or the stayed squirrel's chirp"

Among the many pleasant sights, the one which he liked was the design formed by thawing sand and clay in flowing down the sides of a deep cut. The sand takes different forms and one feels closer to the vitals of the globe. The spring brings along without the squirrels, the first sparrow, the carols of the happy brooks. The geese sail off. Life bubbles with activities. Spring creates life. All life comes into its own and asserts itself. Everything in nature appears immortal.

18. Conclusion:

"To the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery." man lives a confined life but the universe is wider still. After living in Walden Pond for two years, two months and two days, Thoreau realized he had several more lives to live and wanted to experience those. He did not want to fall into a monotonous routine. "How deep the ruts of tradition and conformity". He admonishes people not to build castles in the air but lay foundations of hard work to actualize the dreams. Some feel that the moderns and Americans are intellectual dwarfs. He says, "however mean your life is meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it bad names. Love your life poor as it is. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul." There is "an incessant influx of novelty into the world and yet we tolerate incredible dullness." It is said that the British Empire is very large and respectable and that the United States are a first rate power. We do not believe that a tide rises and falls behind every man which can float the British Empire like a chip if he should ever harbor it in his mind.

He ends the book thus : "The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star." What an optimistic note to end with!

8.5. A brief Synopsis :

The opening chapter states the purpose of the book and explores social, political and economic problems. "Economy gives a philosophy of life. Thoreau brings out the relationship between the individual and nature and also society. He reveals his views at length on education, society and charity. A man needs more to live wisely than to labour hard. Then he can acquire some freedom which can be employed for improving the nature and condition of his soul.

The second chapter describes the place and purpose of his stay. We may consider every place to be a suitable spot for a house. We must live free and uncommitted. We must not be desirous of owning a house because we will become a slave to that desire. We must learn to face life boldly. Simplicity must be our guiding principle.

The third chapter is called "Reading". Reading should not be taken up only to kill time, for that would be similar to using arithmetic for trade and commerce. What we read must change our life fundamentally.

The fourth section tells us that the books are limited and lifeless. Nature gives us a variety of sounds and it is better to listen to nature as in nature "much is published and little is printed." The sounds come from different sources, and they evolve the thoughts appropriate to occasion. But contemplation is possible only in solitude. In solitude one can find himself and God. The sun is lonely, and God is alone. But man is a social animal. Even when he prefers solitude, he gets visitors.

In the sixth section, Thoreau describes the visitors. One need not be ashamed of one's poverty. The visitors range from ministers to urchins and from beggars to relatives.

In the seventh section he talks about the cultivation of beans and identifying it with instilling virtues in man.

The eighth section takes us to the village scene to show that Thoreau does have external contacts. The ninth section brings us to the pond where Thoreau seeks solitude to enrich his soul. The next section deals with the farm where John Field works. He advises Field, "Enjoy the land but own it not." One can conquer poverty by conquering his soul. We can have such a conquest only by obeying higher laws which are explored in the eleventh section. The brutal element within should be killed to allow the divine element to grow and glow. The hunter has to be tamed. This is to be done by regulating and controlling one's habits of eating and drinking and one's physical desires. We are always drawn to the "Brute Neighbors" who point to the tragic struggle for existence for survival.

In the twelfth section, Thoreau describes the battle of the ants. It is a symbolic battle between the animal instinct in man and his spirituality. The next section tells that we have to attend to "House Warming" in winter. Visitors reduce gradually.

The fourteenth section has a profound suggestion. The English soldiers burnt the hut along with the cat and the dog. But history must not yell the tragedies enacted in New England. The householder must wait for guests.

The fifteenth section describes different animals of the season. The next section describes the pond in winter. The spring, in the next section, presents the picture of the springing of new life, of new activity.

In the last section, Thoreau sums up the entire argument to present a brief philosophy of life. His emphasis is on the contemplation of the inward being. Man must pursue his dreams and live the life he wants.

In *Walden*, Thoreau throws light on the purpose of life and the need to be aware of a better life hereafter. The eighteen sections of the books are modeled after the eighteen chapters of the *Gita* and eighteen parvas of the *Mahabharata*.

8.6. A Critical Evaluation.

Thoreau was influenced by a number of great writers like Jefferson, Tom Paine, Shakespeare, Emerson and Hindu scriptures. Manu's influence is more on him as he says man has to live alone to seek self. The Gita also emphasizes meditation in solitude as a way to self realization. Thoreau also appreciates the ideal of Karma yoga or the ideal of disinterested action from the Gita. He has tremendous faith in the influence of nature on man and feels it his duty to know every thing in nature. He read Emerson's essay on "Nature." Thoreau endorsed it and experienced something more valuable Emerson called him the "The bachelor of nature" and Channing said he was "a poet naturalist". Emerson also said "The depth of his perception found likeness of law throughout Nature."

Thoreau is a transcendentalist like Emerson but a little different from the latter. He held to the concept of the presence of God in nature and in man. The sanction of religious and moral principles is to be sought in human experience and reason, not in authority or tradition. He developed a new conception of good life, characterized by self trust, a joyous love of beauty, and a sincere altruism. Granville Hicks remarked "Nothing in American literature is more admirable than Thoreau's devotion to his principles, but the principles, are unfortunately, less significant than the devotion." Van Wyck Brooks told him to be a charming New England eccentric.

Thoreau's advice to man is to "simplify, simplify, simplify". He also preached the gospel of poverty. Simplicity which appears as poverty makes life an organized whole, directed towards moral and spiritual objectives. Sherman Paul says, "Thoreau believes that man can clarify and concentrate as well as simplify his life, that he can consciously shape the materials of his life and in the shaping, can transform living into an art and an adventure. His subject isn't only the state of men but the promising condition of man. He awakens us to the crises" of our lives. Stanley Edgar Hymen feels, "*Walden* works through to sharp social criticism. Lewis Mumford observes, "What he discovered was that people are so eager to get the ostentatious 'necessaries' of civil life that they lose the opportunity to profit by civilization itself. *Walden* is a book for all those who seek to explore life and who want to live life. It enables one to create values for himself and to reject manners and conformity.

George Eliot said that *Walden* is a "bit of pure American life, animated by that energetic, yet calm spirit of innovation, that practical as well as theoretical independence of formulae, which is peculiar to some of the first American minds."

Symbolism

There are many symbols used in *Walden*. *Walden Pond* itself is the most important symbol. It is the eye, the organ of vision suggesting light and enlightenment and purity. Pond suggests infinity and loneliness and also fortitude and sanctity. It gets frozen or solidified indicating the single-minded and stable concentration of the yogi. It is indifferent to the

activities of the world thereby depicting detachment and self sacrifice and compassion. It is the symbol of the god head also.

Similarly the sun is another symbol who gives light and sustains and preserves life. It is the first among the creation and nearer to God. The sun is committed about its duties. It also suggests moral and spiritual awakening. It is a morning star, a symbol of love and hope.

Ice is also symbolic of intellect. The growing grass symbolizes rejuvenation. The nodding twigs suggest intercommunion and curling creepers, beauty and interdependence. Green suggests youth, hope and vigor while yellow, decay and death and red and pink, action and determination. The animals indicate the harmony in creation.: the squirrel, joy the muskrat wildness and the wood chuck alertness. The sleepers on the rails are the people exploited by the authorities. *Walden* is Thoreau's myth; "A fact truly and absolutely stated is taken out of the region of the commonsense and it acquires a mythic or universal significance." Thoreau's wide travels into life are also presented in his book. "Travel" he said, "was the " best symbol of our life." *Walden* grew out of Thoreau's union with the earth and he acknowledges his closest acquaintance with nature.

Style of Walden :

Thoreau planned his book carefully and his style is unique. As already mentioned, it has eighteen chapters like the *Gita* and the *Mahabharata*. It has 428 paragraphs having varied structures. Each paragraph is built organically. Many of the passages read like independent essays. Some sentences are long and sometimes very long while some are short. Diction is very appropriate. Imagery is vivid and sensory. The images represent the world of nature he likes. There are many references and allusions to the Bible, Classics, Gods and Poets and also Hindu scriptures. He cites examples from American History also. His style is terse, racy, epigrammatic and even vigorous. Thoreau was one of the great masters of English prose. It is "purer, stranger, richer and closer to a genuine life rhythm than any one of his contemporaries or successors. There is the organic process of birth, decay and rebirth out of decay." In brief *Walden* is a great work with fresh, vital and vigorous style.

8.7. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Thoreau's philosophy of life as described in *Walden*.
2. Write an essay on the symbolism in *Walden*.
3. Does Thoreau appear through *Walden*? Substantiate your answer.
4. "*Walden* triumphs in the superb grace with which it conjoins the life of nature with the life of man." Discuss this observation.

5. Give a brief account of the prose style of Thoreau as evidenced in *Walden*.
6. What is the value of Thoreau's *Walden* for our age?
7. Do you find any evidence of Transcendentalism in *Walden*? Support your argument.

8.8. Suggested Readings

1. H.D.Thoreau, *Walden*
2. American Literature, An Anthology. Ed Egbert S.Oliver. Eurasia Publishing House. New Delhi, 1994.
3. Student's Handbook of American literature ed: C.D. Narasimhaiah, New Delhi, Kalyani Publishers. 1997.
4. Thoreau: A Century of Criticism ed: W.Warding
5. Approaches to Walden ed:L.Lane Jr,
6. H.S. Canby: *Thoreau*.

Lesson Writer:

Dr.K.Sandhya

9. THE ASSISTANT

- Bernard Malamud.

Contents:

- 9.1. Biography
- 9.2. Introduction
- 9.3. Synopsis
- 9.4. Analysis
- 9.5. Criticism
- 9.6. Sample Questions

9.1. Biography

Bernard Malamud was born on April 28, 1913 in Brooklyn, New York. His parents Max and Bertha Fidelman Malamud had immigrated to Brooklyn from Russia and owned a grocery store in Brooklyn. Malamud graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in 1932. After earning a B.A. at City College of New York. Malamud wrote a Columbia master's thesis on Thomas Hardy's poetry while also teaching at his former high school and in Harlem. Malamud began writing stories after graduating from Columbia. In 1949, he joined the faculty of Oregon State University where he remained until 1961 when he began working at Bennington College. He married Ann de Chiara in 1945 and had two children, Paul and Jane.

Malamud's first novel, *The Natural* (1952), deals with the quintessential American sport, baseball, and not at all with Jewish characters or milieus. In his second novel, *The Assistant* (1957), however, an ailing, struggling Jewish grocer is robbed by a young Italian whom he then unknowingly takes on as an assistant. *The Magic Barrel* (1958) was Malamud's first collection of stories and probably his finest, dealt with an urban, bleak, unforgiving world, tenanted by luckless Jews, yet a world in which goodness and grace crop up refreshingly enough.

Most of Malamud's writing is as in his second novel, *The Assistant* (1957) is concerned with Jewish themes. *The Fixer* (1966), for which Malamud received a Pulitzer Prize, is a poignant novel of the suffering of a Russian Jewish workman sentenced unjustly to prison. *The Tenants* (1971), which deals with inner-city tensions, demonstrates how human beings can win through to an affirmative view of life despite suffering. Later novels are *Dublin's Lives* (1979), about a biographer, and *God's Grace* (1982). Malamud's short story

collections are *The Magic Barrel* (1958), *Idiot's First* (1963), and *Rembrandt's Hat* (1971). *Pictures of Fidelman* (1969) is a series of largely satirical stories about an unsuccessful Jewish artist. A complete collection, *The Stories of Bernard Malamud*, was published in 1983.

Malamud always objected to being called a "Jewish writer," because he has found the term too limiting. Yet Malamud insists that the drama of "Jewish history – suffering, expiation, renewal"—inspires him. "I'm an American, I'm a Jew, and I write for all men.... I write about Jews because they set my imagination going." Although he does not mention other Jewish writers as influences, he concedes "a common fund of Jewish experience and possibly an interest in the ethical approach". Though Malamud's fiction reflects his immigrant Jewish background and American experience, above all it reveals a unique imagination which can mingle history and fantasy, comedy and tragedy.

Today, Malamud is widely regarded as a leader of the post-World War II Jewish literary renaissance. Although most of his stories are about Jews, he is concerned with both being Jewish as with being human. Most of his stories are about individuals struggling to just survive and these people are mostly symbolized by poor Jews. His main premise as a writer was, in his own words, "to keep civilization from destroying itself. As such I write for humanism... and against nihilism." He died on March 18, 1986 in New York City.

9.2. Introduction

Malamud has received several tributes from fellow novelists. According to Anthony Burgess, "Malamud never forgets that he is an American Jew, and he is at his best when posing the situation of a Jew in urban American Society. A remarkably consistent writer who has never produced a mediocre novel, he is devoid of either conventional piety or sentimentality and is always profoundly convincing". Saul Bellow remarks "Malamud in his novels and stories discovered a sort of communicative genius in the impoverished, harsh jargon of immigrant New York. He was a myth maker, a fabulist, a writer of exquisite parables. The accent of hard-won and individual emotional truth is always heard in Malamud's words. He is a rich original of the first rank."

Malamud sets *The Assistant* in an immigrant setting with strong Jewish main characters. The young Italian assistant of an aged and suffering Jewish grocer moves from scorn to sympathy and eventual mythic identification with the old man and his religious values. This novel manages to evoke the tradition of Yiddish folklore while not being entirely subsumed by it. The main character of the novel, Morris Bober, can be seen as a version of the schlemiel, a traditional archetype from Yiddish folklore who acts as an ironic hero, using light humor and irony to soften an otherwise harsh world. He is however, paradoxically enough, also a Christ figure. In fact, though the settings and situations of Malamud's works vary, his bumbling, suffering, yet comic, heroes resemble each other. Whether a Jewish grocer, or Italian assistant, all are students of life who learn the importance of being human. In Malamud's fiction, a good Jew is a good man. According to Philip Roth, "Connection,

indebtedness, responsibility, these are Malamud's moral concerns. We are faced again with the idea of the Jew as Everyman since Malamud digs for universal themes: failure, entrapment, isolation, gentleness, choice, compassion, redemption". Malamud emphasizes that humanity is his subject, that he uses Jews to communicate the universal. Suffering and endurance are central themes within the novel. It is through suffering that Malamud believes human beings may develop morally, which also is being underlined by religion. Although a serious writer, Malamud uses humor to underscore the preposterous, to highlight grief, and to instruct readers.

The values of Jewishness and modern America are contrasted against each other. It is shown that honesty and integrity do not necessarily lead to success in America, where money confers a status beyond material wealth. Writing in the last third of the twentieth century, Malamud was aware of social problems, rootlessness and disintegration, but he believes in love as redemptive and sacrifice as uplifting. Often, success depends on cooperation between antagonists.

Jewishness itself is being defined in a broader way, deprived of all external traditions it is being reduced to its religious and ethical core. Malamud's characters are both archetypal Jews and suffering humanity and his characteristic themes are man's struggle to survive against all odds as well as the ethical underpinnings of recent Jewish immigrants.

9.3. Synopsis.

The Assistant tells the story of an immigrant Jewish grocer, Morris Bober, who lives with his wife Ida in New York. Their grocery is not doing well as new stores are taking business away. Their daughter, Helen, has to help out by working as a secretary though she wants to go to college. One day, two men rob Morris's grocery and knock him unconscious. Soon afterwards, a man named Frank Alpine arrives in the neighborhood and starts helping Morris occasionally. Frank asks if Morris for a job and disappears when refused. Morris occasionally. Frank asks Morris for a job and disappears when refused. Morris notices that some milk and rolls are regularly stolen from his deliveries and alerts the police because he cannot find the culprit. Next day, Morris finds Frank sleeping in his cellar. Frank admits to stealing the milk and bread out of hunger. Morris lets him sleep in the grocery for the night. The next morning, Morris slips while cleaning and passes out; Frank rescues him then puts on the grocer's apron and starts working in the store.

Frank manages to bring in much more money than Morris had done. When Morris returns, he wants to pay Frank well; but Frank feels guilty about being paid because he has been stealing money. What was more; it was Frank and Ward Minogue, son of a local detective, who had robbed Morris earlier.

Frank becomes interested in Helen who has had relationships with two Jewish boys but has broken up with them. Helen and Frank become close, but she tells him that she cannot have sex with someone unless she is sure that he loves him. Frank has a hard time trying to control his sexual urges.

Morris Bober enjoys working with Frank, but one day, Morris starts to suspect Frank of stealing. He starts watching Frank closely. Ironically Frank gets caught at the very moment he had decided to put some money back! Morris is heartbroken as he had started to like and trust Frank a lot, but he still orders Frank to leave.

The same night, Helen goes to meet Frank late in the park. Ward Minogue tries to rape her. Though Frank appears and rescues her, he loses control and proceeds to rape her himself.

Morris Bober falls asleep in his apartment with the radiator unlit, flooding his rooms with gas and almost killing himself. Frank saves him but Morris catches pneumonia and has to go to the hospital. Frank keeps the store open for the weeks when Morris is sick. Business is terrible but Frank gives all of his personal savings to the grocery and even takes a night job. Still, when Morris returns to the shop he makes Frank leave and business goes downhill. A mysterious man appears one night offering to burn the store down so that Morris can collect the insurance money, but Morris turns him down. But later, Morris tries to light such a fire himself, but nearly burns himself to death before Frank appears and rescues him but Morris is still not willing to trust Frank. Ward Minogue accidentally sets fire to a neighboring liquor store. The shop owner offers to buy Morris store and grocery so that he can reopen. Morris in his relief and happiness ventures out without his coat; he falls sick and dies three days later from pneumonia.

After Morris's death, Frank starts running the store. He works all night at a different job, pays rent meticulously to Ida and even decides that he wants to pay for Helen to attend college though she despises him now. At the end of the book, Helen has become friendlier to Frank and Frank himself has changed, becoming very much like Morris Bober, whose philosophies he has now internalized. As an external manifestation of his inner change, Frank officially converts to Judaism.

9.4. Analysis

Deftly mixing myth with reality, Morris Bober, the grocer, is shown as a virtual monk who welcomes Frank as a novice into his cell. Malamud reshapes the grocery into a kind of Jewish monastery, as Frank, the repentant, becomes Morris's disciple in training for a new vocation. One of the most relevant passages in the novel is when Frank asks Morris: 'Tell me why it is that Jews suffer so much? It seems to me that they like to suffer, don't they?' Morris answers: 'Do you like to suffer?' 'What do you suffer for Morris?' said Frank. 'I suffer for you,' Morris said calmly. 'What do you mean?' asked Frank. 'I mean you suffer for me.' This goes beyond the concept of Jewishness as just a religion, it extends to the limits of human interdependence and coexistence.

Frank is drawn to this sad little grocer family and wants to understand who and what they are. He starts off from a rational, 'realistic' vision of the Jewish condition; tries to understand Jewishness through an academic approach. 'He read a book about the Jews'

He also read about the ghettos, where the half-starved bearded prisoners spent their lives trying to figure out why they were the Chosen People. However, he comes to realize that the intellectual approach would not suffice, books were not enough. The heart has to be called into play and in a wonderfully cathartic progress of hopes and failure; Frank finally reaches an understanding and sympathy for this unlikely, even un-American, hero Morris Bober, a process so complete as to even come close to identification.

In *The Assistant* Malamud takes an intensely thoughtful stand on the question *What is a Jew?* For him to be a real Jew it is to accept the moral stance of the good Jew; because of having suffered personally and through sharing the history of the Jews, rich in persecution and cruelty, one does not deliberately inflict suffering on others. And that really, for Malamud, is The Law. Frank though a Gentile by birth, is Jewish because of his own past knowledge of suffering of orphanhood and because of Morris's influence he manages to discard the callous, immoral side of his nature that he had earlier justified as a natural response to the world's cruelty and neglect.

The created relationship between Morris and Frank is presented as almost a father-son bond and through his subtle handling of it; Malamud explores the relative difficulty of passing a historical legacy from father to son, as well as one's philosophy of system of laws. Morris Bober fully accepts the idea of suffering. He regards it as necessary to his own self and the world. Through this acceptance, Morris is able to transcend the imprisoning effect of suffering and liberate his self. Frank's eventual transformation in the novel allows him to move on the paths towards achieving similar mental freedom.

It is important that the major characters are not only Jews, but also immigrants in America. They all struggle for the American Dream. Malamud suggests that this struggle is difficult, but also acknowledges its possibilities. He accepts the dazzling prospects offered by The American Dream to a new immigrant, but also depicts its harsh reality of life if the Dream proves to be unattainable.

Saint Francis of Assisi is a symbolic presence who reappears throughout the novel mostly in Frank's reflections. Saint Francis represents the idea of pure goodness and love, which Frank is trying to obtain throughout the novel. The constant recalling of Saint Francis through the images of flowers and birds reminds Frank of his desire and helps him stay mostly on track though there are occasional severe lapses. Saint Francis had also preached that poverty was the way to reach God and was Christ's true message. The Catholic Church of his time considered Saint Francis's ideas incorrect. Morris Bober, however, shares this perspective and accepts his material impoverishment as a way to remain spiritually wealthy. Eventually, Frank comes around this view as well and is able to work his hardest to overcome poverty, but not chafe under the necessity.

Frank initially sees the grocery as a prison and Helen sees her home itself as a prison. Indeed, Morris himself is the only person who did not regard the shop as imprisoning. This motif of the prison indicates a larger prevalent concern with man's state of continu-

ous bondage in this world by materialistic and immoral desires. When asked about the prison motif in his work. Malamud once stated, it use it as a metaphor for the dilemma of all men: necessity, whose face we look through and try not to see. Social injustice, apathy, ignorance. The personal prison of entrapment in past experience, guilt, obsession ñ the somewhat blind or blinded self. A man has to construct, invent his freedom.†

It is possible to see Morris as a *Schlemiel* which is an archetype common to Yiddish folklore. According to Ruth Wisse who has traced the schlemiel character back to its East European origins the schlemiel can be characterized as a folkloristic, anti-intellectual figure who uses ironic humor in order to soften the brutality of a harsh world. The schlemiel uses faith instead of reason in order to survive. With his unique perspective, the schlemiel evades the harsh real world, while emerging as an ironic figure characterized by tragedy and comedy. Morris Bober appears to be a schlemiel because he does exist in his own moral world and refuses to believe in blind reason or cold facts when they appear to go against his convictions even if he has to incur severe losses as a consequence.

The rape of Helen by Frank is vicious and a symbol of his basically animal nature. Helen's *disillusionment* as to her romantic notions about his character is complete. At the same time, Frank's *illusionment* about the success of his personal transformation is shattered. He has to accept that despite all his efforts, he has not really advanced very much and humbly go back and start rebuilding his character from step one, with the added difficulty that the two people he cares about, Morris and Helen, now despise him as a thief and a rapist.

The fact that Morris hears his enemies using German in a nightmare is noteworthy. For a Jewish person in the post- Holocaust world, German is a threatening language that represents the past persecutions by the Germans against the Jews. The presence of German in the dream suggests the extent to which Morris sees the world conspiring against him. Even though it is not clear whether the gas incident was a suicide attempt, the fact that Morris effectively if accidentally creates his own gas chamber calls up disquieting memories of the holocaust. Morris's creation of his own gas chamber coupled with his symbolic dream indicate that he has decided in an intense, if temporary excess of disillusionment, to give up fighting for life.

The rabbi's funeral service fairly eulogizes Morris and serves as a testimony to his humanity and person: †The rabbi gazed down at his prayer book, and then looked up. When a Jew dies, who asks if he is a Jew? He is a Jew, we do not ask. There are many ways to be a Jew. So if somebody comes to me and says, Rabbi, shall we call such a man Jewish who lived and worked among the gentiles and sold them pig meat, that we do not eat, and not once in twenty years comes inside a synagogue, is such a man a Jew, rabbi? To him I will say, Yes, Morris Bober was to me a true Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish heart. May be not to our formal tradition for this I do not excuse him. But he was true to the spirit of our life, to want for others that which he

wants also for himself. He followed the Law which God gave to Moses on Sinai and told him to bring to the people. He suffered he endured, but with hope. Who told me this? I know. He asked for himself little or nothing, but he wanted for his beloved child a better existence than he had. For such reason he was a Jew. What more does our sweet God ask of his poor people? This reinforces Malamud's broad view of Judaism that suggests that a person's behavior can make him Jewish, even if he was not born into the faith. Malamud once said, 'All men are Jews,' a controversial statement, and his treatment of Morris Bober reinforces that idea.

Failure is a critical issue—the central irony lies in the fact that Morris considers himself a failure. He wishes that America were the sort of place where morality could lead to practical success. But where Morris fails is just the secular world where his Jewishness and his morality remain intact. It is shown that honesty and integrity do not lead to success in America, where money confers a status beyond material wealth. Even those close to him see him as a failure in a certain respect because he must live a lesser life in material terms.

9.5. Criticism

'You should write about what you write best about. My writing could be described as chronicles of simple people struggling to make their lives better in a world of bad luck. The suffering of the Jews is a distinct thing for me. I for one believe that not enough has been made of the tragedy of the destruction of six million Jews. Somebody has to cry now even if it's a writer, 20 years later. ... All men are Jews, but they don't know it. I was concerned with what Jews stood for,' he said, 'with their getting down to the bare bones of things. I was concerned with their ethicality and how Jews felt they had to live in order to go on living. Jewishness is important to me, but I don't consider myself only a Jewish writer. I have interests beyond that, and I feel I'm writing for all men. It's a lucky break to be a member of a minority group in America. Everyone has a heritage, but the Jews, because of their everlasting struggle to maintain theirs, are especially conscious of it.' — Bernard Malamud.

A tension between faith and pessimism is evident in many works of Malamud, ranging from the early novel *The Assistant* (1957) to his unfinished novel *The People* (published posthumously in 1990). In *The Assistant* there is a major confrontation between Morris Bober, the grocer and an embodiment of the Hebrew patriarch's attempt to serve as mentor and Frank Alpine, the corrupt and violent thief. The language of the grocer and that of the thief are at odds. Morris tells Frank: 'This means to do what is right, to be honest, and to be good. ... This means to other people. Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? For everybody should be the best, not only for you or me. ... This is why we need the Law. This is what a Jew believes.' The swift movement from Morris's style of high seriousness, reminiscent of the Bible, to the low language of the street that Frank uses creates comic irony and may even have the effect of deconstructing Morris's Talmudic ideals. Frank ridicules Morris's moral emphasis and asserts that suffering rather than an ethical stand is the Jewish experience: 'But tell me why it is that the Jews suffer so

damn much, Morris? It seems to me that they like to suffer, don't they? At the end of the novel, however, Frank is mainly through his love for Helen Bober and his suffering on her account that he has learned that one can appreciate and sometimes achieve responsibility through suffering. Frank gains direction for his own life by taking on Morris Bober's responsibilities, including the responsibility for working in the grocery store in order to pay for Helen's college education. The novel ends with Frank's conversion and the prescribed ritual circumcision: One day in April Frank went to the hospital and had himself circumcised. For a couple of days he dragged himself around with a pain between his legs. The pain enraged and inspired him. After Passover he became a Jew. These lines of affirmation seem to contain their own self-parody. Frank reversed his selfish, aggressive past, which was exemplified by robbing Morris's store and raping Helen in the park when she expected his protection. Helen's calling Frank a "Dog-uncircumcised dog" can be seen to be counterbalanced by his final conversion to Judaism and his conversion to humanistic behavior. The humanism, however, seems to take on elements of black humor. The flat tone describing the ritualistic conversion seems to deconstruct positive interpretation, making the act seem ironic. Ihab Hassan, though calling the act one of self-purification, of initiation too, points out that it is also an act of self-repudiation, if not, as some may be tempted to say, of symbolic castration. In addition, although Frank now has direction in his life, he is by adopting Morris's code that he has ironically entombed himself in the very store that was a prison for Bober. Elaine B. Safer.

A leader of the post-world War II Jewish literary renaissance, Malamud changed the landscape of American literature, introducing mainstream America to marginal ethnic characters, to immigrant urban settings, to Jewish-American dialect and, most important, to a world with which Americans could empathize. Something of a magician, Malamud transformed the particular into the universal so that poor Jews symbolized all individuals struggling to survive with dignity and humanity. Malamud was a writer of the era in which, in America, the old givens of Jewishness had for many faded; the Yiddish language, the regular observance of Jewish rites and even the anti-Semitism that makes a Jew feel an outsider who had better cling to his own for security. In *The Assistant*, one of his greatest works, he takes a radical, even shocking tack on what remains of Jewishness in his America. *The Assistant* is a work of classic power and importance, illuminating the great issues and decisions of a life, in an exciting, engrossing narrative set in a small, intimate world. Evelyn Avery.

The Assistant stands as a beautiful meditation on the nature of Jewishness itself, a subject few writers would dare tackle as readily, then or now. There is no prayer in *The Assistant* except after Morris's death, but there is plenty of ham, pork and whiskey. So how are the Bobers Jews? They are Jews; Malamud seems to argue, in their suffering and in their nobility, or in their goodness, despite that suffering. This definition seems dated. Many Jews are no longer comfortable with the portrayal of noble suffering. After all, Jews can hardly claim to have that market cornered! When you add Malamud's evocation of Frank as Saint Francis to this motif of redemptive suffering, the novel begins to seem more like a

Christian than a Jewish parable. Furthermore, despite its obvious literary power, Morris's articulation of what it is to be a Jew is quite problematic. In fact, it works equally well if you substitute, for the word Jew, something like Jedi Knight, or even Sufi, or Lutheran. So where's the specificity of Jewishness if not in religious observance? Just may be it's the tactile nature of the business of keeping a small store that draws Frank, and defines, at least for him, the Jewish experience. The daily reality of peeling hot potatoes for the potato salad; bringing in the milk and rolls; sweeping and shoveling the sidewalks; making and drinking glasses of tea, to warm the hands as much as the belly or the soul ñ these daily acts substitute for, for the morning prayers, for the dietary laws, for the marriage laws, for the wholly absent religious community. The Bobers, along with their Jewish neighbors are strangers in a strange land and the very American fate of their largely uneducated, cultural, hand-me-down Judaism is what Malamud so beautifully charts. ñ Shoshana Marchand.

If we leap a head to the 1950s and 1960s ñ the literary period often referred to these days as the Golden Age of Jewish-American writing ñ we see that the most popular Jewish protagonists continue to affirm their Americanness well over and beyond their lingering Jewishness. Consider, for example, Bernard Malamud's National Book Award winning novel, *The Assistant* (1957), and its long-suffering protagonist, Morris Bober. Bober struggles as a grocer to support his family, to accommodate the demands of his ungrateful customers, and generally to aid and assist his fellow human beings in his declining Brooklyn neighborhood. But he is hardly an observant Jew. He samples the ham in his shop case, opens up his grocery store on the Jewish Sabbath, and rarely attends synagogue, all of which confuses his Italian ñ American assistant, who finally must ask his boss, 'What is a Jew anyway?' After some hemming and hawing, Morris finally contends that to be a Jew is to do what is right, to be honest, to be good. ñ This means to other people. Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? For everybody should be the best, not only for you or me. We ain't animals. This is why we need the Law. This is what a Jew believes. ñ Noble sentiments. But not particularly Judaic, as Bober's assistant astutely recognizes. 'I think other religions have those ideas too,' he replies, somewhat deflated. Morris Bober, and other saintly schlemiel protagonists of this era resonated with mainstream readers because they embodied ñ in a concentrated formula ñ the physical and spiritual malaise of the 1950s and early 1960s and the broad humanistic values American readers so wished to affirm. Malamud and his cohorts (Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, most notably) created Jews who, as the old quip goes, were just like everybody else, only more so. 'Morris Bober, c'est moi,' the white non-Jewish reader could somehow claim. This was Malamud's genius, and the secret to his mainstream success. 'All men are Jews,' he famously declared. And the public apparently agreed. But, in retrospect, it seems just as true that Malamud, Bellow, and Roth proved the converse ñ that the Jew could be fashioned fictively into an every-man. ñ Andrew Furman.

'Beginning with God's gift of a spirituality that raises man to his highest being,' the Jewish drama persists through betrayal of that gift, destruction, exile, and an oftentimes agonizing defense of moral selfhood, human responsibility, even occasional joy. As for the

local version of this drama, Malamud sees the ethical ideal of compassion echoed in American democratic principles, and he sees Jewish historical experience in a rich and tragic drama of the self-realization of a people in a country's own self-realization. (R. Norton.)

Malamud's strengths were the feeling for the outsider Jew, the direct, unadorned yet flavoursome storytelling, the skeptic's fascination with Hasidic mysteries and the ruminations on the meaning of love. His characters are bent under packs of conscience, whether in wanderings without end or in conditions without escape. (Walter Goodman.)

The Jews of the *Magic Barrel* and the Jews of *The Assistant* are not the Jews of New York City or Chicago. They are Malamud's invention, a metaphor of sorts to stand for certain possibilities and promises.

The petty criminal and drifter Frank Alpine in *The Assistant*, while doing penance behind the counter of a failing grocery store that he'd once helped to rob, has a terrifying insight about himself: that all the while he was acting like he wasn't he was a man of stern morality. (Philip Roth.)

The novel *The Assistant* by Bernard Malamud is a good representation of the perpetual cycle of the way of life for America's social outcasts. The main characters Frank Alpine and Morris Bober are both outcasts, with different pasts that are both a typical form of social rejection. (D.V. Roeland.)

In Mr. Malamud's hands, Frank Alpine, the alien and outsider, becomes a kind of redeemer. The speech of these people is marvelously true and adds another dimension to the story that is told. There is a kind of crystalline hardness over the tautly lyrical descriptions of people and scenes; there is never literariness or any intrusion of philosophic values in Mr. Malamud's world. All is kept simple, real, basic; there is the rightness that permeates this book. Yet around the simplicity of it there gathers and grows in the mind of the reader a sense of values and destinies and large truths in there is this mysterious accretion that contributes weight and size and beauty to *The Assistant*. (William Goyen)

Malamud has been in the fable business, so to speak; he has always had a fondness for telling tales arranged for the purpose of a specific moral lesson. Neither realism nor surrealism has been his forte through the years, but the fable, the parable, the allegory, the ancient art of basic storytelling in a modern voice; through this special mode he has earned his high place in contemporary letters. (Alan Leichuk.)

9.6. Sample Questions :

1. Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* deals with the evolution of Frank Alpine from a thoughtless sensualist to a thoughtful moral person. Examine.
2. The developing image of St. Francis in the novel corresponds to Frank Alpine's movement towards redemption. Examine.
3. Does Bernard Malamud show his protagonist growing in maturity in *The Assistant*.

Lesson Writer

Dr. Chitra Pannicker, Reader,

10. THE DEATH OF A SALESMAN

- Arthur Miller

Contents:

- 10.1. Biography
- 10.2. Introduction
- 10.3. Synopsis
- 10.4. Analysis
- 10.5. Criticism
- 10.6. Sample Questions

10.1. Biography

A leading American playwright, Arthur Miller was born on October, 17, 1915 in New York. Miller began writing plays while a student at the University of Michigan, where several of his dramatic efforts were rewarded with prizes. His first real dramatic successes were *All My Sons* (1947), and *Death of a Salesman* (1948). Several of his plays were made into highly successful films and he won both the Drama Critics Award and the Pulitzer Prize for *Death of a Salesman*. Later plays were *The Crucible* (1953), *A View From the Bridge* (1955) and *After the Fall* (1964). Miller also wrote two one act plays *Incident at Vichy* (1964) and *The Price* (1968). *The Creation of the World and Other Business* appeared in 1972 and *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* in 1991. Apart from his plays, Miller has written a novel, screenplay, travelogues essays and an autobiography, *Time bends: A Life*. In 1993, Miller wrote *The Last Yankee*. In 2002 Miller was honored with Spain's prestigious Principe de Asturias Prize for Literature, making him the first U.S. recipient of the award.

10.2. Introduction

Miller holds a theatric philosophy that the fate of a person is social and that the stage should be considered as a medium more important for ideas than for mere entertainment. As a dramatist, Miller is a moralist, and his plays have a serious intellectual purpose. In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller criticizes the falsity of the American Dream and the emphasis placed on financial success in the United States. The central character in this play is symbolically named Willy Loman, Loman acting as a kind of shorthand for Everyman. It was a central part of Miller's dramatic vision which he famously defended in an essay, *Tragedy and the Common Man*, that not only exceptional individuals but ordinary every day men and their fate were fit subjects for tragedy. *Death of a Salesman* is a brilliant example of *The tragedy of the everyday*.

10.3. Synopsis

As the play opens, Willy Loman a long time traveling salesman of Wagner company has just come back home much earlier than expected from a sales trip. He tells his wife Linda that he has returned unexpectedly because he cannot seem to keep his mind on driving anymore. Willy's sons Biff and Happy are home for the first time in years. Willy is worried about how Biff is unable to find a job. Willy had great expectations for Biff who was a star athlete in school. But now Biff seems to be at a loose end. Willy had operated on mistaken notions all his life and he had also instilled those notions into his sons. One idea was that the American Dream of success could be achieved through personality and not through work or luck. Willy's entire career is built up on this myth. Now he is struggling for his money and Biff is a drifter. Willy's friend Charley and his son Bernard who Willy had looked down upon are on the other hand very successful now. In one of the many flash-backs we also meet Uncle Ben, Willy's brother who represents another pole of success. He had offered Willy a chance of success through adventure, but Willy had been too afraid to take up the offer. Now Willy finds his life a failure all around. Linda is the only person who cares for him and sympathizes with his grandiloquent talk. But Willy had been unfaithful to Linda also. He had an affair with a woman on his trips and unluckily Biff had caught them on one occasion. Willy feels that Biff's downfall began from the day and he is consumed by guilt. Happy and Biff desert Willy at a hostel to date some girls and this makes him feel sure that they despised and love him. To make matters worse, Willy loses his job and has to borrow from Charley, the ultimate indignity. However, at this point, Biff and Willy have a straight talk for once and as a result Willy realizes that Biff still loves him a lot. But instead of learning from the past, Willy immediately decides that all Biff needs to become a big success is capital. As he had no other way of raising money, he commits suicide by crashing the car so that Biff can claim the insurance. The final pathos is at the funeral when hardly anybody attends for this man who had based his entire life on personality and being Well-liked.

10.4. Analysis

The gap between reality and illusion is a major source of conflict in the play. Throughout the play the Lomans in general cannot distinguish between reality and illusion, particularly Willy. For example, Willy believes that to be well liked is the means to being successful which itself is an illusion. Also, Willy very frequently seems to be reliving conversations and situations that occurred years ago. He is constantly reliving the past, a classic example of an inability to come to terms with current reality. This dichotomy contributes in no small measure to Willy's downfall.

The American Dream is a central symbol in the play. To Willy, the foundation of success is not education or hard work, but rather 'who you know and the smile on your face.' The antagonist is the false promise of The American Dream, which makes people believe that anyone in the United States can become rich through only hard work, persever-

ance, or personality which is exposed as a false promise. Willy is overcome by his dreams and illusions during the course of the play. He is fired by the company that he believes will promote him; he is rejected by his sons, for whom he has worked and struggled; and he is forced to see that his life and his philosophies are lies. Willy Loman represents the primary target of The American Dream. He struggles to provide financial security for his family and dreams about making himself a huge financial success. After years of working as a traveling salesman, Willy Loman has only an old car, an empty house and a defeated spirit. Miller chose the job of salesman carefully for his American Dreamer. A salesman does not make his/her personality as much as his/her product. Willy Loman falsely believes he needs nothing more than to be well liked to make it big. Oddly, his fixation with the superficial qualities of attractiveness and likeability is at odds with a more gritty, more rewarding understanding of the American Dream that identifies hard work without complaint as the key to success. Willy's blind faith in his stunted version of the American Dream leads to his rapid psychological decline when he is unable to accept the disparity between the Dream and his own life.

The increasing dysfunctional nature of the 'American Family', ideally supposed to be ballast for the 'American Dream' is another target in the play. Linda juggles the difficult realities of a working class family while making her husband believe that his income is better than adequate. Willy attempts to provide financial security and to guide his sons' future, neither of which he does very well. Unlike the myth of economic mobility in America, the vast majority of people in the working or middle classes stay there generation after generation. However, the myth is what Willy Loman lives on. Unfortunately, his illusions equip him for real life and the only way out is to kill himself so that they can collect on his life insurance. The failure of the American Dream makes the audience question its own commitment to false dreams.

The false importance placed on personal attractiveness and popularity is questioned. Willy naively believes that if a person is attractive and popular, the entire world opens up for him, guaranteeing success and answering the American Dream. Willy sees the personification of this in the legendary salesman, David Singleman, whom he describes in the play as the man who has obtained the American Dream through being a salesman. Clearly this is no flesh and blood person, but the personification of myth and an all too human Willy will fail miserably in trying to emulate his ideal's legendary achievements. Even his death is a footnote of pathos. Willy has imagined that his funeral will be well attended, just like the one for Singleman. As he plans his suicide, he pictures customers and fellow salesmen from all over New England coming to his burial; the image pleases Willy, for he feels it will cause his sons to feel respect from their dead father. In truth, no one outside of family attends the funeral, except for Charley. It is a sad statement on a sad life.

Miller develops the image of being 'all used up' throughout the play. Early in the play, Willy captures the essence of this image when he talks about his house. He tells Linda, 'I work a life time to pay off a house. You finally own it and there's nobody to live in it.' The play ends with an echo of the same thought; Linda tells a dead Willy that she has just made

the last mortgage payment on the house, but there is no longer anyone to live in it. Like the products that surround him, Willy is also used up and broken. The Wagner Company has sucked the life out of him and then fired him.

It is also worth noticing that Willy's version of the American dream is partly a pastoral one. Part of Willy's desperation comes from his sense of being boxed in, especially in the city. He romanticizes life in the country and tries to get something to grow in his own back yard. In the first scene, Willy comments that he feels boxed in by bricks and complains that he cannot get anything to grow. He then remembers the time when the Biff and Happy were young and there was lilac and wisteria growing in the yard. The flowers, therefore, symbolize real life and good times. Now that life is closing in on Willy, he desperately wants something to grow, to plant something that has life, but his attempts are futile, both in his efforts in the back yard and in his efforts with his sons.

The tragedy of Willy Loman is not just the tragedy of a single individual. Miller implies that Willy's distorted illusions and values are all too frequently those forced upon people in a capitalist society, especially in America. It is Linda who points out the tragic predicament of Willy Loman: he is not the finest character that ever lived. But he is human being and a terrible thing is happening to him. Willy is a thoroughly human character whose limitations and errors are combined with a noble parental passion and a heroic effort to maintain his self-esteem and dreams in the midst of a competitive capitalist society.

Because he doesn't want to face his failure, for years Willy has been lying to himself and to others, fantasizing and fooling himself into a false vision of his own popularity. This erroneous view of himself, or false pride, as his boss calls it, gets in the way of Willy's relationships. All during the course of the play, Biff is trying to come to terms with, and ultimately rid himself of, his father's dreams and expectations. Willy expects him to be great in business because he was great in sports. Believing that Biff has all the makings of a success, Willy sees his son's failure to amount to much as a deliberate act of spite. In turn, Biff feels his father is mocking him.

Identity itself is a precarious construct within this play. 'Who am I?' is a question we all ask. Willy, whose father and older brother went away when he was very young, has always felt insecure about how he should be conducting his life. Most of the time he covers up his feeling (kinda temporary) about himself with boasts. Only when he's deeply in trouble does he ask advice (What's the secret?) from Ben, from Charley, from Bernard, all of whom have achieved the financial success he longs for. If Willy could have accepted and made the most of his good qualities, he might not have struggled all his life to fit into the wrong mould. Note that Willy forced this mould not only onto himself but also onto his sons, causing them the same confusion over identity. Willy's failure stems from his refusal to admit what his character is, and his insistence on trying to be someone he's not. Therefore, he works as a salesman but can't make any money at it. He will borrow money from Charley, but he won't take a job from him. He is good with his hands, but he won't view that as a measure of success. For him big time success as a salesman is the one acceptable triumph

and in his pursuit of this he overlooks other minor achievements which he may have been capable of.

There is a constant undercurrent of a fear of mortality. Willy is madly eager to leave some sort of impression behind him and as he is not successful so as to have monuments erected in his memory, he hopes to have a lasting memorial in the success of his sons, especially Biff. Arthur Miller wrote of the need to leave a thumbprint as being as strong a need as hunger or thirst. Willy wants to make an impression, to be remembered after his death, to give something to Biff, and his inability to do any of these haunts him. His life has been futile: he is old, poor, scorned by his peers and his sons. His final attempt to make a legacy for Biff is his suicide, which he feels will earn the money from his insurance policy. In killing himself, Willy finally becomes a man of purpose and reason. He had been trying to make a gift that would crown all those striving years, in this instant, all those lies he told, all those dreams and vivid exaggerations would now be given form and point. In American Society the only option open to Willy as such was to be a salesman. Tragically, he eventually feels he must, symbolically, trade his own life for his family's well being whereby they will hopefully experience a life of greatness without, ironically, Willy himself being present.

Willy is a perfect example of someone who feels betrayed because he can't achieve the financial goals society has set up for him. I put thirty-four years in this firm, and now I can't pay my insurance. He is unable to accept his failings and denies their existence till the very end. Even in death he holds on to that dream in securing for Biff insurance money to boost his future. From the urgency and desperation of Willy's situation, we are bound to see the play from another angle one that looks into the working of his inner life. Undoubtedly Miller meant for his audience to look into this aspect as is obvious from the dream and memory sequences.

Obviously, *Death of a Salesman* is a criticism of the moral and social standards of contemporary America, not merely a record of the particular plight of one man. And, also obviously, it presents Willy as a victim of the deterioration of the 'American dream,' the belief in untrammelled individualism.

The Lomans are all examples of what life is like if you continually live in a dream world and never train yourself for anything. However, Charlie and his son Bernard were able to achieve greatness and to make the system work for them. The particulars concerning Willy's situation also have universal significance. Willy has lived passionately for values to which he is committed, and he comes to find that they are false and inadequate. He has loved his sons with a passion which wanted for them that which would destroy them. He has grown old and he will soon vanish without a trace, and he discovers really the vanity of all human endeavor, save perhaps love. Biff and Willy are two versions of the idealist, or 'dreamer' may be a better word, paralyzed by reality: Biff by the effects of disillusionment, Willy by the effects of the illusions themselves. Willy's refusal, to acknowledge reality, from the standpoint of dramatic significance, seems less a product of his insanity than of his lifelong feeling of competition with Charlie. Acceptance would have been tantamount to

admitting that Charlie's philosophy had proved to be the right one, and Willy simply isn't big enough a man to make such an admission.

Willy Loman is a perfect example of someone who feels betrayed because he can't achieve the financial goals society has conditioned him to strive for. He worships the goddess of success, but he doesn't have the talent or the temperament to be a salesman, his chosen career. When he fails as a salesman, no other measure of success—the love of his family, his talent as a carpenter, and so on—can comfort him. He believes that a person who fails in business has no right to live.

Though he is a common man (Low-Man), Willy was later described by the author who created him as a very brave spirit who cannot settle for half but must pursue his dream of himself to the end. A tragic hero is someone with the dedication to die for a belief, but also someone who has a tragic flaw or limitation that defines him as a character and makes the tragedy happen. He has alternatives, but he chooses to live in a certain way that brings about his downfall. All of this is true of Willy. He is intense and passionate and cares about his dream enough to sacrifice his life to it. The problem was that he picked the wrong dream to follow and spent his entire life chasing a mirage.

10.5. Criticism

The play romanticizes the rural-agrarian dream but does not make it genuinely available to Willy. Miller seems to use this dream merely to give himself an opportunity for sentimentality. The play is ambiguous in its attitude toward the business-success dream, but does not certainly condemn it. It is legitimate to ask where Miller is going. And the answer is that he has written a confused play because he has been unwilling or unable to commit himself to a firm position with respect to American culture. Linda is not part of the solution but rather part of the problem with this dysfunctional family and their inability to see things for what they really are. There are many forms of failure as well as success that are spawned by the American system. In the end, the decision to make it in this American system is, ironically, up to the individual. — Craig M. Garrison.

Linda, as the eternal wife and mother, the fixed point of affection both given and received, the woman who suffers and endures, is in many ways, the earth mother who embodies the play's ultimate moral value, love. But in the beautiful, ironic complexity of her creation, she is also Willy's and their sons' destroyer. In her love Linda has accepted Willy's Greatness and his dream. But while in her admiration for Willy her love is powerful and moving, in her admiration for his dreams, it is lethal. She encourages Willy's dream, yet she will not let him leave her for the New Continent, the only realm where the dream can be fulfilled. She wants to reconcile father and son, but she attempts this in the context of Willy's false values. She cannot allow her sons to achieve that selfhood involves denial of these values.

Willy's foolishness is really no grater than Othello's raving jealousy or Lear's appreciation of the insincere, outward appearance of love. A pension would not help him, nor, had he come to be J.P. Morgan would it have helped. Linda says, 'A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man,' and she cries out 'Attention must be paid.' Inevitably, no matter what material heights a man succeeds to, his life is brief and his comprehension finite, while the universe remains infinite and incomprehensible. Willy comes to face, if you will, the absurdity of life, and it is for this reason that 'attention must be paid.' ñ Lois Gordon.

Biff, who in the play is an amplification or reflection of Willy's problems, has been nurtured on Willy's dreams, too. But he has been forced to see the truth. And it is the truth ñ his father's cheap philandering ñ in its impact on a nature already weakened by a diet of illusion that in turn paralyzes him. This is how Biff and Willy sum themselves up at the end of the play, just before Willy's suicide. 'Pop! Biff cries, 'I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!' 'I am not a dime a dozen!' Willy answers in rage 'I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!' And the tragedy ñ if it is tragedy-is that they are both right.' ñ Richard J. Foster

'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. It is, therefore, interesting to note that not well liked though he may be, Bernard, through persistent application of his native intelligence, grows up to be an eminent lawyer who, the day Biff and Willy are finally forced to face the unpleasant facts of their lives, embarks for Washington to plead a case before the Supreme Court. That Mr. Miller chose to contrast Willy's and Biff's failures with an obvious example of how one can succeed in this country makes it difficult to interpret the play as an attack upon the American system, in totality.' ñ R.H. Gardner.

Historically the American dream meant a promise of freedom and opportunity for all. A new frontier lay open and anyone who worked hard could expect to have a happy and prosperous life. Today, however, we think of the American Dream in a less idealistic way, as the instant business success of those who are ruthless or lucky. The critic Harold Clurman wrote, 'Instead of the ideals of hard work and courage, we have salesmanship. A certain element of fraud ñ the accumulation of profit being an unquestioned end in itself.' We Americans seem to feel we deserve money and material things as our birthright. Advertising reinforces our desire for possessions, often making us want things we either don't need or can't afford. Then when we don't have enough money to buy everything we want, we feel cheated somehow. It's important to remember as you read the play that it's not a criticism of salesmanship itself, but of the pursuit of money as an end in itself.' ñ Liza M. Williams.

The word 'dream' is a key word, recurring frequently in the play; and the deterioration of American individualism is traced through the Loman generations in a descending scale, from the Whitman-like exuberance of Willy's father, through Ben, Willy himself, to the empty predatoriness of Happy, who as he admits, compulsively competitive in sex and business for no reason at all.' ñ Brian Parker.

So Willy Loman wreaks havoc on his own life and on that of his sons. The blight of his own confusion is visited upon them. Unaware of what warped his mind and behavior, he

commits suicide in the conviction that his legacy of twenty thousand dollars is all that is needed to save his beloved but almost equally damaged offspring. This may not be tragic, but such distorted thinking maims a very great number of folk in the world today. ñ Harold Clurman.

Willy Loman, exhausted salesman, does not go back to the past. The past, as in hallucination, comes back to him; not chronologically as in flashback, but dynamically with the inner logic of his erupting volcanic unconscious. In psychiatry we call this the return of the repressed, when a mind breaks under the invasion of primitive impulses no longer capable of compromise with reality. Willy is one vast contradiction, and this contradiction is his downfall. He is a nicer guy than Charley. He is so nice, as someone said once, he's got to end up poor. This makes Charley untroubled and a success, and Willy contradictory, neurotic, full of love and longing need for admiration and affection, full of a sense of worthlessness and inadequacy and dislocation and a failure. ñ Daniel E. Schneider.

Willy's illusions of materialistic success relate to the myth of the American dream. This idea elevates the play to another dimension where American culture and politics play pivotal roles in the lives of the characters. As a social commentary, it brings to the foreground the nihilistic features of a capitalist society. The play indicts a system that values machines more than men. In an effort to achieve that American dream, Willy Loman clings to past fables that elude him constantly. *Death of a Salesman* tells the tragic story of an average man in the most poetic terms. It presents a host of ideas and themes that engage audiences all over the world. At its simplest level it can be seen as a play exploring relationships in the background of changing times, chief of which is the one between an eccentric father and his no-good sons. In fact, *The Inside of His Head* was the first title conceived for the play because in Miller's own words the inside of his head was a mass of contradictions. We glimpse Willy's subconscious, distraught with guilt, hope and regret. It is through these scenes that Miller allows us to see the internal turmoil of a mind that has not come out of adolescence and because of it, is unable to help his own sons to healthy maturity. Memories are Willy's support in a society that is failing him. As he progresses more and more towards personal disappointments ñ Biff's failure in life, loss of his job, and the realization of a low self-worth he moves successively further into his dream world. Nature imagery is another strong motif running through the play that symbolizes the disappearance of an old system as it collides with a new world order. When Willy bought his house, we are told, there were woods all around and he could hunt rabbits and snakes and had elms growing in the yard. But now, in the present, the woods are all gone and nothing grows because of the menacing buildings that shadow his house. Willy faces the onslaught of a new, commercial age where time is money and life is moving too fast ahead of him. The image of constricted nature reflects the noose that society puts around Willy's neck. He is tragically unable to come to terms with the invalidity of his profession in modern times. As the noose tightens, the only choice left him is suicide. ñ Elia Kazan.

Death of a Salesman tells the story of a man confronting failure in the success-driven society of America and shows the tragic trajectory which eventually leads to his suicide. Willy Loman is a symbolic icon of the failing America; he represents those that have striven for success but, in struggling to do so, have instead achieved failure in its most bitter form. Arthur Miller's tragic drama is a probing portrait of the typical American psyche portraying an extreme craving for success and superior status in a world otherwise fruitless. To some extent, therefore, *Death of a Salesman* is concerned with the jagged edges of a shattered dream but on another more tragic and bitter level, it also evokes the decline of a man into lunacy and the subsequent effect this has on those around him, particularly his family. Miller amalgamates the archetypal tragic hero with the mundane American citizen. The result is the anti-hero, Willy Loman. He is a simple salesman who constantly aspires to become great. Nevertheless, Willy has a waning career as a salesman and is an aging man who considers himself to be a failure but is incapable of consciously admitting it. As a result, the drama of the play lies not so much in its events, but in Willy's deluded perception and recollection of them as the audience gradually witness the tragic demise of a helpless man. In creating Willy Loman, Miller presents the audience with a tragic figure of human proportions. Miller characterizes the ordinary man (the 'low man') and ennoble his achievements. *Death of a Salesman* seems to conform to the tragic tradition that there is an anti-hero whose state of hamartia causes him to suffer. The audience is compelled to genuinely sympathize with Willy's demise largely because he is an ordinary man who is subject to the same temptations as the rest of us. Whilst everyone around Willy experiences success and wealth, the Lomans themselves struggle financially. The play romanticizes the pioneering dream but never makes it genuinely available to Willy and his family. Willy reveres success. He wants to be successful, to be great, but his dream is never fulfilled. Indeed, he feels the only way he can actually fulfill his dream is to commit suicide so that his family may subsequently live off his life insurance. His brother, Ben is idealized by Willy since he fulfilled the genuine American Dream: to start out with nothing and eventually become rich through effort and hard work. Ironically, this wealth is achieved outside America suggesting that there is little left available for the ordinary individual within the country's own boundaries. Instead, one must look elsewhere for true greatness, underlining the fact that, for the majority, the much sought after American Dream is a myth. The play is ambiguous in its attitude toward the business-success dream, but certainly does not rebuke it openly. *Death of a Salesman* may also be interpreted as an allegorical representation of America. Willy's garden can be perceived as a microcosm of American society as tower blocks continued to be raised around him. This suggests that, for the ordinary person, the literal 'Low-man', life has become overshadowed at the cost of capitalism. The audience is left with the image of the garden that will never grow; the ordinary person has been left behind and even rejected by wealthy capitalists. In one last vain effort, Willy attempts to grow something for his family in his buying of seeds to plant in the garden. Even Willy has come to realize that his life is a failure when he declares, 'Oh, I'd better hurry-Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground.' Nevertheless, it seems that Miller's intention in writing about the death of a salesman, a seemingly mundane occurrence in twentieth-century society, was to express the playwright's own vision of American Society and the nature of individuality. *Death*

of a *Salesman* may be interpreted as being solely a play about the failing America and the failed dream but it does, nevertheless, engage Miller's belief that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings are. ñ James Lee.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Mr. Miller wrote with a fierce, liberating urgency. Even as his play marches steadily onward to its preordained conclusion, it roams about through time and space, connecting present miseries with past traumas and drawing blood almost everywhere it goes. Though the author's condemnation of the American success ethic is stated baldly, it is also woven, at times humorously, into the action. ñ Frank Rich.

In suicide Willy is given his existence, so to speak his fatherhood, for which he has always striven and which until now he could not achieve. That he is unable to take victory thoroughly to his heart, that it closes the circle for him and propels him to his death, is the wage of his sin, which was to have committed himself so completely to the counterfeits of dignity and the false coinage embodied in his idea of success that he can prove his existence only by bestowing power on his posterity, a power deriving from the sale of his last asset, himself, for the price of his insurance policy. ñ Arthur Miller.

10.6. Sample Questions

1. What implications does the ending of *Death of A Salesman* carry?
2. *Death of A Salesman* is the story of a frustrated and disillusioned Salesman whose dream of success is shattered ñ examine.
3. *Death of a Salesman* is a desperate assertion of American dream ñ examine.

Lesson Writer

Prof. Sindu Meenam

11. The Old Man and the Sea

- Ernest Hemingway

Contents :

- 11.1. Biography
- 11.2. Introduction
- 11.3. Summary
- 11.4. Analysis
- 11.5. Criticism
- 11.6. Sample Questions
- 11.7. Suggested Readings

11.1. Biography

Ernest Hemingway was born in Illinois, in 1899 as the son of a doctor and a music teacher. He attended public schools in Oak Park and published his earliest stories and poems in his high school newspaper. After his graduation in 1917, Hemingway worked for six months as a reporter for the Kansas City Star. After the war Hemingway worked for a short time as a journalist in Chicago. He moved in 1921 to Paris, where he wrote articles for the *Toronto Star*.

In Europe Hemingway associated with such writers as Gertrude Stein and F. Scott Fitzgerald, who edited some of his texts and acted as his agent. When he was not writing for the newspaper or for himself, Hemingway toured Europe with his wife Elizabeth. Hemingway's first books, *Three Stories and Ten Poems* (1923) and *In Our Time* (1924) were published in Paris. *The Torrents of Spring* appeared in 1926 and *The Sun Also Rises* was published in the same year. *Men Without Women* was published in 1927 and Hemingway returned to the United States, settling in Florida. He later lived in Cuba.

Hemingway and Elizabeth were divorced in 1927 and in the same year he married Pauline Pfeiffer. He was later to have two more marriages. In Florida he wrote *A Farewell to Arms*, which was published in 1929. In 1932 Hemingway wrote *Death in the Afternoon*, a nonfiction account of Spanish bullfighting, and *The Green Hills of Africa* in 1935, a story of a hunting safari in East Africa. His *To Have and Have Not* was published in 1937. Hemingway was also a master of the short story. Among his most famous stories is *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* appeared in 1940.

His novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*, published in 1950, was a failure. It was his first novel in ten years but critics called the work the worst thing Hemingway had ever written. The huge success of *The Old Man and the Sea*, published in 1952, came as a vindication. The novella won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and played a prominent role in getting the Nobel Prize for Hemingway in 1954.

Despite his creed of masculinity and grim endurance, Hemingway at the end of his life was more and more prone to bouts of depression and drinking binges. He committed suicide in 1961 in Idaho.

11.2. Introduction

The Old Man and the Sea was acknowledged as a masterpiece even before its publication, and *Life* magazine took the unprecedented step of publishing the entire text in its September 1, 1953, issue, which sold over 5 million copies in two days. Two film versions of the novella have been produced, the first involving Hemingway's participation. The work was especially praised for its depiction of a new dimension to the typical Hemingway hero, less macho and more respectful of life. In Santiago, Hemingway had finally achieved a character who could face the human condition and survive without cynically dismissing it or dying while attempting to better it. Susan Beegel points out that the Nobel committee singled out the story's natural admiration for every individual who fights the good fight in a world of reality overshadowed by violence and death.

11.3. Summary

The Old Man and the Sea is the story of an epic struggle between an old fisherman and the greatest catch of his life. For eighty-four days, Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman, has set out to sea and returned empty-handed. The parents of his apprentice Manolin, have forced the boy to leave the old man.

Santiago is very interested in American baseball and the player Joe DiMaggio is his hero. He is confident that his luck will turn soon. On the eighty-fifth day, Santiago goes further out than ever before. Santiago loves the sea, though at times it can be cruel. He thinks of the sea as a woman whose wild behavior is beyond her control. At noon, he hooks a marlin, a very big fish. Unable to reel it in, he starts struggling with the fish. The main part of the story deals with this struggle elevated to epic and symbolic proportions. The fish pulls the boat through days and nights. The entire time, Santiago endures constant pain from the fishing line. Although wounded and weary, the old man feels a deep empathy and admiration for the marlin. Finally the fish tires, and Santiago manages to pull it in close enough to kill it with a harpoon thrust. He lashes it to his boat and sets sail for home. As Santiago sails on with the fish, its blood leaves a trail in the water and attracts sharks. The old man fights off the successive predators as best he can, stabbing at them with a crude spear and even clubbing them with the boat's tiller. Although he kills several sharks, more and more appear, and by the time night falls, Santiago's continued fight against the scavengers is useless.

They devour the marlin's precious meat, leaving only the skeleton. He arrives home before daybreak, goes wearily to his hut and sleeps deeply. The next morning, a crowd of fishermen gathers around the carcass of the fish, which is still lashed to the boat. Though they admire it, for the nearby tourists, the skeleton is mere garbage. Manolin and Santiago agree to fish as partners once more.

11.4. Analysis

Santiago is humble, yet exhibits a justified pride in his abilities. He preserves a sense of hope regardless of circumstance. His life, has been full of tests of his strength and endurance. The struggle with the fish is his greatest challenge and though he loses the fish, the struggle itself is his victory.

The tug-of-war between Santiago and the fish often seems more like an alliance than a struggle. The fishing line serves as a symbol of a fraternal connection Santiago feels with the fish. As he eats, Santiago even feels a brotherly desire to feed the marlin too. When the captured marlin is later destroyed by sharks, Santiago feels destroyed as well.

The baseball player DiMaggio is a symbol of strength and commitment as he continued to play despite adversity. Santiago thinks of DiMaggio whenever he needs to reassure himself of his own capacity to struggle and overcome.

At one level, the tale as a chronicle of man's battle against the natural world, but it is also a story of man's place within nature. Santiago and the marlin both display several similar qualities and are subject to the same law of kill or be killed. No living thing can escape the inevitable struggle that will lead to its death. Death is inevitable, but the best beings will not give up without a struggle, they will not go gently into that good night.

It is precisely through the effort to oppose the inevitable and the status of his antagonists that a man can prove himself. Santiago's admiration for his opponent brings love and respect into an equation with death. The marlin is the ideal opponent. In a world in which everything kills everything else in some way, Santiago feels genuinely lucky to find himself matched against a creature that brings out the best in him. Neither the Marlin, though dead nor Santiago though robbed of his trophy by the sharks are finally defeated, they are heroic precisely because their struggle was heroic. The sharks as opponents stand in bold contrast to the marlin, which is worthy of Santiago's struggle. They symbolize the destructive laws of the universe.

Ironically Santiago also recognizes his transgression of boundaries which leads to the death of the Marlin out of which he does not even make actual profit. He himself admits: "I went out too air" and this is both his glory and his mistake. Santiago is not condemned for pride, indeed he stands as proof that pride motivates men to greatness. Santiago acknowledges that he killed the mighty marlin largely out of pride, and because his capture of

the marlin leads in turn to his heroic struggle and victory beyond defeat, pride is the source of his strength. Without pride, that battle would never have been fought to the inevitable end.

Hemingway seems to suggest that victory is not necessary concomitant of honor. The Marlin has not disgraced itself though it is finally defeated. Santiago returns without a trophy, he was only the skeleton of his catch, but he is not defeated. Honor depends upon seeing a struggle through to its end, regardless of the outcome. Santiago's credit comes not from his battle itself but from his pride and determination to fight. The conscious decision to act, to fight, to never give up, enables Santiago to avoid defeat. Though he loses his tangible trophy, he returns with the knowledge that he has behaved manfully.

Death is the unavoidable force; but Hemingway suggests that death is never an end in itself; in death itself there is always the possibility of life. Not only is Santiago reenergized by the battle, but the fish itself is described by Hemingway as having a kind of life in death. Life, with its possibility of renewal, closely follows death. The suggestion is that the world, though designed to bring about death, is also a vast, interconnected network of life.

Santiago has a symbolic dream of lions at play on the beaches of Africa three times. The first time is the night before he departs on his fishing expedition, the second when he sleeps in the middle of his struggle with the marlin, and the third takes place at the very end of the book. The final image of the lions suggests the central idea of regeneration. Dreaming about the lions each night provides Santiago with a link to his younger days, as well as the strength and idealism that are associated with youth.

Santiago is basically an outsider; an alienated, almost ostracized figure. Such an alienated position is characteristic of Hemingway's heroes, whose greatest achievements depend, in large part, upon their isolation. In a way Santiago's isolation indicates his distance from ordinary humans and endeavors. Santiago's endurance is a recurrent and symbolic theme. Although Santiago's physical luxuries are minimal, it is not strange that he wins an outwardly physical struggle as the terms of the struggle are gradually revealed as mental and symbolically spiritual too. Santiago recognizes that his strength lies in his irresolution. This resolve allows him to keep on fishing, despite his age, despite the loss of his apprentice and despite the fact that he has not caught anything for eighty four days. When he eventually hooks the fish, it is his resolve that keeps him holding on to it, regardless of his fatigue. He is prepared to keep fighting the fish until it kills him or vice versa.

Santiago is not just a fisherman, he is a philosopher hero who displays a rare determination to understand the universe, as is evident when he meditates that the sea is beautiful and benevolent, but also cruel. His meditations on the Marlin are also philosophical. The brotherhood between Santiago and the surrounding world is significant. The old man feels an intimate connection to the great fish, as well as to the birds and even to the sea and the stars. Hemingway spends a good deal of time drawing connections between Santiago and his natural environment the fish, birds, and stars are all his brothers or friends. Also,

They devour the marlin's precious meat, leaving only the skeleton. He arrives home before daybreak, goes wearily to his hut and sleeps deeply. The next morning, a crowd of fishermen gathers around the carcass of the fish, which is still lashed to the boat. Though they admire it, for the nearby tourists, the skeleton is mere garbage. Manolin and Santiago agree to fish as partners once more.

11.4. Analysis

Santiago is humble, yet exhibits a justified pride in his abilities. He preserves a sense of hope regardless of circumstance. His life, has been full of tests of his strength and endurance. The struggle with the fish is his greatest challenge and though he loses the fish, the struggle itself is his victory.

The tug-of-war between Santiago and the fish often seems more like an alliance than a struggle. The fishing line serves as a symbol of a fraternal connection Santiago feels with the fish. As he eats, Santiago even feels a brotherly desire to feed the marlin too. When the captured marlin is later destroyed by sharks, Santiago feels destroyed as well.

The baseball player DiMaggio is a symbol of strength and commitment as he continued to play despite adversity. Santiago thinks of DiMaggio whenever he needs to reassure himself of his own capacity to struggle and overcome.

At one level, the tale as a chronicle of man's battle against the natural world, but it is also a story of man's place within nature. Santiago and the marlin both display several similar qualities and are subject to the same law of kill or be killed. No living thing can escape the inevitable struggle that will lead to its death. Death is inevitable, but the best beings will not give up without a struggle, they will not go gently into that good night.

It is precisely through the effort to oppose the inevitable and the status of his antagonists that a man can prove himself. Santiago's admiration for his opponent brings love and respect into an equation with death. The marlin is the ideal opponent. In a world in which everything kills everything else in some way, Santiago feels genuinely lucky to find himself matched against a creature that brings out the best in him. Neither the Marlin, though dead nor Santiago though robbed of his trophy by the sharks are finally defeated, they are heroic precisely because their struggle was heroic. The sharks as opponents stand in bold contrast to the marlin, which is worthy of Santiago's struggle. They symbolize the destructive laws of the universe.

Ironically Santiago also recognizes his transgression of boundaries which leads to the death of the Marlin out of which he does not even make actual profit. He himself admits: "I went out too far" and this is both his glory and his mistake. Santiago is not condemned for pride, indeed he stands as proof that pride motivates men to greatness. Santiago acknowledges that he killed the mighty marlin largely out of pride, and because his capture of

The marlin leads in turn to his heroic struggle and victory beyond defeat, pride is the source of his strength. Without pride, that battle would never have been fought to the inevitable end.

Hemingway seems to suggest that victory is not necessary concomitant of honor. The Marlin has not disgraced itself though it is finally defeated. Santiago returns without a trophy, he was only the skeleton of his catch, but he is not defeated. Honor depends upon seeing a struggle through to its end, regardless of the outcome. Santiago's credit comes not from his battle itself but from his pride and determination to fight. The conscious decision to act, to fight, to never give up, enables Santiago to avoid defeat. Though he loses his tangible trophy, he returns with the knowledge that he has behaved manfully.

Death is the unavoidable force; but Hemingway suggests that death is never an end in itself; in death itself there is always the possibility of life. Not only is Santiago reenergized by the battle, but the fish itself is described by Hemingway as having a kind of life in death. Life, with its possibility of renewal, closely follows death. The suggestion is that the world, though designed to bring about death, is also a vast, interconnected network of life.

Santiago has a symbolic dream of lions at play on the beaches of Africa three times. The first time is the night before he departs on his fishing expedition, the second when he sleeps in the middle of his struggle with the marlin, and the third takes place at the very end of the book. The final image of the lions suggests the central idea of regeneration. Dreaming about the lions each night provides Santiago with a link to his younger days, as well as the strength and idealism that are associated with youth.

Santiago is basically an outsider; an alienated, almost ostracized figure. Such an alienated position is characteristic of Hemingway's heroes, whose greatest achievements depend, in large part, upon their isolation. In a way Santiago's isolation indicates his distance from ordinary humans and endeavors. Santiago's endurance is a recurrent and symbolic theme. Although Santiago's physical luxuries are minimal, it is not strange that he wins an outwardly physical struggle as the terms of the struggle are gradually revealed as mental and symbolically spiritual too. Santiago recognizes that his strength lies in his irresolution. This resolve allows him to keep on fishing, despite his age, despite the loss of his apprentice and despite the fact that he has not caught anything for eighty four days. When he eventually hooks the fish, it is his resolve that keeps him holding on to it, regardless of his fatigue. He is prepared to keep fighting the fish until it kills him or vice versa.

Santiago is not just a fisherman; he is a philosopher hero who displays a rare determination to understand the universe, as is evident when he meditates that the sea is beautiful and benevolent, but also cruel. His meditations on the Marlin are also philosophical. The brotherhood between Santiago and the surrounding world is significant. The old man feels an intimate connection to the great fish, as well as to the birds and even to the sea and the stars. Hemingway spends a good deal of time drawing connections between Santiago and his natural environment the fish, birds, and stars are all his brothers or friends. Also,

apparently contradictory elements are repeatedly shown as aspects of one unified whole. the sea is both kind and cruel, feminine and masculine.

The struggle is actually a moral one; the material prize is of secondary importance. Triumph over crushing adversity is the heart of heroism, and in order for Santiago the fisherman to be a heroic emblem for humankind, his tribulations must be monumental. Triumph, though, is never final, as Santiago's successful slaying of the marlin shows. Santiago constantly reiterates a statement of his sentiment of brotherhood to the marlin. The fish's death is not portrayed as senselessly tragic. Santiago, and seemingly Hemingway, feels that since death *must* come in the world, it should be dealt by a worthy opponent. Although they are opponents, Santiago and the marlin are also partners, allies, and, in a sense, doubles.

Rules and rituals dominate the rest of the old man's life as well. When he is not thinking about fishing, his mind turns to religion or baseball. Even though Santiago doesn't consider himself a religious man, it is during his struggle with the marlin that the book becomes strongly suggestive of a Christian parable. As Santiago declares that he is not a religious man, his prayers seem less an appeal to a supernatural divinity and more a habit that orders and provides a context for his daily experience. Also, Santiago's worship of Joe DiMaggio, and his constant comparisons between the baseball great and himself, suggests his preference for worlds in which men are measured by a clear set of standards. The novel depicts a world in which women have no real place; even the picture of Santiago's wife no longer remains on his wall. Men are the central focus of most of Hemingway's writing and certainly of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Santiago is convinced that his adversary is, as he continually notes, a male. Hemingway's ideal of manhood is nearly inseparable from the ideal of heroism. To be a man is to behave with honor and dignity: to not succumb to suffering, to accept one's duty without complaint, and most importantly, to display a maximum of self-control. The representation of femininity, the sea, is characterized expressly by its caprice and lack of self-control.

It is possible to interpret Santiago's journey as a cautionary parable about the dangers of pride. However, an alternative and stronger interpretation is suggested by the fact that Santiago fulfils himself only by going beyond normal bounds. Some have interpreted the loss of the marlin as the price Santiago had to pay for his pride in traveling out so far in search of such a catch. Contrarily, one could argue that this pride was beneficial as it allowed Santiago an edifying challenge worthy of his heroism. In the end, Hemingway suggests that pride in a job well done, even if pride drew one unnecessarily into the situation, is a positive trait.

Santiago is one of Hemingway's typical male heroes whose courage and dignity in the face of adversity provide an ideal for mankind. Santiago is, however, different from earlier code heroes in that he is the first to be shown as an old man. This is possibly a reflection of the stage of Hemingway's life and career in *The Old Man and the Sea* was his last major work and written following a period in which he had written little that was well

received. Many critics have suggested that Santiago's struggle mirrors Hemingway's own in that the writer's dry spell was the equivalent of the fisherman's eighty-four days. The fantastical final stage of the old man's fight with the fish brings two thematic issues to the fore. The first concerns man's place in nature, the second concerns nature itself. Santiago finds the place where he is most completely, honestly, and fully himself only by sailing out farther than he ever has before. Indeed, Santiago has not *left* his true place; he has *found* it, which suggests that man's greatest potential can be found in his return to the natural world from which modern advancements have driven him.

Christian symbolism, especially images that refer to the crucifixion of Christ, is present throughout *The Old Man and the Sea*. During the old man's battle with the marlin his palms are cut by his fishing cable. Given Santiago's suffering and willingness to sacrifice his life, the wounds are suggestive of Christ's wounds, and Hemingway goes on to portray the old man as a Christ-like martyr. And the old man's struggle up the hill to his village with his mast across his shoulders is evocative of Christ's march toward Calvary. Even the position in which Santiago collapses on his bed—he lies face down with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up—brings to mind the image of Christ on the cross. Hemingway employs these images in order to link Santiago to Christ, who exemplified transcendence by turning loss into gain, defeat into triumph, and even death into life.

Hemingway draws a distinction between two different types of success: outer, material success and inner, spiritual success. While Santiago clearly lacks the former, the import of this lack is eclipsed by his possession of the latter. Santiago is a complex, multifaceted character. He is humble and unpretentious. His simple life and recent lack of success mean that he has nothing. Yet at the same time he has the courage to continue to dream. He sets off on a quest in which he is willing to go far beyond the limits of younger, more successful fishermen and to test his physical and mental endurance to the very limits.

Santiago's obsession with valorizing his opponent seems to be a far cry from our common idea that one must devalue or dehumanize that which we kill. To view a victim as an equal is supposed to render killing it a sin, and make oneself susceptible to death: the rule usually is that if you don't want to die you should not kill others. Santiago defies this reasoning, though he accepts the consequences of its logic of equality. Instead of trying to de-grade his object, he elevates it, accepting with it the equalizing proposition that his death is as worthy an outcome of the struggle as his opponent's death. He is only worthy to kill the opponent if he is worthy to be killed by him: two sides of the same coin.

Knowing to suffer and to endure is an essentially noble quality in Hemingway's world view. The old man's battle with the fish is marked by supreme pain and suffering, but he lives in a world in which extreme pain can be a source of triumph rather than defeat. The key to Santiago's triumph is partly sheer endurance, a quality that the old man knows and values. Santiago repeatedly reminds himself that physical pain does not or at least *should* not matter to a man, and he urges himself to keep his head clear and to know how to suffer

like a man. Hope is shown to be a necessary component of endurance, so much so that the story seems to suggest that endurance can be found wherever pain and hope meet. It is not just silly not to hope; it is even a sin.

The simplicity of Santiago's house develops our view of Santiago as materially unsuccessful. It is interesting, though, that Hemingway draws attention to the relics of Santiago's wife in his house, presenting an aspect of Santiago which is otherwise absent throughout the novel. This is significant because it suggests a certain completeness to Santiago's character which makes him more of an Everyman. There is, as there always is with Hemingway, a premium placed on masculinity and the obligations of manhood. The female tourist at the end of the book represents the feminine incapacity to appreciate Santiago's masculine quest. For her, the marlin skeleton, a phallic symbol, is just garbage waiting to go out to out with the tide.

Although Santiago's great adventure takes place while he is completely alone, he feels the need to return to the company of others. Santiago's loneliness highlights the value/necessity of community. Suffering is both common and unavoidable throughout the story. The conclusion is that being true to yourself and your destiny will bring inevitable suffering. But though Santiago comes ashore with only the skeleton of his fish, but he has not truly been defeated. He has achieved a spiritual victory, something far more meaningful than having marlin meat to bring to market. Against great odds and in spite of intense personal suffering, he conquered the fish itself and survived the grueling three days on the sea. There may be nothing to sell, but the massive skeleton itself stands as proof of his heroic accomplishment.

A heroic and manly life in Hemingway's terms is not one of inner peace and self-sufficiency; it requires constant demonstration of one's worthiness through noble action. The close of the novel sees Santiago seemingly defeated as he is suffering exhaustion, his hands and back are injured and his great fish is just a skeleton, ravaged by sharks and left to be taken out to sea by the tide. Yet he has gained as he has proven he is still able to catch a fish and has gained the respect of the other fishermen. They are awed not just by the size of the fish, the biggest they have ever seen, but that Santiago has managed to land it unaided. He has also gained companionship.

11.5. Criticism

It is, in fact, quite telling that Hemingway titled the novella *The Old Man and the Sea*, rather than *The Old Man and the Fish*. This suggests that the sea, the purest form of nature in the book, is Santiago's real enemy. The tale could not be more simple; One man, One fish, One sea. Hemingway shows his mastery of the English language with short, simple language that is easily absorbed and planted in the reader's mind. The simplicity of the language is also fitting with the main character, who is a simple fisherman who's seen better years. The old man is believable, and his struggles translate across the cultural and class differences to resonate strongly with readers today. The themes of man's will to

survive, his perseverance to achieve an almost impossible goal, and the noble contest of nature, can apply to almost any reader.

The old man has a love and respect for the sea not felt by the other fishermen. He calls her *la mar* a feminine form, full of love, whereas the younger men call her by the masculine *el mar*, seeing her as an opposing force to be conquered. The sea keeps him company by healing his wounded hands and bringing him safely home. Yet, at the same time, he battles the sea. It provides shelter for his adversary, the fish. To successfully catch the fish and get it home, he must do battle with sea and its inhabitants. In the end it is the creatures of the sea, the sharks, that deprive Santiago of complete victory. *ñ* Jeremiah Gould.

Despite Hemingway's express admonition against interpretation, *The Old Man and the Sea* has been a favorite subject of literary criticism throughout the half-century since it was published. As the enduring interest in the text might indicate, there are a variety of different readings of the novella. It has, for instance, been read as a Christian allegory, a Nietzschean parable of overcoming, a Freudian dream of oedipal wish-fulfillment, and a Humanistic saga of triumph in the face of absurdity. Santiago's concerns about his own worthiness come to a head when he finally beholds the fish he is tracking. When Santiago finally catches a glimpse of the great marlin, he imagines he is in some sort of aristocratic feud, with each participant needing to demonstrate his prowess to the other before the fight. Not, though, to intimidate the opponent, but rather to demonstrate his own status, to show the other that he is a worthy antagonist.

One might read the statement of fate as an expression of Santiago's own place in a symbolic story about the writing process itself. Santiago, a product of Hemingway's authorial imagination, was born to play the role he has in the narrative. In this way, the character's succumbing to fate is a comment on the creative process by which the author controls the destiny of his or her characters.

Santiago never thought about the past and always needed to prove himself as each new situation arose, as a broader statement about nobility, Hemingway's concept of nobility is not really a quality of character but of actions. As with the necessity of having one's worthiness recognized by others, this alienation of nobility from the person to his deeds complicates Hemingway's internal standard of manhood. In the end, we might still ask, whether Santiago's victory over the fish amounted to a triumph for humanity or a miscarriage of justice, in which an ignoble human brute defeats the sea's paragon of nobility. *ñ* Barbara Garrison.

War was for Hemingway a potent symbol of the world, which he viewed as complex, filled with moral ambiguities, and offering almost unavoidable pain, hurt, and destruction. To survive in such a world, and perhaps emerge victorious, one must conduct oneself with honor, courage, endurance, and dignity. To behave well in the lonely, losing battle with life is to show grace under pressure and constitutes in itself a kind of victory. This theme is

clearly established in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The respectful, even intimate, rivalry between Santiago and the great fish is an excellent example of the one-on-one competition that Hemingway viewed as heroic, graceful, and sometimes beautiful. ¶ Jim Auer.

¶ Biblical imagery literally abounds in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The name Santiago itself is a biblical allusion. Donald Heiney informs us that Santiago is simply the Spanish form of Saint James, and James like Peter was a fisherman-apostle in the New Testament. Santiago's battle with the fish produces myriad biblical images, and while the most obvious are Santiago-as-Christ, others exist as well.

While not always as frequent in the novel as biblical imagery, we can see through Santiago's treatment of other creatures, especially the marlin, how images of natural harmony figure into *The Old Man and the Sea*. Throughout the novel, Santiago enters into an increasingly intimate bond with the creatures of Nature. From the playful porpoises, to the small warbler resting on his line, to ultimately the marlin, the old man shows a blossoming affection for life. A sense of brotherhood and love, in a world in which everyone is killing or being killed, binds together the creatures of Nature, establishes between them a unity and an emotion which transcends the destructive pattern in which they are caught. Santiago, like the other creatures of the sea, must kill or be killed. Because he is joined literally to the marlin through the fishing line, his struggle indelibly joins the two in spirit. His efforts to kill the marlin or be killed by him form a bond of spiritual brotherhood between the old man and the fish. Santiago's spiritual bonding with the fish during their struggle represents an important image of natural harmony in the novel. ¶ Sean Donnell.

¶ For Hemingway, man is born into a completely naturalistic and totally indifferent universe: a universe without supernatural sanction, and thus without purpose, order, meaning, or value. The text focuses on man's confrontation with the absence of God, the indifference and seeming hostility of the universe, and thus with the absence of purpose, order, meaning, and value in the universe and in human life. In a universe without purpose, order, meaning, or value, man is a victim of the irrational and often hostile workings of chance and accident, which often bring about gratuitous pain, destruction, loss, and death. The Hemingway hero must reject all traditional, socially sanctioned explanations of the universe and the value assumptions based upon them as false and misleading. For Hemingway, since there are no divinely sanctioned absolute values, a thing, an experience, or an activity is valuable to the extent that it gives one a measure of immediate physical pleasure (good food, drink, sex, etc.); heightened emotional intensity (love, risk, danger, art, conquest, etc.); or to the extent that it helps one develop and/or reaffirm a realistically based self-control, and thus gives a measure of purpose, order, and ultimately, dignity to one's behavior and to one's life. Such values are *immediate* and *practical* in two senses: first, because they do give one pleasure, intensity, and self-control; and second, because such values have no significance beyond the pleasure, intensity, and self-control they give.

While man has no control over his ultimate fate in a chaotic universe, nor does he have control over the vicissitudes of chance, accident, and destruction of which he is a victim, he can control the manner in which he confronts his fate and the manner in which he

responds to the vicissitudes of chance, accident, and destruction. Hemingway's work embodies a code of conduct in terms of which, though a man may be victimized and, finally, destroyed, he may yet remain undefeated by refusing to yield in the face of his victimization, and by confronting his sense of destruction and death with honor, on his own terms. In this sense, as Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* says, 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated.' — Philip Young.

Given the choices of half empty or half full, the contents of such works as *The Old Man and the Sea*, where a man goes out and returns empty-handed, is categorized as depressing or tragic when the character and plot show more of the naked realities than tragic horrors. By going out into the sea, Santiago finds virtue in primitive nature. If survival in nature is the highest form of virtue, then the fish is virtuous for its age. Similarly, Santiago certainly proves his primitive virtue merely by surviving the trip and by returning alive. If virtue in nature is simply existence and man is more peaceable when he is surrounded by nature and a part of it, then Santiago's trip proves that man, who is born in nature, must have innate virtue.

The question remains whether Santiago should be considered defeated. The basic conflict of this book would have to be that of man against nature, and nature's victory is typical with Hemingway. But when Santiago's character is stripped to its primitive state, he shows the virtue that comes with survival in this state. — Jon Blackstock.

11.6. Sample Questions :

1. The Old Man and the Sea is the story of an epic struggle between an old fisherman and the greatest catch of his life — examine.
2. Images of natural harmony figure in The Old Man and the Sea — examine.
3. Hemingway is a masterful user of images that convey disastrous developments — examine.

11.7. Suggested Readings :

1. Carlos Baker : Hemingway : The Writer as artist. 1956.
2. Carlos Baker.ed Ernest Hemingway Critique of four major Novels. 1962.
3. Philip Young. Ernest Hemingway . 1952.

Lesson Writer

Prof. Sindu Meenam

12. "Home Burial" and "Birches".

- Robert Frost.

Contents:

- 12.1. Biography
 - 12.2. Introduction
 - 12.3. "Home Burial" – Paraphrase
 - 12.4. Criticism
 - 12.5. "Birches" – Paraphrase
 - 12.6. Analysis
 - 12.7. Criticism
 - 12.8. Sample Questions
- ### 12. 1. Biography.

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, California on March 26, 1874. After the death of his father, a journalist, when he was eleven years old, Frost moved with his mother and sister to eastern Massachusetts to stay near his paternal grandparents. Frost wrote his first poems while a student at Lawrence High School. Though he joined Dartmouth College, he left after a term and tried his hand at several jobs. In 1894 the *New York Independent* published Frost's poem "My Butterfly" and he had five poems privately printed. He married Elinor Miriam White in December 1895. In 1897 Frost entered Harvard College as a special student, remaining there just short of two years. He also worked as a teacher and continued to publish his poems in magazines. In October 1900, Frost settled with his family on a farm in New Hampshire and stayed there for nine years. Farming was not very successful, and by 1906 Frost began teaching English at a secondary school in New Hampshire. He and Elinor produced six children, two of whom died in infancy. In 1912 Frost sold the farm and sailed with his family to England. There he published his first collection of poems, *A Boy's Will* in 1913 and *North of Boston* (which contained "Home Burial") in 1914. Frost returned to America in 1915 and purchased a farm near Franconia in New Hampshire. A third volume of verse, *Mountain Interval* (which contained "Birches") was published in 1916. He later worked as a teacher at Amherst and Dartmouth Colleges and the University of Michigan. In 1924, Frost won the Pulitzer Prize for *New Hampshire*. *West-Running Brook* appeared in 1928 and was followed by *A Further Range* in 1936, which also won a Pulitzer. While his professional fame was increasing, Frost suffered several personal tragedies. His wife died in 1938 and he lost four of his children. One of his sons had committed suicide and a daughter had to be institutionalized for mental disorders. Still, he produced a significant work in *The Witness Tree* a collection published in 1942. *Steeple Bush* appeared in 1947. In 1957, Frost re-

ceived honorary degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge. He died from a severe heart attack on January 29, 1963.

12. 2. Introduction.

Frost claimed that that the highest goal of the poet was "to lodge a few poems where they will be hard to get rid of", and it was a goal he certainly achieved. He had obtained almost iconic status in America towards the end of his career and till today, remains one of the few poets who do not only figure on academic syllabuses but are genuinely enjoyed by people. Frost's own formulation is helpful in thinking about his achievement: "We write of things we see and we write in accents we hear. Thus we gather both our material and our technique with the imagination from life; and our technique becomes as much material as material itself." Ezra Pound's comment on *North of Boston* sums up Frost's achievement well: "I know more of farm life than I did before I had read his poems. That means I know more of 'Life'". Both the down to earth nature suggested by "farm life" and the philosophical bend indicated by "Life" are essential and interlinked parts of Frost's poetic vision.

12. 3. "Home Burial" – Paraphrase.

"Home Burial" is an intense dramatic lyric depicting a conversation between a couple who have just lost their only child. The dialogue is extremely tense and we see that the relationship is being strained to its very limits. In "Home Burial," the couple are trapped inside the house, which is described as a kind of prison, or perhaps more aptly, a mental hospital. Even the wife's glance out the window can suggest to the husband the desperation she feels within the confines of what has always been his family's "home"; it looks directly on the family graveyard which now holds the body of their recently dead child. Out of some terrible fastidiousness she seems to want to abridge even what is left of their relationship, while he, because of love, and some incipient pride of place in the community, is doing his best to maintain some sort of contact.

The woman is distraught after catching sight of the child's grave through the window and she resents her husband's supposed inability to share in and comprehend her grief. He on the other hand finds it impossible to express himself in the same way she does. The result is complete misunderstanding and we learn that she has been in the habit of shutting him out and going to share her sorrow with someone else. She attempts to leave the house again and he desperately tries to persuade her to stay, to give him a chance of sharing her feelings. He has tried to conceal his grief and she interprets this as hardness. She does not respond to his appeal and turns to leave after cruel and ultimately self defeating remarks have been uttered on both sides. But as she turns to go, in his assertion that he will bring her back, there is some trace of a need for each other that the two share.

Analysis.

"Home Burial" is about loss and grief, but it is even more concerned about the breakdown and limits of communication. The child's death though the crucial incident is not the

central tragedy, that relates to the disintegration of a marriage almost severely because of misunderstandings and false perceptions.

The wife and the husband threw themselves into the situation after the child's death in very different ways. With her desire to stop everything in the interest of mourning the death of an infant, she cannot understand his apparent incapacity to mourn at all and his choosing to talk, instead, of everyday concerns. She does not see that this is his only way of managing grief, of not letting it consume his or her life. Besides being a moving and powerful human drama, "Home Burial" is about the limits, as revealed through the consciousness of these two unique people, of "home" as a place, a form, a mode of discourse in which often unmanageably extreme states of feeling occur. The wife is in the process of leaving the house, crossing the threshold from marital asylum into freedom. The house is suffocating her. The house itself is a correlative for the sexual tension generated by the man's preoccupation with his marital rights and the woman's rejection of them.

The wife dwelled on her grief and bitterly thought about the fickleness of relationships which go no further than the grave. In her very minor, localized way, she is articulating a challenge, impressive if futile in its cosmic proportions: "I won't have grief so/ If I can change it." The husband, on the other hand, reacts in what would be called a macho fashion; he shuts out his sorrow and tries to bury himself in mundane affairs and strenuous physical work. His wife is particularly shocked when he comes in after digging the child's grave and says: "Three foggy mornings and one rainy day/ Will rot the best birch fence a man can build". She interprets this as the height of callousness and is too taken up with her own feelings to see that this is his version of a defense mechanism, just as retreat from the world was hers. He too fails as he refuses to confront his genuine grief; he made the mistake of assuming that grief would go away if he did not acknowledge its existence. As a result, he is unable to express his feelings even when he genuinely wants to and finds that all he has succeeded in doing is to very successfully paint a picture of himself as an insensitive brute with no feelings.

However, the purpose of the poem isn't really to determine the right way to grieve. Obviously there is no one correct way. Frost is more concerned with portraying a breakdown of communication and understanding. Tragically, both the protagonists fail to alter even slightly their own form of grief in order to accommodate the other's viewpoint. The way they keep on pushing each other further and further apart is painful. The husband does try to reach out to his wife, but he seems to have left it too late. Nearly all his actions have worked overtime in conjunction with her fevered imagination and have created such a wide chasm between the two of them that it seems almost impossible to bridge. He had earlier refused to talk about his feelings, and now when he wants to talk, neither can he find the words nor is she willing to listen. His expression of frustrated communication: "Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?" which is repeated three times in the poem is pathetic.

The husband's comments after digging the grave can be interpreted at a metaphorical level, as his indirect way of talking about their loss. His words, from that perspective

have everything to do with the child's dead body. He is talking about death, about the futility of human effort, about fortune and misfortune, about the unfairness of fate and nature. However, the wife is not willing to accept indirect sentiments and chooses to take his statements literally and clearly, and from such a viewpoint they naturally appear as cruelly inappropriate and intrusive.

The husband also had made the fatal mistake of not attempting to clarify his meanings. His wife's need for sympathy must have been pathetically evident, but he chose to regard it as so much temporary hysteria, which she would get over in time. But this meant that when he did find out that damage control measures were necessary, the situation had got out of hand. Even now, despite the fact that her grief has proved persistent if nothing else, he cannot bring himself to accept it as something quite valid; he clings to a belief in its somehow excessive nature. As a result, he cannot at the most inappropriate juncture avoid the completely unnecessary, even if considered as true, statement: "I do think, though, you overdo it a little".

He keeps on with irony and veiled admissions even now when perhaps an honest, even "feminine" avowal of feeling could break through the walls she has erected. Part of the problem is this very clash between what is considered as "feminine" and as "masculine". The two function as polar opposites, not complementing but striking against each other. The failure of communication is partly due to the preconceived notion of the two as mutually exclusive areas of perception, emotion and expression. The dilemma is articulated when the husband says: "A man must partly give up being a man/ With women-folk". The gender dimension is also reflected in the husband's desperate though clearly futile threats of violence- the more the situation demands subtlety, the more hamhandedly he seems to handle it. It almost seems as if he would like to *force* her into sharing her feelings, clearly an impossible task. She reacts with revulsion and increases the rift between them.

Apart from the personal note, Frost also suggests the inescapable frontiers of all communication. A great deal of Frost's poetry deals with an essential loneliness, which is linked to the limits of empathy and the sense that some things are simply inexpressible.

12. 4. Criticism.

"The poem's first sentence, "He saw her from the bottom of the stairs / Before she saw him," implies what the poem very soon states: that, knowing herself seen, she would have acted differently—she has two sorts of behavior, behavior for him to observe and spontaneous immediate behavior. The poem continues: "He said to gain time"—to gain time in which to think of the next thing to say, to gain time in which to get close to her and gain the advantage of his physical nearness, his physical bulk. What he says twice over (this is the third time already that he has repeated something) is a rhetorical question, a querulous, plaintive appeal to public opinion: "Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?" He does not say specifically, particularly, with confidence in himself: "I've the right to speak of our

dead child"; instead he cites the acknowledged fact that any member of the class *man* has the acknowledged right to mention, just to mention, that member of the class of his belongings, *his own child*—and he has been unjustly deprived of this right. "His own child he's lost" is a way of saying: "You act as if he were just yours, but he's just as much just mine; that's an established fact." His "Amy! Don't go to someone else this time" of course tell us that another time she *has* gone to someone else; and it tells us the particular name of this most particular woman, something that she and the poem never tell us about the man. Her interruption, "There you go sneering now!" implies that he has often before done what she calls "sneering" at her and her excessive sensitivity; and, conscious of how hard he has been trying to make peace, and unconscious of how much his words have gone over into attack, he contradicts her like a child, in righteous anger: "I'm not, I'm not!". He has said that it is an awful thing not to be permitted to speak of his own dead child; she replies that it is not a question of permission but of ability that he is too ignorant and insensitive to be *able* to speak of his child. She opens herself up, now—is far closer to him, striking at him with her words, than she has been sitting apart, in her place. His open attack has finally elicited from her, by contagion, her open anger, so that now he is something real and unbearable to attack, instead of being something less than human to be disregarded. His "God, if I don't believe I'm cursed" is akin to his earner "God, what a woman!"—both have something of the male's outraged, incredulous, despairing response to the unreasonableness and immorality of the female. He responds hardly at all to the exact situation; instead he demands sympathy for, sympathizes with himself for, the impossibly unlucky pigeonhole into which Fate has dropped him. Appropriately, his last line is one more rhetorical announcement of what he is going to do: he will follow and bring her back by force; and, appropriately, he ends the poem with one more repetition—he repeats: "I will!" – Randall Jarrell.

"Sexuality in Frost has been noted, when at all, with a kind of surprise. And yet in a very great number of his poems it figures, as it does here, as a submerged metaphor for his all-consuming interest in the *relational* and *transitional* nature of poetry, of thinking, of talking itself. The husband and wife here cannot "ask" anything of one another or "tell" anything without giving offense partly because they both are flawed in their sense of time and of timing. But if the limits are sad and terrifying, Frost seems nonetheless sure of their necessity". - Richard Porrier.

"Home Burial" may not be as popular as "Mending Wall" and "The Death of the Hired Man," but it is Frost's most critically acclaimed and intensively analyzed narrative. Again, Frost deals with barriers between people—in this case a husband and wife who have recently lost their first child and who handle their grief in strikingly different ways—according to their characters and expressive capacities. In the initial action the wife moves away from the husband and he pursues her with hesitating dominance, but her continued withdrawal is partly a provocation, which helps account for his protest that he's not allowed to grieve in his own way. Her desire for air and her explanation that perhaps his reaction is just masculine show that her criticism may not be strictly personal." – M. Marcus.

"Home Burial," in its committing to earth the proof of a couple's sexual love, predicts a pattern of imagery, rich and ambivalent, that throughout Frost's poetry relates earth both to sexuality and to death. The grave, with its natural and domestic correlates, becomes a remarkably potent conflation of the point at which desire and death merge into inextricable ecstasy and despair". – Katherine Kearns.

"Interestingly, a central source of friction between the couple is the divergence between their self-conceptions, expressed in their different attitudes toward grief; while he mourns inwardly, she affirms the necessity of its outward expression. Frost understands the psychic weight carried by the threat of physical violence embodied here by the husband, and he is deeply sensitive to the wife's vulnerability. If masculinity requires bodily supremacy, it also collides, however unwittingly, with psychological dominance. Yet the consequence of this dominance seems to be only greater alienation, sexual as well as emotional. In "Home Burial" we are left a capacious space in which to imagine the transformation of a prior intimacy into an utter fracture of relationship. Working against the stereotype of the nostalgic regionalist idyll, Frost is especially critical of representations of home as merely a source of renewal and refuge. The husband's words that conclude the poem—"I'll follow and bring you back by force. I will!"—represents both desperate plea and the final, overt expression of the menace that has underscored his speech throughout the poem. Structurally as well as semantically, the poem enacts the enclosure of the feminine self and feminine speech; to read this last line as merely desperate is seriously to underread the danger that the husband poses. Echoing the voice of cultural authority, he becomes both judge and author of his wife's fate: house arrest." – Karen L. Kilcup.

12.5. "Birches" – Paraphrase.

"Birches" is a deceptively simple lyric with considerable connotations. First published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in August 1915, *Birches* was later included in the *Mountain Interval* volume. In the opening part of "Birches", Frost writes about bent birch trees that he sees among straighter, darker trees. As he sees them, he begins to imagine that a boy has bent them by swinging on them in play. He imagines the boy swinging on them, slipping into a daydream for awhile. However, he quickly comes to his senses and knows that it is not the boy, but the "ice-storms" that were actually responsible for the bent trees. Frost proceeds to give a vivid description of the trees. Then his fantasy world is abruptly cut off as he slips into logic. As he spoke of the natural process of how birches are bent with ice storms, he realizes the logical explanation. He wants to believe that it was a boy who bent the birches, but he knows ... was the storm. Then Frost turns to picturing the boy who he imagined had bent the birches. This boy was going to fetch his father's cows but decided to play on the birches. He lives so deep in the rural area, that he has only his imaginary games for amusement. This birch swinging was a favourite pastime and he had swung on all the trees. Afterwards, Frost reveals that he too once was a "swinger of birches". This can be taken in a literal sense as we know about Frost's rural childhood. But when he goes on to say that he dreams of going back to be a swinger of birches, then we have to bring in the metaphorical dimen-

sion. Frost talks of the "pathless woods" which stand for the unknown critical decisions and responsibilities of life that arrive as one enters into adulthood. At such moments, he would like to get away from earth by swinging high into the air on the birches. However, he only wants to leave earth for a while, he does not want to be taken away for ever. "Earth's the right place for love" and he always wants to come back here. But just on occasions and for short intervals when life gets to be too taxing, "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches".

12. 6. Analysis.

The basic desire in "Birches" is that of temporary escape from the world. Frost likens birch swinging to getting "away from the earth awhile" and then coming back. However, this is no coward escapism, he wants to "get away from earth awhile/ And then *come back* to it and begin over." If climbing trees is a move toward transcendence, then complete transcendence means never to come back down. Frost is especially particular that divine powers should not misinterpret his wish: "May no fate willfully misunderstand me/And half grant what I wish and snatch me away/Not to return." Despite the bleak picture of life drawn in the images of "pathless ways" and "cobwebs" and being "weary of considerations", Frost wants to return. He is not ready for capitulation and asks only for temporary respite so that he can face the struggle with renewed zeal.

The title is "Birches," but the main action is birch "swinging." And the theme of poem seems to be related to the motion of swinging; between the pull of opposite forces- truth and imagination, earth and heaven, flight and return. The constant state being here and elsewhere suggested by swinging clearly appeals to Frost - to be in the world, but not so much that one loses focus. Frost rejects the self-delusional extreme of imaginative escapism, and he reinforces his ties to the earth- "the right place for love."

There is a good deal of sensual imagery in the poem and sexual overtones have also been detected. There has been a school of interpretation of "Birches" to the effect that it is a work of erotic fantasy. At any rate, the sexual connotations of tree climbing and bending the trees cannot be overlooked.

Truth and Imagination clash in this poem- the poet was having a lovely daydream when "Truth broke in with all her matter of fact about ice storms." But Frost reveals the rare ability to look steadily on truth and yet not discard the pleasures of the fancy completely. He "knows" the truth, but he prefers to indulge his imagination and this conscious selection makes the aware choice acceptable in a way a deluded one would not have been.

12. 7. Criticism.

"In 'Birches', Frost begins to probe the power of his redemptive imagination as it moves from its playful phase toward the brink of dangerous transcendence. The movement into transcendence is a movement into a realm of radical imaginative freedom where all possibilities of engagement with the common realities of experience are dissolved. In its moderation, a redemptive consciousness motivates union between selves. But in its ex-

treme forms, redemptive consciousness can become self-defeating as it presses the imaginative man into deepest isolation. The pliable, malleable quality of the birch tree captures the poet's attention and kicks off his meditation. Perhaps young boys don't bend birches down to stay, but swing them they do and thus bend them momentarily. Those "straighter, darker trees," stand ominously free from human manipulation, menacing in their irresponsiveness to acts of the will. The malleability of the birches is not total, however, and the poet is forced to admit this fact into the presence of his desire, like it or not. The ultimate shape of mature birch trees is the work of objective natural force, not human activity. Yet after conceding the boundaries of imagination's subjective world, the poet seems not to have constricted himself but to have been released. The shrewdness in Frost's strategy now surfaces. While claiming to have paid homage to the rigid standards of empirical truth in his digression on the ice-loaded branches, what he has actually done is to digress into the language of fictions. When he turns to the desired vision of the young boy swinging birches, he is not, as he says, turning from truth to fiction, but from one kind of fiction to another kind of fiction: from the fiction of cosmic change and humanized nature to the fiction of the human will riding roughshod over a pliable external world. As he evokes the image of the boy, playing in isolation, too far from the community to engage in a team kind of sport, he evokes, as well, his cherished theme of the imaginative man who, essentially alone in the world, either makes it or doesn't on the strength of his creative resources. For anyone but Frost the "pathless wood" is trite. But for him it carries a complex of meaning fashioned elsewhere. The upward swinging of the boy becomes an emblem for imagination's swing away from the tangled, dark wood; a swing away from the "straighter, darker trees"; a swing into the absolute freedom of isolation, the severing of all "considerations." This is the transcendental phase of redemptive consciousness, a game that one plays alone. The downward movement of redemptive imagination to earth, contrarily, is a movement into social reality. At the end of "Birches" a precious balance has been restored between the claims of a redeeming imagination in its extreme, transcendent form, and the claims of common sense reality. To put it in another way, the psychic needs of change—supplied best by redemptive imagination—are balanced by the equally deep psychic need—supplied by skeptical ironic awareness—for the therapy of dull realities and everyday considerations." — Frank Lentricchia.

"The philosophy articulated in "Birches" poses no threat to popular values or beliefs, and it is so appealingly affirmative that many readers have treasured the poem as a masterpiece. Among Frost's most celebrated works, perhaps only "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" ranks ahead of it. Unlike the meditative lyrics Frost selected for *North of Boston*, however, "Birches" does not present a central dramatized event as a stimulus for the speaker's utterance. Although the conclusion seems sincere, and although Frost created a persuasive metaphorical context for it, the final sentiments do not grow dramatically out of the experiences alluded to. It may seem arbitrary to press too hard the issue of honesty in this poem. Art, after all, relies on fantasy and deception." — John C. Kemp.

"The discursive blank-verse meditation "Birches" does not center on a continuously encountered and revealing nature scene; rather, it builds a mosaic of thoughts from frag-

ments of memory and fantasy. Its vividness and genial, bittersweet speculation help make it one of Frost's most popular poems, and because its shifts of metaphor and tone invite varying interpretation it has also received much critical discussion, not always admiring. The poem moves back and forth between two visual perspectives: birch trees as bent by boys' playful swinging and by ice storms, the thematic interweaving being somewhat puzzling. The birches bent "across the lines of straighter darker trees" subtly introduce the theme of imagination and will opposing darker realities. Then, almost a third of the poem describes how ice storms bend these trees permanently, unlike the action of boys; this scene combines images of beauty and of distortion. Ice shells suggest radiating light and color, and the trees bowed to the level of the bracken, suggest suffering, which is immediately lightened by the strange image of girls leaning their hair toward the sun as if in happy submission. Frost's speaker then self-consciously breaks from his realistic but metaphorically fantasized digression to say he would prefer to have some boy bend the birches, which action becomes a symbol for controlled experience, as contrasted with the genial fatality of ice storms. The boy's fancied playfulness substitutes for unavailable companionship, making for a thoughtful communion with nature, which rather than teach him wisdom allows him to learn it. Despite the insistence on the difference between ice storms' permanent damage to birches and a boy's temporary effects, the boy subdues and conquers the trees. His swinging is practice for maintaining life's difficult and precarious balances. The third part of the poem begins with a more personal and philosophical tone. The speaker claims to have been such a youthful swinger of birches, an activity he can go back to only by dreaming. The birch trees, probably both ice-bent and boy-swung, stand for the order and control missing from ordinary experience. The "considerations" he is weary of are conflicting claims that leave him disoriented and stung. The desire to "get away from earth," importantly qualified by "awhile" shows a yearning for the ideal or perhaps for the imaginative isolation of the birch swinger". – M. Marcus.

"Birches" connects poetic aspiration and physical love. It begins with a fanciful image of a boy swinging on and bending birches. It then shifts to a brilliant description of ice-laden branches blown by the wind. Frost then returns to the swinger-of-birches theme as the boy, like the future poet, launches out at the proper time, keeps his poise and climbs carefully". – Jeffrey Myers.

"Toward heaven" but never to, never all the way. Frost fears transcendence. Despite all the apparent moralizing ("earth's the right place for love"), this passage is one of the most skeptical in Frost. He contemplates a moment when the soul may become completely absorbed into a union with the divine. But he is earthbound, limited, afraid. No sooner does he wish to get away from earth than he thinks of "fate" - rather than God. And what might be a mystical experience turns into a fear of death, a fear that he would be snatched away "not to return." He rejects the unknown, the love of God, because he cannot know it, and he clings to the finite: "Earth's the right place for love." – Floyd C. Watkins.

"The first twenty lines of "Birches" clearly hint at Promethean tendencies. In the poem's central fiction, Frost adroitly converts the birches from emblems of Promethean aspiration to

emblems of natural fact conquered by that aspiration. Rather than an Ice storm, the poet should prefer to have some boy bend" the birches; this fictive explanation represents more clearly the central presence of human activity, and human domination of the natural. But, in the last third of the poem, where he explicitly reads in the act of swinging birches a lesson for the governance of one's imaginative life, Frost draws back from the Prometheanism implied earlier in the poem: "I'd like to get away from earth awhile / And then come back to it and begin over. The proper role of the mind or spirit is seen here, not as a conquest of the natural, not as a transcending of earth or a "steering straight off after something into space," but as an integral part of a larger process of give and take, "launching out" and return. The mature speaker of "Birches," knows how to use natural fact to reach its uppermost limits; to climb "Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more," but then to accept the end of the trip and be returned by the tree in a kind of cooperative effort. The imagination here again asserts its freedom and autonomy by dominating natural fact; but then, refreshed by that flexing of imaginative muscle, it "comes back" to natural fact to "begin over," now willing to accept the different but also "almost incredible freedom," as Frost puts it elsewhere, of being "enslaved to the hard facts of experience". George F. Bagby.

12. 8. Sample Questions:

1. The poem "Home Burial" juxtaposes masculinity and Femininity – Examine.
2. The Poem "Home Burial" records the psychological conflict between Wife & Husband –examine.
3. The Poem 'Birches' symbolizes the human aspiration of soaring higher – examine.
4. The pragmatic approach that one has to apply in life is seen in the attempts of a Boy in Birches – examine.

Lesson Writer,

Dr. Raja Sekhar. Patteti

13. Emily Dickinson

Contents :

- 13.1. Biography
- 13.2. J 303. "The Soul Selects Her Own Society"
- 13.3. Criticism
- 13.4. J 322. "There Came A Day at Summer's Full."
- 13.5. Criticism
- 13.6. J 347. "When Night Is Almost Done"
- 13.7. Criticism
- 13.8. J 538. "This true – They shut me in the Cold"
- 13.9. Criticism
- 13.10. Criticism
- 13.11. Sample Questions
- 13.12. Suggested Readings

13.1. Biography

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts as the second daughter of Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson. Emily and her siblings were raised in a quiet, reserved family headed by their authoritative father Edward. The Dickinson children were brought up in the Christian tradition, and they were expected to take up their father's religious beliefs and values without argument. Later in life, Emily would come to challenge these conventional religious viewpoints of her father and the church, and the challenges she met with would later contribute to the strength of her poetry.

The Dickinson family was prominent in Amherst. Emily's father also served in powerful positions on the General Court of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts State Senate, and the United States House of Representatives. Being the daughter of a prominent politician, Emily had the benefit of a good education and attended the Amherst Academy. After her time at the academy, Emily left for the South Hadley Female Seminary. She returned after only one year at the seminary in 1848 to Amherst where she began her life of seclusion.

Although Emily never married, she had several significant relationships with a select few. It was during this period following her return from school that Emily began to dress all in white and choose those precious few that would be her own private society. Refusing to see almost everyone that came to visit, Emily seldom left her father's house. During her

early twenties, Emily began to write poetry seriously. When she had a sizable backlog of poems, she sought out somebody for advice about anonymous publication, and on April 15, 1862 she found Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an eminent literary man. She wrote a letter to Higginson and enclosed four poems to inquire his appraisal and advice.

Although Higginson advised Dickinson against publishing her poetry, he did see the creative originality in her poetry, and he remained Emily's "preceptor" for the remainder of her life. It was after that correspondence in 1862 that Emily decided against publishing her poems, and, as a result, only seven of her poems were published in her lifetime – five of them in the Springfield Republican. All the rest of her nearly 2000 poems were published only after her death.

Emily had persistent eye trouble, which led her, in 1864 and 1865, to spend several months in Cambridge, Mass for treatment. Once back in Amherst she never traveled again and after the late 1860s never left the boundaries of the family's property.

The later years of Dickinson's life were primarily spent in mourning because of several deaths within the time frame of a few years. Throughout the year of 1885, Emily was confined to bed in her family's house where she had lived her entire life, and she died on May 15, 1886, at the age of 56.

13.2. J 303. "The Soul Selects Her Own Society"

Paraphrase and Commentary.

This poem possibly has some relation to Dickinson's choice of a life of seclusion, preferring her own small circle and shutting out the general world. This poem about friendship or of love illustrates why Dickinson has been called the poet of **exclusion**. The soul in the poem opts for a select society. It bars itself to all others. Emperors may be clamoring for her attention, but she is unmoved. She selects "one" from a multitude and remains steadfast in her choice, presenting a stony aspect to those not selected. However, the selected "One" can be interpreted as both Muse and Lover. Three themes can be identified – adoption of solitude, dedication to personal poetry and acceptance of a single image of the beloved. Dickinson is dealing with the theme of **renunciation**. She is dramatizing the moment of selection.

On another level, the poem is about spiritualization. There is a rigorous inner discipline, in relation to which the trappings of the secular world, like chariots or kneeling emperors become extraneous and irrelevant. The soul takes on queenly and regal attributes. However, this exclusivity of the soul is also her vulnerability. The cloister she inhabits is constantly under siege and has to be guarded zealously as the slightest touch of contamination could lead to devastation. We have an awareness of the precariousness of the soul's position combined with the assurance of her regal selection.

13.3. Criticism

"It becomes clear that the poem neither advocates haughty isolation, nor condemns the reclusive soul, for creating an "irreparable dualism" between itself and the cosmos by its

arrogant process of selection." Rather she seems to be fully aware of "the balance struck between the solitude implied in the act of selecting and the unfolding of the self through that act. In this context, "the seemingly ominous image of the last stanza, the decisive closing of "the Values of her Attention / Like Stone," can also be read as an emphatic example of the process outlined in the first two stanzas. Selecting the 'joyful solitude' of an Emersonian communion with what is kindred to its, the Soul need by no means become permanently sealed off in a tomb-like world or frozen in a static posture. The closed valves, after all, are only valves of attention; their stone-like close emphasizes the "weight," the certainty, of the act of selection, not merely, as the image is commonly read, the "entombment" of the selective soul. The selection process depicted in the present tense in the first stanza may be one in a series of ongoing selections, part of the progressive gathering process Emerson perceives as defining and refining one's genius. The image itself suggests that an alternation takes place; like the valves of the heart, the Soul's valves of attention can both open and close—a way of controlling the flow of related persons, ideas, and events for consideration by memory and the poetic talents. The Soul's section, then, instead of creating a heart of stone, a death-like stasis, or a willful solipsism, may actually be preparing it for a "teaching" that paradoxically brings a transfusion from the world outside." – Robert M. Luscher.

"This poem is not usually conceived of as a riddle, but rather as a description of those instinctive preferences and choices, those defiantly non rational elections and allegiances, like love, that we all make, without regard to personal advantage, to rank or to estate. To the degree that the poem has been construed as a private and guarded revelation of the poet's emotional life, and to some circumstantial events in its, there is a dispute about whether the choice of "one" means someone else or the poet herself; whether she is electing the solitude of a society of one, or committing herself to another. And it is not out of place, I think, to construe the poem as being about love". – Anthony Hecht.

"The soul is shown living within a space defined by door, gate, and mat. The external world, with its nations and their rulers, is kept outside. Traditional ideas about power are reversed here. Not control over vast populations but the ability to construct a world for oneself comprises the greatest power, a god-like achievement, announces the opening stanza. The poem also challenges our ideas about what constitutes a social group. Consequently, the enclosed space of the soul's house is more than adequate for a queenly life, and ambassadors of the external world's glories, even emperors, can easily be scorned. While associating power with the enclosed space of the mind, the poem also implies how isolation is confinement, too." – Suzanne Juhasz.

13.4. J 322. "There Came A day at Summer's Full."

Paraphrase and Commentary.

This poem is full of one of Dickinson's common themes of nature as a symbol of spirit and intrusion of the infinite into everyday life. The speaker finds herself wide-eyed, in a glorious day fit for saints. Words were few, and needless. It was like everyone was attending a personal church sacrament with heightened intensity. Two people, with no other ceremony,

but being bound by each other's crucifix, feel that this was sufficient to ensure rising after death, a new kind of informal "marriage", justified by agonies of love. The last line "justified – through Calvaries of Love" seems to suggest a forbidden love that is justified by the suffering they will endure for one another.

Dickinson's view of love was conditioned by her fear of mutability. She was keenly aware of the fleeting and transitory nature of human attachments. The poem is less about specific lovers than about transience itself and an examination of how to face up to that challenge. The suggested answer is sacrifice, even a voluntary "death" to be followed by resurrection and a "new marriage" justified by suffering.

13.5. Criticism

"There came a Day at Summer's full" tells a conversion narrative in the rhetoric of Christian religious discourse and thus identifies the particular narrative frame within which so many of Dickinson's poems are written. There seems to be no problem in narrating for the speaker in this case, but the event that precedes the poem becomes enigmatic by virtue of the several possible meanings each of which the poem fails to contradict. This might be a poem about a summer's day, about an encounter between lovers, or about a conversion experience. But to identify its referent as any one of these subjects alone is to deny the poem's complex ambiguity. There are figures for a love relationship between a man and woman. At the same time, the story of their love repeats the Christian story of salvation and since this story is itself a "love" story between the individual and Christ, the referents of the poem's terms become doubly confused. The poem is also understandable as a description of a day in summer and the ecstatic experience of nature." – Claudia Yukman.

"A recurrent theme in the love poems is the separation of two lovers by death, and their reunion in immortality. But Emily Dickinson's conception of this immortality is centered in the beloved himself, rather than in any theological principle. The immortality which concerns her arises directly from her connection with a second person, and never exists as an abstract or Christian condition. In the same way, redemption is also reduced to the simplest personal equation. There is little talk of heaven or hell, except as they exist within the poet herself. It is not the "dumb-show of the puritan theology" which protects the poet, but her own redefinition of Christian values. This redefinition is not important because of any radical deviation from the church's percepts, but because the catchwords of pulpit and hymnal have been given an intimate and casual interpretation. She speaks of Death's coming for her, yet has him arrive in a carriage to take her for an afternoon's drive. She writes of Calvaries, but they are "Calvaries of Love." – A.Larrabee.

13.6. J 347. "When Night Is Almost Done"

Paraphrase and Commentary

This poem suggests both the loneliness of a sleep deprived solitary night and the faces we "put on" to greet the dawn and the new day. The speaker has spent the whole night in

fear and agony. But now that sunrise is near, the terrors and bogeymen and the night recede and we start putting on our masks for the new day. The act of arranging the hair itself is interpreted as a theatrical device and dimples are artificial add-ons which have to be "got ready"! We are very courageous now that it is day and are even surprised and amused that we could ever have been overwhelmed by the transient fears of the night. However, under all that bravado, there is an underlying despair at the fact that night will return in an unremitting temporal cycle. The two cardinal themes in this poem are the exacerbating nature of lonely nights and the artifice that goes into the public faces with which we confront the day.

13.7. Criticism.

"What can be heard is only the powerful and unforgettable note of a primitive astonishment at the fundamental phenomena of life, an astonishment where no side is chosen. The questions raised here are not set out as problems to be solved, however. They are subjectivized into something that lies beyond, into an accent, an attitude to life, a direction of thought rather than thinking itself. In the main, this involves two themes that are fundamentally coherent: changing over time and antithesis. The questions are suggested to the reader along many different routes. For example, *in the morning, while dressing, she is surprised at the fears of the past midnight, now so long ago*. Her most interesting poems, which have a bearing upon time, are those where it is not transience, but the suspension of time, which becomes the object of her poetry; as the possibility of a seemingly immense stretch of time, experienced by the individual, not therefore a mere perception of eternity, or of thought of in terms of eternity." - Simon Vestdijk.

13.8. J 538. "This true – They shut me in the Cold"

Paraphrase and Commentary.

This poem shows an identification with the Christ who upon the Cross called on God to forgive his enemies. The attempt could either be to humanize a patriarchal God or to deify the poetic persona. Unnamed tormentors are hinted at in the poem, who condemned the poetess to cold burial. But "they knew not what they did" – in Dickinson's terms, they did not know the horrors implied by the cold as they themselves were warm. She wishes to forgive them in keeping with the injunction "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us". She ensures her own place in heaven by pleading for the admittance of those who have wronged her.

13.9 Criticism.

"Given the self-abnegation often required for women to be deemed "normal" within a patriarchal context, one of Dickinson's needs is to identify with Christ's self-sacrificing passion. She identifies with him further when she asks God to forgive those who reject, exclude, and hurt her. This poem echoes Christ's plea regarding his persecutors. The poet's won "Heavenly esteem" and inclusion in Heaven is contingent upon forgiving, rather than blaming "Them." In this way, she herself may be forgiven. Forgiveness is possible if one concedes

that "Their" will to exclude is based upon not yet having experienced such a "shutting out" of "Themselves." Thus it is that Dickinson's love based on inclusion is possible and lasting: she, unlike "Them," has known the opposite extreme and would not, therefore, impose it on others." – Roseanne Hoefel.

J 712. "Because I Could Not Stop For Death"

Paraphrase and Commentary.

In this poem, Dickinson attempts an imaginative reconstruction of her own death. She tries to focus on herself in the middle of the very act of dying. Death is not presented as a withered old man with a scythe common in imagery, but as a romantic suitor. Death and Immortality come calling together in a carriage at the poetess's door. She embarks on a journey with them, putting aside all earthly concerns, both "labor and her leisure." It is a very relaxed journey, as if all the time in the world were available. On the way they witness the flurry of life from which the lady is now far removed. Playing children, growing fields – all these symbols of life are now distant from her. Death, in a way is a lover/bridegroom figure and Immortality functions as the chaperone on this bridal journey. At the same time, despite all her romantic conceptions, the lady's flimsy attire of gossamer and tulle and the fact that she is shivering in the cold dews indicate how unprepared we always are for death. From this perspective, Death is arrogant, making no allowances for human fears and hopes. The attitude towards death oscillates between these two poles, providing an image akin to that of a "demon-lover". On the way they pass a grave which is described as a little house, indicating the finality of burial. However, the saga does not end there. It has been, the poetess says, centuries since she set to on this journey with death, but at the same time, it feels like a brief instant as she has realized the journey was towards eternity – a beginning, not an end. The emphasis on Eternity, suggests the distance between circumscribed earthly existence and infinity.

The two concluding stanzas, with progressively decreasing concreteness, hasten the final identification of her "House." It is the slightly rounded surface "of the Ground," with a scarcely visible roof and a cornice "in the Ground." To time and seasonal change, which have already ceased, is now added motion, Cessation of all activity and creativeness is absolute. At the end, in a final instantaneous flash of memory, she recalls the last objects before her eyes during the journey; the heads of the horses that bore her, as she had surmised they were doing from the beginning, toward – it is the last word – "Eternity." Gradually, too, one realizes that Death as a person has receded into the background.

13.10. Criticism

"The content of death in the poem eludes forever any explicit definition. He is a gentleman taking a lady out for a drive. But note the restraint that keeps the poet from carrying this so far that it is ludicrous and incredible, and note the subtly interfused erotic motive, which the idea of death has presented to every romantic poet, love being a symbol

interchangeable with death. The terror of death is objectified through this figure of the genteel driver, who is made ironically to serve the end of Immortality. The framework of the poem is, in fact, the two abstractions, mortality and eternity, which are made to associate in perfect equality with the images." – Allen Tate.

"The poem is a remarkably beautiful poem on the subject of the daily realization of the imminence of death – it is a poem of departure from life, an intensely conscious leave-taking. In so far as it concentrates on the life that is being left behind, it is wholly successful; in so far as it attempts to experience the death to come, it is fraudulent, however exquisitely, and in this it falls below her finest achievement. The poem ends in irresolution in the sense that it ends in a statement that is not offered seriously." – Yvor Winters.

"It is true that Dickinson is forced to experience and deal with nature before she can turn her back on it, but redemption and immortality are for her neither weapon nor protection. If these concepts deserve any place at all, it is rather because they are avenues of escape from death. In her love poems, as well as in the group dealing with time and eternity, she returns constantly to her preoccupation with death – both as it is incorporated in all of nature, and as it encompasses it on all sides. Death for Emily Dickinson, therefore, was an uncomfortable lacuna which could in no way be bridged, except by transposing it into a more homely metaphor. Death as a caller, the grave as a little house – these are a poetic whistling in the dark. In a safe and ordered microcosm, she found death an ungoverned and obsessing presence. It could be neither forgotten nor accepted in its present form. Death had possessed too many of her friends to be reckoned with as a complete abstraction. But when she translated this oppression into a language of daily routine, she could blot out the reality of death with pictures conjured up by the surrounding images. Emily Dickinson regards nature as resembling death in that it can, for the moment, be brought with in her garden walls, but still spreads around her life and beyond her door, impossible to hold or to measure. Both are forces which must be discussed and rehearsed constantly." – A Larrabee.

"Because I could not stop for Death" is a superlative achievement wherein Death becomes one of the great characters of literature. It is almost impossible in any critique to define exactly the kind of reality which her character Death attains, simply because the protean shifts of form are intended to forestall definition. A poem can convey the nuances of exultation, agony, compassion, or any mystical mood. But no one can successfully define mysticism because the logic of language has no place for it". In "Because I could not stop for Death" Emily Dickinson envisions Death as a person she knew and trusted, or believed that she could trust. Clearly there has been no deception on his part. They drive in a leisurely manner, and she feels completely at ease. Since she understands it to be a last ride, she of course expects it to be unhurried. Indeed, his graciousness in taking time to stop for her at that point and on that day in her life when she was so busy she could not possibly have taken time to stop for him is a mark of special politeness. She is therefore quite willing to put aside her work. And again, since it is to be her last ride, she can dispense with her spare moments as well as her active ones. She notes the daily routine of the life she

is passing from. She now conveys her feeling of being outside time and change, for she corrects herself to say that the sun passed them, as it of course does all who are in the grave. She is aware of dampness and cold, and becomes suddenly conscious of the sheerness of the dress and scarf which she now discovers that she wears." – Thomas J. Johnson

"Emily Dickinson's finest poem on the funeral ceremony is "Because I could not stop for Death". On the surface it seems like just another version of the procession to the grave, but this is a metaphor that can be probed for deeper levels of meaning, spiritual journeys of a very different sort. At first reading, the orthodox reassurance against the fear of death, appears to be invoked, though with the novelty of a suitor replacing the traditional angel, by emphasizing his compassionate mission in taking her out of the woes of this world into the bliss of the next. 'Death,' usually rude, sudden, and impersonal, has been transformed into a kindly and leisurely gentleman. Although she was aware this is a last ride, since his 'Carriage' can only be a hearse, its terror is subdued by the 'Civility' of the driver who is merely serving the end of 'Immortality'. The ineluctability of the journey, with Death on the driver's seat and her body laid out in the coach behind, is dispelled by the presence of her immortal part that rides with her as a co-passenger, this slight personification being justified by the separable concept of the soul. Too occupied with life herself to stop, like all busy mortals, Death 'kindly stopped' for her. But this figure of a gentleman taking a lady for a carriage ride is carefully underplayed and then dropped after two stanzas. The balanced parallelism of the first stanza is slightly quickened by the alliterating 'labor' and 'leisure' of the second, which encompass vividly all that must be renounced in order to ride 'toward Eternity'. Her intensely conscious leave-taking of the world is rendered with fine economy, and instead of the sentimental grief of parting there is an objectively presented scene. The labor and leisure of life are made concrete in the joyous activity of children contrasted with the passivity of nature and again, by the optical illusion of the sun's setting, in the image of motion that has come to rest. Also the whole range of the earthly life is symbolized, first human nature, then animate, and finally inanimate nature. But, absorbed 'in the Ring' of childhood's games, the players at life do not even stoop to look up at the assign carriage of death. In the concluding stanzas the movement of the poem slows almost to a stop, 'We paused' contrasting with the successive sights 'We passed' in the earlier stages of the journey. For when the carriage arrives at the threshold of the house of death it has reached the spatial limits of mortality. The tomb's horror is absorbed by the emphasis on merely pausing here, as though this were a sort of tavern for the night. The house of death so lightly sketched is not her destination. That is clearly stated as 'Eternity', though it is significant that she never reaches it. The final stanza is not an extension of knowledge beyond the grave but simply the most fitting code for her poem. In projecting the last sensations of consciousness as the world fades out, she has employed progressively fewer visible objects until with fine dramatic skill she limits herself at the end to a single one, the 'Horses Heads', recalled in a flash of memory as that on which her eyes had been fixed throughout the journey. These bring to mind the 'Carriage' of the opening stanza, and Death, who has receded as a person, is now by implication back in the driver's seat. 'Since then – 'tis Centuries', she says, in an unexpected phrase for the transition from time to eternity, but this

is a finite infinity; her consciousness is still operative and subject to temporal measurement. All of this poetically elapsed time 'Feels shorter than the Day', the day of death brought to an end by the setting sun of the third stanza, when she first guessed the direction in which these apocalyptic horses were headed. 'Surmised', carefully placed near the conclusion, is all the warranty one needs for reading this journey as one that has taken place entirely in her mind. The last word maybe 'Eternity' but it is strictly limited by the directional preposition 'toward'. So the poem returns to the very day, even the same instant, when it started. Its theme is a Christian one, yet unsupported by any of the customary rituals and without any final statement of Christian faith. The resolution is not mystical but dramatic. Also, though in her withdrawal the events of the external world by-passed her, in the poetic life made possible by it she escaped the limitations of the mortal calendar. She was borne confidently, by her winged horse 'toward Eternity' in the immortality of her poems". — Charles R. Anderson.

"Yet the ultimate implication of this work turns precisely upon the poet's capacity to explode the finite temporal boundaries that generally define our existence, for there is a third member of the party—also exterior to time and location — and that is "Immortality". True immortality, the verse suggests, comes neither from the confabulations of a mate lover nor from God's intangible Heaven. Irrefutable "Immortality" resides in the work of art itself, the creation of an empowered woman poet that continues to captivate readers more than one hundred years after her death". — Cynthia Griffin Wolff.

"On the surface, the first lines of 'Because I could not stop for Death' appear to invoke orthodox reassurance against the fear of death. Death is portrayed as sensitive to the ordinary busy life of mortals—too occupied with life to stop—when he "kindly" stops and invites her for a carriage ride. In reality, the lines offer the first of several ironic reversals of what Dickinson suggests might be but isn't. If the conditional phrase seems to suggest that the dead one has rights and options in the matter—a choice of when to die—the main clause is the reminder of death's absolute nature. He stops, and that's that. The sentence points to the very human capacity to fool ourselves when we are afraid. Faced with the large unknown, we pretend it is manageable. Because it is unacceptable in its brute form, we make it governable. There is a third occupant in the carriage, Immortality — shadowy, and if not a person, a condition to be desired. Immortality is consoling and recognizable, what one hopes will come with death. With Immortality as a companion, the speaker can accede to the trip in death's carriage, it becomes a leisurely afternoon drive—a gentleman taking a lady and her friend (a chaperone?) for a ride in the country. In the second stanza Death and the speaker ride along without concern for time. Her "labor" and her "leisure," are done, and she is content to be in the carriage, as if now there were no there concern but death's luxury. The word choice seems clearly ironic, with Dickinson playing reality against the romantic view of childhood and death, where one's salvation is so little in danger that a schoolyard is solely for play ("The School where children played", "The Chariot"). The speaker enters the carriage as a believer, immortal soul intact, but the adult Dickinson was not such a one in the conventional sense. The poem is informed ironically with theology; it is the inexorable law of time's direction that the little narrative uncovers: the carriage seems to be going where God's chariots are supposed to go, but it ends up in the graveyard. The

third stanza takes note of the daily routine of the life the speaker is passing from, starting with children at recess and ending with the setting sun. The day seems to have gone down quickly, in part because of the dual suggestion of both a day's cycle and the cycle of the seasons. Death has been kind and civil, but he drives the carriage toward the dark and cold of the grave. The speaker feels the chill, for she is flimsily dressed with a scarf not made of fur or wool but of "Tulle" and in "Gossamer". The supernatural journey ends in the graveyard. "Because I could not stop for Death" certainly addresses itself to the question of being by describing the state of being alive and dead at the same time. She doesn't explain how the dead live, except to give us glimpses of the perceptions the living have, ending with the partial, remembered age of the "Horses' Heads" facing eternity. The speaker is in the cemetery, left to wonder at her progress from the moment of her first encounter with Death, with his promise of immortality, to her present situation. Immortality has changed into Eternity—an uncomfortable change, one would think, from everlasting life to a long time of waiting for redemption. The questions, Dickinson implies, persist. People will always wonder what heaven is like and live with the hope that immortality will be granted. And until the unknown bliss is achieved, then, Dickinson suggests, the world of grain and carriage rides and, yes, graveyards, is all there is: "Because I could not stop for Death", perhaps her finest poem on the theme of what lies beyond death, both in cosmic terms and in the feeling of those bound to dies, she presents us with the strangeness of such a condition. The poem allows us to feel our own discomfort at not fully knowing, despite what we might surmise, and to experience fears and wonders about time's evanescence and the mystery of death".
– Carol Frost

13.11. Sample Questions

1. Discuss Auto biographical elements in Dickinson's poetry?
2. Discuss Meta Physical elements in Emily Dickinson's Poetry?
3. Consider Emily Dickinson as a Mystic poet?
4. Achievement of Emily Dickinson as a poet – examine.

13.12. Suggested Readings

1. Charles H. Anderson Emily Dickinson's Poetry: stairway of surprise. 1960
2. Richard Chase Emily Dickinson. 1951
3. Albert J. Gelpi. Emily Dickinson : The Mind of the poet 1965.

Lesson Writer

Dr. Raja Sekhar P.

**M.A., ENGLISH, SECOND YEAR, EXAMINATION, MAY 2011
PAPER II — AMERICAN LITERATURE**

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question No. 1 is compulsorily.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.
- (b) I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detained me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.
- (c) I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed,
I'm cursed, God if I don't believe I'm cursed.
- (d) One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them.
- (e) We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will
Speak our own minds.
- (f) Events, actions arise, that must be Sung, that will bring themselves.
- (g) His name was never in the paper, He's not
the finest character that ever lived. But he's
human being, and a terrible thing is
happening to him.
- (h) Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country
in the world a young man with such - personal
attractiveness, gets lost.

UNIT II

- 2. "The American scholar" is a forceful Plea for intellectual independence. Illustrate
- 3. Discuss the element of realism in the Poetry of Robert Frost.

4. Comment on the use of Symbolism in Whitman's poems prescribed.
5. Critically examine Miller's Death of a Salesman as an experimental play.
6. Comment on the use of Naturalism in Modern American Drama.

UNIT III

7. "On its narrative level, Walden is a record of practical experiments". Illustrate
8. Attempt a critical study of the aspect of lyricism in Emily Dickinson's poetry.
9. Examine The Old Man and the Sea as a symbolical novel.
10. Discuss the theme and technique used in Poe's The Raven.
11. Critically examine the theme of quest for identity in The Hairy Ape.
12. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - (a) Transcendentalism.
 - (b) Picaresque elements in American novel.
 - (c) Mysticism in Whitman's poetry.
 - (d) Treatment of nature in Frost's poetry.
 - (e) Linda in Death of a salesman.
 - (f) Irony as a strategy in The Hairy Ape.
 - (g) Malamud as a novelist.
 - (h) Ishmael's quest in Moby Dick.

M.A., ENGLISH, SECOND YEAR, EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2010.

PAPER II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question No. 1 is compulsorily.

**Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and
TWO from Unit III.**

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) I saw, I heard at intervals remaining one, the he – bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.
- (b) Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come infalteringly
- (c) I shall laugh the worst laugh I even laughed
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I am cursed.
- (d) Earth's the right place for
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
- (e) Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past
instructs; him the future invites.
- (f) The people delight in it; the better part of every man feels, This is my music; this is
myself.
- (g) When this game is over, Charley, you'll be laughing out of the other side of your
face.
- (h) I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the
woman has waited and the woman has suffered.

UNIT II

- 2. Critically examine Emerson's The American Scholar as an example of the American
Renaissance.
- 3. Bring out the lyrical quality in the poetry of Robert Frost.
- 4. Consider Walt Whitman as an elemental poet.
- 5. Discuss the dramatic technique of Arthur Miller in Death of a Salesman.

6. Write an essay on the impact of the American dream on American Literature.

UNIT III

7. Write an essay on Thoreau's Walden Pond.

8. Discuss the theme of death as portrayed in Emily Dickinson's poems prescribed.

9. Examine the art of characterisation in The Old Man and the Sea.

10. Explain the Central idea in Poe's 'The Raven'.

11. Write an essay on the use of expressionism in The Hairy Ape.

12. Write short notes on-FOUR of the following :

- (a) The Bard of Boston.
- (b) Dramatic techniques of Williams.
- (c) The Journey motif in Moby Dick.
- (d) Theme of The Assistant.
- (e) Whitman as an elegiac poet.
- (f) Existentialist predicament in Modern American Drama.
- (g) Theme of Alienation in American Fiction.
- (h) Symbolism in American Poetry.

M.A. ENGLISH SECOND YEAR EXAMINATION, JUNE 2010.
PAPER II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

TIME : THREE HOURS

Maximum : 100 marks

Question No. 1 is compulsory.
Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO
questions from Unit III.
All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe
- (b) He called on his mate, He poured forth the meanings which I of all men know
- (c) The wonder is I didn't see at once
I never noticed it from here before
I must be wonted to it - that's the reason.
- (d) When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighten darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them
- (e) I learn from any speaker how much he has
already lived, through the poverty or splendour of his speech.
- (f) The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise,
and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearance.
- (g) You can't eat the orange and throw the peel
away - a man is not a piece of fruit! Now pay attention.
- (h) What am I doing in an office, making a
contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when
all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am.

UNIT-II

- 2. How does Emerson advocate intellectual independence of America in 'The American Scholar'?
- 3. Critically examine the significance of the major symbols in 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd'.

4. Bring out the element of realism in Frost's poetry.
5. Discuss Miller's Death of a Salesman in the context of The American Dream.
6. Attempt a critical essay on the impact of the civil war on American Literature.

-UNIT III

7. How is Walden an expression of the transcendentalist vision? Elaborate.
 8. Explain the symbolic nature of Emily Dickinson's poetry.
 9. The Old Man and The Sea marks the passage of the Hemingway hero from negation to affirmation. Comment.
 10. Write an appreciation of the poem 'The Raven'.
 11. The Hairy Ape is basically a play of social protest.
-
13. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - (a) The Sage of Concord
 - (b) Existentialism in recent American Drama
 - (c) Expressionism in American Drama
 - (d) Theme of Mokey Dick.
 - (e) Significance of the title The Assistant.
 - (f) Quest for identity in The Glass Managerie
 - (g) Pastoral element in Frost's poetry
 - (h) Impact of the great depression on American literature.

M.A., ENGLISH, SECOND YEAR, EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2009.

PAPER II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Question No.1 compulsorily.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) And everyday I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them, cautiously peering, absorbing, translating, shine, shine, shine,
- (b) With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.
- (c) God, what a woman I and its come to this,
A man can't speak of his own child that's dead
- (d) Not so much larger than a bed room is it?
There are three stones of state and one of marble.
- (e) This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we know what to do with it
- (f) Books are the best of things well used, abused among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means going to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire.
- (g) See Biff, everybody around me is so-false that I'm constantly lowering my ideals
Happy.
- (h) A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty six years thin march, opens up unheard of territories of their trade.

UNIT II

- 2. Examine the evaluation of "The American Scholar" as the first clarion of an American literary renaissance.
- 3. Attempt an essay on the note of democracy in Whitman.
- 4. Critically examine Frost's 'Home Burial' as a dramatic monologue.
- 5. Examine Miller's death of a salesman as an experimental play.

6. Examine how the American imagination is often conditioned by a puritan ideology.

UNIT III

7. Consider Thoreau's Walden as a fable of general.

8. In Emily's poetry we see a gradual evolution from doubt and scepticism to faith and belief".
Justify.

9. "Old man and the sea" is an allegorical interpretation of Heming way's vision of himself, O' an artist's struggle with his material. Explain.

10. How did Poe justify the composition of his poem Raven?

11. Sketch the character of Yank. How far are we justified in calling him a hairy ape?

12. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :

- (a) The Jewish – American Novel
- (b) The treatment of nature in Frost and Dickinson
- (c) The anti-hero
- (d) Freedom in American dream
- (e) The Boston Brahmins
- (f) Americanness of American literature
- (g) Puritanism
- (h) Linda in The Death of a Salesman.

M.A., ENGLISH, SECOND YEAR, EXAMINATION, MAY 2009.

PAPER II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Answer Question No. 1 is compulsory.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.
O you singer solitary, singing by yourself projecting me.
- (b) My own songs awaked from that hour
And with them the key, the word up from the waves.
- (c) They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
- (d) 'Not you! Oh where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!
I must get out of here. I must get air.
I don't know rightly whether any man can'.
- (e) And, in fine, the ancient precepts, 'know thyself', and the modern precept, 'Study
'nature' become at last one maxim.
- (f) This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which
the field and the work-yard made.
- (g) He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our
family.
- (h) Without a penny to his name, three great universities are begging for him, and from
there the sky is the limit.

UNIT II

2. Examine the concept of the American Renaissance in The American Scholar.

3. Explain the elemental nature of Whitman's poetry.

4. Discuss how thematically Frost's poetry becomes universal inspite of its being narrowly regional.
5. Critically examine the central conflict that grows out of a crisis of identity in Death of a Salesman.
6. Write a note on the salient features of nineteenth century American Poetry.

UNIT III

7. 'On its narrative level, Walden is a record of practical experiments'. Illustrate.
8. Write an essay on imagism of Emily Dickinson giving examples.
9. Explain the relationship between Santiago and the Marlin in The Old Man and The Sea.
10. Critically examine the relationship between the theme and structure of the poem 'The Raven'.
11. Comment on the theme of alienation in The Hairy Ape.
12. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :
 - (a) Transcendentalism.
 - (b) Nature in Frost.
 - (c) Puritan influences.
 - (d) Hemingway Hero.
 - (e) Irony as a strategy in The Hairy Ape.
 - (f) Theme of The Glass Menagerie.
 - (g) Art of characterisation in The Assistant.
 - (h) Ishmael's quest in Moby Dick.

M.A., ENGLISH, SECOND YEAR, EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2008.

PAPER II — AMERICAN LITERATURE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Question No. 1 is compulsory.

Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following :

- (a) Sing on dearest brother, Warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.
- (b) Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging - O I think it is heavy with love, with love
- (c) So was I once myself a swinger of birches,
And so I dream of going back to be.
- (d) But before one is in it, their minds are turned
And making the best of their way back to life.
- (e) So much of life only as I know by experience,
So much of the Wilderness have I vanquished and planted.
- (f) The boy is a Greek; the youth, romantic; the adult, reflective.
- (g) Sure you will The trouble with you in
business was you never tried to please people.
- (h) I stopped in the middle of that building and I
saw - the sky. I saw the things that I love in the world.

UNIT II

- 2. What according to Emerson are the major influences on the American scholar?**
- 3. Write a critical appreciation of any one of Whitman's poems prescribed for your study.**
- 4. Discuss Robert Frost's achievement as a poet.**
- 5. Comment on Miller's use of lighting and setting in Death of a Salesman.**

6. Define and illustrate transcendentalism.

UNIT III

7. Bring out the autobiographical element in Thoreau's Walden.

8. Critically examine Dickinson's thematic concerns in her poetry.

9. Explain the significance of the title The Old Man and the Sea.

10. Discuss how The Hairy Ape dramatises the idea that man has lost his old harmony with nature.

11. Examine the theme of Moby Dick.

12. Write short notes on FOUR of the following :

- (a) Frost's love of nature
- (b) Art of characterisation in The Assistant.
- (c) Symbolism in The Glass Menagerie.
- (d) Puritanism.
- (e) Sub-title of Death of a Salesman.
- (f) Salient features of Poe's The Raven.
- (g) Theme of belonging in The Hairy Ape.
- (h) Hemingway's hero.

అధ్యాపకుల, విద్యార్థుల సలహాలు, సూచనలు :

అధ్యాపకులు, విద్యార్థులు ఈ స్టడీ మెటీరియల్ కు సంబంధించిన సలహాలు, సూచనలు, ముద్రణ దోషాలు తెలియపరచినచో, పునర్ముద్రణలో తగు చర్యలు తీసుకొనగలము. తెలియపరచవలసిన చిరునామా : డిప్యూటీ డైరెక్టర్, దూరవిద్యా కేంద్రం, ఆచార్య నాగార్జున విశ్వవిద్యాలయం, నాగార్జున నగర్ - 522 510.

Course
M.A. English

Year
IInd Year

Paper No. & Title
Paper - II : American Literature