Master of Arts

(English)

British Poetry – 1

Semester-I

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British Poetry - I (Chaucer to Pre-Romantics) (Paper – 2)

Learning Outcomes

The student will be able to understand:

Unit I

- Students can develop skills in analyzing and interpreting medieval literature, understanding the historical and cultural context of Chaucer's time.
- Acquire knowledge about the social, political, and cultural aspects of medieval England through the characters and their stories in "The Canterbury Tales."
- Enhance linguistic skills by studying Middle English and its evolution into Modern English.
- Explore connections between literature and other disciplines such as history, theology, and sociology to gain a holistic understanding of Chaucer's work

Unit II

- Develop skills in analyzing metaphysical poetry, including use of language, imagery, and metaphors.
- Explore connections between literature and philosophy, theology, or psychology to deepen the understanding of the poem's themes.
- Understand the historical and cultural context of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.

Unit III

- Develop advanced skills in analyzing complex poetic structures, themes, and literary devices employed by Milton in "Paradise Lost."
- Understand the historical and political context of 17th-century England, including the impact of the English Civil War and the Interregnum on Milton's life and work.
- Analyze Milton's use of language, including his grand and elevated style, classical allusions, and the creation of vivid and imaginative imagery.

Unit IV

- Explore Pope's satirical commentary on the social and cultural norms of his time, including issues related to gender, class, and the frivolities of aristocratic society.
- Understand the conventions of mock-heroic poetry and its origins in classical literature.
- Connect the study of literature to other disciplines such as art, fashion, and sociology, considering the ways in which Pope's poem engages with various aspects of culture.

Unit V

- Develop skills in analyzing religious poetry, use of language, imagery, and metaphors in conveying spiritual themes.
- Understand the historical and cultural context of the 18th century, the broader religious and philosophical movements of his time.
- Discuss how "Ode to Evening" fits within the broader context of Romantic poetry and its celebration of nature.

BRITISH POETRY - I
(CHAUCER TO PRE-ROMANTICS)
SYLLABUS

UNIT I
GEOFFREY CHAUCER
"The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales"

UNIT II
ERA OF BRITISH POETRY
John Donne: "Death be not Proud"

Andrew Marvell: "To His Coy Mistress"

Thomas Gray: "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

William Blake: "The Poison Tree"

UNIT III
JOHN MILTON
Paradise Lost (Book 1)

UNIT IV
ALEXANDER POPE
The Rape of the Lock

UNIT V
POEM
William Cowper: "Light Shining Out of Darkness"

William Collins: "Ode to Evening

UNIT I

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objective
1.2 Introduction
1.3 The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales
1.4 Review Questions
1.5 Multiple Choice Questions

NOTES

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to:

- Know more about Geoffrey Chaucer.
- Know about his writing The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales.
- Also know about his style and theme of writing.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer, (born c. 1342/43, London, England—died October 25, 1400, London), the outstanding English poet before Shakespeare and "the first finder of our language." His The Canterbury Tales ranks as one of the greatest poetics works in English. He also contributed importantly in the second half of the 14th century to the management of public affairs as courtier, diplomat, and civil servant. In that career he was trusted and aided by three successive kings—Edward III, Richard II, and Henry IV. But it is his avocation—the writing of poetry—for which he is remembered.

Perhaps the chief characteristics of Chaucer's works are their variety in subject matter, genre, tone, and style and in the complexities presented concerning the human pursuit of a sensible existence. Yet his writings also consistently reflect an all-pervasive humour combined with serious and tolerant consideration of important philosophical questions. From his writings Chaucer emerges as poet of love, both earthly and divine, whose presentations range from lustful cuckoldry to spiritual union with God. Thereby, they regularly lead the reader to speculation about man's relation both to his fellows and to his Maker, while simultaneously providing delightfully entertaining views of the frailties and follies, as well as the nobility, of mankind.

1.3 THE GENERAL PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licóur
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem Natúre in hir corages,
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,

NOTES

To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by áventure y-falle
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a Knyght than wol I first bigynne.
A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honóur, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honóured for his worthynesse.
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce.
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,—
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.

NOTES

At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
At many a noble armee hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene
In lyste thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye
Agayn another hethen in Turkye;
And evermoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde,
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght.
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay;
Of fustian he wered a gypon
Al bismótered with his habergeon;
For he was late y-come from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.
With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squiér,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his statúre he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede.
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.
Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde;
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde;
He koude songes make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.
A Yeman hadde he and servántz namo

At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
A sheef of pecock arwes bright and kene,
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily—
Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe—
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
A not-heed hadde he, with a broun viság e.
Of woodecraft wel koude he al the uságe.
Upon his arm he baar a gay bracér,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that oother syde a gay daggere,
Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene.
An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.
A forster was he, soothly as I gesse.
Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte Loy,
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle:
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
Thát no drope ne fille upon hire brist;
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir list.
Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.
And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.

NOTES 

Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel breed;
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was;
Hire nose tretys, her eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal and ther-to softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And ther-on heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after, Amor vincit omnia.
Another Nonne with hire hadde she,
That was hire chapeleyne, and Preestes thre.
A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gýnglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,
And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle,
Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.
The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,—
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,—
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
Or swynken with his handes and labóure,
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therfore he was a prikasour aright:

NOTES

Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves y-púrfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat.
He was nat pale, as a forpyned goost:
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.
A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solémpne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hym-self, moore than a curát,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun.
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
There as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;
For unto a povre ordre for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel y-shryve;
For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt
He wiste that a man was répentaunt;
For many a man so hard is of his herte
He may nat wepe al-thogh hym soore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepynge and preyéres
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His typet was ay farsed full of knyves

NOTES 

And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a murye note:
Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
Fór to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
And over-al, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous;
[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt,
Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;]
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his In principio,
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente:
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe.
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe,
For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scolér,
But he was lyk a maister, or a pope;
Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle, out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed for his wantownesse,
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Hubérd.
A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye, and hye on horse he sat;
Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat;
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
His resons he spak ful solémpnely,
Sownynge alway thencrees of his wynnyng.

NOTES

He wolde the see were kept for any thing
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So estatly was he of his gouvernaunce,
With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.
For sothe he was a worthy man with-alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.
A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde longe y-go.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and ther-to sobrely.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office;
For hym was lévere háve at his beddes heed
Twénty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fíthele, or gay sautrie.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wher-with to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede;
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quyk and ful of hy senténce.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche;
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.
A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the Parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence—
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.
For his science and for his heigh renoun,
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:
Al was fee symple to hym in effect;

NOTES 

His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.
Ther-to he koude endite and make a thyng,
Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.
A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye.
Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verraily felicitee parfit.
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His breed, his ale, was alweys after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,
Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,
After the sondry sesons of the yeer;
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.
Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;
Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
An anlaas, and a gipser al of silk,
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour;
Was nowher such a worthy vavasour.
An Haberdasshere, and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer,—
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree

NOTES

Of a solémpne and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,
But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle, on a deys.
Éverich, for the wisdom that he kan,
Was shaply for to been an alderman;
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente,
And elles certeyn were they to blame.
It is ful fair to been y-cleped Madame,
And goon to vigilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche y-bore.
A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,
And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Máken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he;
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.
A Shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
For aught I woot he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,
In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he y-drawe
Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
His herberwe and his moone, his lode-menage,
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew alle the havenes, as they were,

NOTES

From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.
His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.
With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;
In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel
In houres, by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymáges for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
And where they engendred and of what humour.
He was a verray, parfit praktisour;
The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To sende him drogges and his letuaries;
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And De{“y}scorides, and eek Rufus,
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestíble.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal.
And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial;
Therfore he lovede gold in special.
A Good Wif was ther of biside Bathe,
But she was som-del deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she

NOTES

That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite y-teyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve;
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe;
But ther-of nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
And thries hadde she been at Jérusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne.
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esily she sat,
Y-wympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
And on hire feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe;
Of remedies of love she knew per chauncé,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.
A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre Person of a Toun;
But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes Gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient;
And swich he was y-preved ofte sithes.
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parisshens aboute,
Of his offrýng and eek of his substaunce;
He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visíte
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.

NOTES 

This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte and afterward he taughte.
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
And this figure he added eek therto,
That if gold ruste, what shal iren doo?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive
By his clennesse how that his sheep sholde lyve.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londoun, unto Seinte Poules,
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde, and noght a mercenarie.
And though he hooly were and vertuous,
He was to synful man nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng díscreet and benygne.
To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
He waited after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience;
But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselve.
With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,
That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother;
A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best, with al his hoole herte,
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte.
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
His tithes payede he ful faire and wel,

Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.
Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,
A Somnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and myself,—ther were namo.
The Millere was a stout carl for the nones;
Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones.
That proved wel, for over-al, ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and thereon stood a toft of herys,
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys;
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.
A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achátours myghte take exemple
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
For, wheither that he payde or took by taille,
Algate he wayted so in his achaat
That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?
Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To maken hym lyve by his propre good,
In honour dettelees, but if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;

NOTES 

And able for to helpen al a shire
In any caas that myghte falle or happe;
And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe
The Reve was a sclendre colerik man.
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
His heer was by his erys round y-shorn;
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
Wel wiste he, by the droghte and by the reyn,
The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
Was hoolly in this reves governyng;
And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
There koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
There nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.
His wonyng was ful fair upon an heeth;
With grene trees shadwed was his place.
He koude bettre than his lord purchace;
Ful riche he was a-stored pryvely.
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This Reve sat upon a ful good stot,
That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.
A Somonour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
With scaled browes blake and piled berd,—

Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree,—
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.
But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
Ay "Questio quid juris" wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
And privelyy a fynch eek koude he pulle.
And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe,
In swich caas, of the erchedekenes curs,
But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he sholde y-punysshed be:
"Purs is the erchedekenes helle," seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede.
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith;
And also war him of a Significavit.
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,
As greet as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.
With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.

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Ful loude he soong, "Com hider, love, to me!"
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde.
But thynne it lay, by colpons, oon and oon;
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walét.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
Ne was ther swich another pardoner;
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that, he seyde, was Oure Lady veyl;
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes
He made the person and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie;
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.
Now have I toold you shortly, in a clause,

Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this compaignye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
And after wol I telle of our viage
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But first, I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
That ye narette it nat my vileynye,
Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce, as ny as evere he kan,
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
"The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede."
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,
And to the soper sette he us anon,
And served us with vitaille at the beste:
Strong was the wyn and wel to drynke us leste.
A semely man Oure Hooste was with-alle
For to been a marchal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe;
Boold of his speche, and wys, and well y-taught,
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek thereto he was right a myrie man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,

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Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges;
And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
At ones in this herberwe as is now.
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how;
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
"Ye goon to Canterbury—God yow speede,
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
For trewely confort ne myrthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if you liketh alle, by oon assent,
For to stonden at my juggement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
Hoold up youre hond, withouten moore speche."
Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche;
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted hym withouten moore avys,
And bad him seye his verdit, as hym leste.
"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn;
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye
In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventúres that whilom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth hym beste of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas,
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost,
Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And, for to make yow the moore mury,
I wol myselven gladly with yow ryde,

Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;
And whoso wole my juggement withseye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."
This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
That he wolde vouche-sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And of our tales juge and réportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris;
And we wol reuled been at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus, by oon assent,
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
Withouten any lenger taryynge.
Amorwe, whan that day gan for to sprynge,
Up roos oure Hoost and was oure aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok;
And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,
Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas;
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste:
Ye woot youre foreward and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song accorde,
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As ever mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for all that by the wey is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.
Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioresse.
And ye, sire Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,
Ne studieth noght. Ley hond to, every man."
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And, shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by áventúre, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght;
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,

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By foreward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,
He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."
And with that word we ryden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manére.

Summary

One spring day, the Narrator of The Canterbury Tales rents a room at the Tabard Inn before he recommences his journey to Canterbury. That evening, a group of people arrive at the inn, all of whom are also going to Canterbury to receive the blessings of "the holy blissful martyr," St. Thomas à Becket. Calling themselves "pilgrims" because of their destination, they accept the Narrator into their company. The Narrator describes his newfound traveling companions.

The Host at the inn, Harry Bailey, suggests that, to make the trip to Canterbury pass more pleasantly, each member of the party tell two tales on the journey to Canterbury and two more tales on the journey back. The person who tells the best story will be rewarded with a sumptuous dinner paid for by the other members of the party. The Host decides to accompany the pilgrims to Canterbury and serve as the judge of the tales.

Analysis

The primary function of these opening lines is to provide a physical setting and the motivation for the Canterbury pilgrimage. Chaucer's original plan, to have each pilgrim tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two more on the way back, was never completed; we have tales only on the way to Canterbury. In The Prologue are portraits of all levels of English life. The order of the portraits is important because it provides a clue as to the social standing of the different occupations. The pilgrims presented first are representative of the highest social rank, with social rank descending with every new pilgrim introduced.

Highest in the social rank are representatives of the aristocracy or those with pretensions toward nobility. First in this group are the Knight and his household, including the Squire. The second group within those of the highest social standing includes the Prioress, the Monk, and the Friar, who ought to be of the lower class, but who, as a pious beggar, has begged so well that his prosperity ironically slips him into the company of the nobles. Of these pilgrims, probably only the Knight and his son, the Squire, qualify as true aristocrats, both outwardly and inwardly. The "gentilesse" — refinement resulting from good breeding — of the Prioress and the Monk is largely external and affected.

Following this class are pilgrims whose high social rank is mainly derived from commercial wealth. Included in this group are the Merchant, who illegally made much

of his money from selling French coins (a practice that was forbidden in England at the time); the Sergeant of Law, who made his fortune by using his knowledge as a lawyer to buy up foreclosed property for practically nothing; the Clerk, who belongs with this group of pilgrims because of his gentle manners and extensive knowledge of books; and the Franklin, who made enough money to become a country gentleman and is in a position to push for a noble station. (It is evident both from the relationship of the Franklin's portrait to that of the guildsmen, presented next, and from Harry Bailey's scornful remarks to him, however, that he is not yet of the noble class).

The next class of pilgrims is the guildsmen, consisting of men who belong to something similar to specialized unions of craftsmen guilds. Among this group of specialized laborers are the Haberdasher, the Dyer, the Carpenter, the Weaver, and the Tapestry-Maker. None of them tell a tale.

A middle-class group of pilgrims comprises the next lower position of social rank. First presented in this group is the Cook, whom we might consider out of place — ranked too high — but who, as a master of his trade, is greatly respected by his fellow travelers. Also included in this social class are the Shipman, because of his immense knowledge of and travels throughout the world, and the Physician, a doctor of medicine (a career that was less revered in the Middle Ages than it is now). The Wife of Bath, who is the last of this group to be presented, is included in this group because of her knowledge and deportment and her many other pilgrimages.

The Parson and the Plowman comprise the next group of pilgrims, the virtuous poor or lower class. Each, although very poor, represents all of the Christian virtues. The last group of pilgrims include those of the immoral lower class. Among this group of pilgrims are the Manciple, who profits from buying food for the lawyers in the Inns of Court, and the vulgar Miller, who steals from his customers. The Reeve tells dirty stories and cheats his trusting young master, and the corrupt Summoner takes bribes. Last, and most corrupt in this litany of undesirables is the Pardoner, who sells false pardons and fake relics.

Character list

The Narrator

The narrator makes it quite clear that he is also a character in his book. Although he is called Chaucer, we should be wary of accepting his words and opinions as Chaucer's own. In the General Prologue, the narrator presents himself as a gregarious and naïve character. Later on, the Host accuses him of being silent and sullen. Because the narrator writes down his impressions of the pilgrims from memory, whom he does and does not like, and what he chooses and chooses not to remember about the characters, tells us as much about the narrator's own prejudices as it does about the characters themselves.

The Knight

The first pilgrim Chaucer describes in the General Prologue, and the teller of the first tale. The Knight represents the ideal of a medieval Christian man-at-arms. He has participated in no less than fifteen of the great crusades of his era. Brave, experienced, and prudent, the narrator greatly admires him.

NOTES

The Wife of Bath

Bath is an English town on the Avon River, not the name of this woman's husband. Though she is a seamstress by occupation, she seems to be a professional wife. She has been married five times and had many other affairs in her youth, making her well-practiced in the art of love. She presents herself as someone who loves marriage and sex, but from what we see of her, she also takes pleasure in rich attire, talking, and arguing. She is deaf in one ear and has a gap between her front teeth, which was considered attractive in Chaucer's time. She has traveled on pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times and elsewhere in Europe as well.

The Pardoner

Pardoners granted papal indulgences—reprieves from penance in exchange for charitable donations to the Church. Many pardoners, including this one, collected profits for themselves. In fact, Chaucer's Pardoner excels in fraud, carrying a bag full of fake relics—for example, he claims to have the veil of the Virgin Mary. The Pardoner has long, greasy, yellow hair and is beardless. These characteristics were associated with shiftiness and gender ambiguity in Chaucer's time. The Pardoner also has a gift for singing and preaching whenever he finds himself inside a church.

The Miller

Stout and brawny, the Miller has a wart on his nose and a big mouth, both literally and figuratively. He threatens the Host's notion of propriety when he drunkenly insists on telling the second tale. Indeed, the Miller seems to enjoy overturning all conventions: he ruins the Host's carefully planned storytelling order; he rips doors off hinges; and he tells a tale that is somewhat blasphemous, ridiculing religious clerks, scholarly clerks, carpenters, and women.

The Prioress

Described as modest and quiet, this Prioress (a nun who is head of her convent) aspires to have exquisite taste. Her table manners are dainty, she knows French (though not the French of the court), she dresses well, and she is charitable and compassionate.

The Monk

Most monks of the Middle Ages lived in monasteries according to the Rule of Saint Benedict, which demanded that they devote their lives to "work and prayer." This Monk cares little for the Rule; his devotion is to hunting and eating. He is large, loud, and well clad in hunting boots and furs.

The Friar

Roaming priests with no ties to a monastery, friars were a great object of criticism in Chaucer's time. Always ready to befriend young women or rich men who might need his services, the friar actively administers the sacraments in his town, especially those of marriage and confession. However, Chaucer's worldly Friar has taken to accepting bribes.

The Summoner

The Summoner brings persons accused of violating Church law to ecclesiastical court. This Summoner is a lecherous man whose face is scarred by leprosy. He gets drunk frequently, is irritable, and is not particularly qualified for his position. He spouts the few words of Latin he knows in an attempt to sound educated.

The Host

The leader of the group, the Host is large, loud, and merry, although he possesses a quick temper. He mediates among the pilgrims and facilitates the flow of the tales. His title of "host" may be a pun, suggesting both an innkeeper and the Eucharist, or Holy Host.

The Parson

The only devout churchman in the company, the Parson lives in poverty, but is rich in holy thoughts and deeds. The pastor of a sizable town, he preaches the Gospel and makes sure to practice what he preaches. He is everything that the Monk, the Friar, and the Pardoner are not.

The Squire

The Knight's son and apprentice. The Squire is curly-haired, youthfully handsome, and loves dancing and courting.

The Clerk

The Clerk is a poor student of philosophy. Having spent his money on books and learning rather than on fine clothes, he is threadbare and wan. He speaks little, but when he does, his words are wise and full of moral virtue.

The Man of Law

A successful lawyer commissioned by the king. He upholds justice in matters large and small and knows every statute of England's law by heart.

The Manciple

A manciple was in charge of getting provisions for a college or court. Despite his lack of education, this Manciple is smarter than the thirty lawyers he feeds.

The Merchant

The Merchant trades in furs and other cloths, mostly from Flanders. He is part of a powerful and wealthy class in Chaucer's society.

The Shipman

Brown-skinned from years of sailing, the Shipman has seen every bay and river in England, and exotic ports in Spain and Carthage as well. He is a bit of a rascal, known for stealing wine while the ship's captain sleeps.

The Physician

The Physician is one of the best in his profession, for he knows the cause of every malady and can cure most of them. Though the Physician keeps himself in perfect physical health, the narrator calls into question the Physician's spiritual health: he rarely consults the Bible and has an unhealthy love of financial gain.

NOTES

The Franklin

The word "franklin" means "free man." In Chaucer's society, a franklin was neither a vassal serving a lord nor a member of the nobility. This particular franklin is a connoisseur of food and wine, so much so that his table remains laid and ready for food all day.

The Reeve

A reeve was similar to a steward of a manor, and this reeve performs his job shrewdly—his lord never loses so much as a ram to the other employees, and the vassals under his command are kept in line. However, he steals from his master.

The Plowman

The Plowman is the Parson's brother and is equally good-hearted. A member of the peasant class, he pays his tithes to the Church and leads a good Christian life.

The Guildsmen

Listed together, the five Guildsmen appear as a unit. English guilds were a combination of labor unions and social fraternities: craftsmen of similar occupations joined together to increase their bargaining power and live communally. All five Guildsmen are clad in the livery of their brotherhood.

The Cook

The Cook works for the Guildsmen. Chaucer gives little detail about him, although he mentions a crusty sore on the Cook's leg.

The Yeoman

The servant who accompanies the Knight and the Squire. The narrator mentions that his dress and weapons suggest he may be a forester.

The Second Nun

The Second Nun is not described in the General Prologue, but she tells a saint's life for her tale.

The Nun's Priest

Like the Second Nun, the Nun's Priest is not described in the General Prologue. His story of Chanticleer, however, is well crafted and suggests that he is a witty, self-effacing preacher.

Themes and Setting of The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

Chaucer explores various social conditions of his period and the manners of people in 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue '. The poem explores the ugly truth of life in all aspects of society. It is a satire on Social Status, Corruption in Church, Friendship and Companionship, for all the classes of medieval society except the highest aristocracy and the lowest order of life. 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue 'is set on a spring evening at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, a suburb at the southern end of London Bridge.

Form and Structure of The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue' is written in Middle English, a form of English spoken from around the 12th to 15th centuries. It serves as an introductory note to the

tale-tellers and their host. Also, it explains the context in which the tales are being told. Chaucer wrote his poem in rhyming couplets with every two lines rhyming with each other. Though they are divided into stanzas, it is structured with the lines of iambic pentameter, with five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables. The narrator opens the General Prologue with a description of the return of spring. The travelers were a diverse group who, like the narrator, were on their way to Canterbury.

Tone of The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

Chaucer uses a satirical tone in his Canterbury Tales, especially in his description of characters in 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue'. Chaucer is poking fun at the representatives of medieval society through his handpicked characters. The main focus of Chaucer's satire is on the medieval Church and its representatives, clearly presented through the ecclesiastical characters.

Use of Irony in The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

Chaucer makes ample use of irony in the 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue', for his main purpose is a criticism of medieval society. The irony is also employed in the portrait of the Friar, especially when Chaucer addresses him as: "He was a noble pillar of his order" when he is mercenary focusing only on money. The Monk's character too is portrayed satirically. For, he is fond of hunting and keeps a large number of fine horses in his stable. His worldliness is clearly exposed with his partiality for a roast swan.

The Prioress's character too ironically represented in contrast to the general expectation of a prioress's attitudes and nature. She wore a brooch in her hand with the inscription "Love conquers all" in Latin. Further, in the character of the Wife of Bath we see the irony employed. Chaucer says she is a good woman who had "Housbondes at Chirche dore she hadde five."

Symbolism in The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

In 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue' Chaucer uses symbols to represent his view on the period and the social condition. Every character is a representation of the social class to which they belong. The first symbol is the springtime. The prologue opens in April the season that symbolizes rebirth and fresh beginnings. The Squire, too, with his liveliness represents the season, for Chaucer compares him to the freshness of the month of May.

Description of garments, too, symbolizes the personality beneath each clothes. The Physicians clothe with rich silk and unique fur reveals his passion and desire for wealth. Also, the excessive floral design in the Squire's clothe represents his vanity of youth.

Moreover, the physical appearance of each character described by the poet too symbolizes the characteristics and the social section they belong to. The Merchant's forked beard could be taken as a symbol of his duplicity as Chaucer hints. And, Miller's appearance "round and ruddy" stereotypically represents the peasant's community most clearly suited for rough and simple work. The Pardoner's glaring eyes and limp hair illustrate his fraudulence.

NOTES 

Analysis of The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

"Here bygynneth the Book of the tales of Caunterbury," thus begins 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue 'of Chaucer. He intentionally makes his purpose clear with this simple line. Though the work of art is titled as "tales" one could see that it is written in verse, the popular form of his time. In this general prologue, Chaucer delineates his characters (tale-tellers), handpicked from 14th century England with his unbiased nature and artistic ability.

Stanza 1 (Lines 1-18)
Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licóur
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem Natúre in hir corages,
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

In the first stanza of 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue', Chaucer gives a beautiful description of April, the spring that has inspired a universal feeling. The April Shower added with the fragrance is carried by the west wind, and the music produced by the little birds seems to intrigue the people to go on a pilgrimage. They go across countries looking for far off saints on strange shores. The people of England from all corners come down to Canterbury to seek the holy martyr, St. Thomas, the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170. He was murdered by followers of the king Henry II in Canterbury Cathedral, against his conflict over the rights and privileges of the Church. Soon after his death, he was canonized by Pope Alexander III. It was believed that he helps them out in their sickness, thus, the pilgrims across the country visit as a way of respect.

Stanzas 2-3 (Lines 19-42)
Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye

NOTES

Of sondry folk, by áventure y-falle
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a Knyght than wol I first bigynne.

In stanza two, Chaucer shares his visit to Canterbury. During his journey, he stayed at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. Another twenty-nine pilgrim too joined him and by chance, they were all going to Canterbury. Since the tavern had enough rooms and spacious stables they decided to stay at that place. By evening he made acquaintance with them all and they formed a fellowship for their purpose were the same. The poet promises to begin his journey along with them the next morning. Nevertheless, since he had some more time to spare, the poet decides to describe the characters he met that day before he commences his journey.

Stanzas 4-6 (Lines 43-78)
A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honóur, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honóured for his worthynesse.
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce.
In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,—
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,

NOTES 

Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
At many a noble armee hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene
In lyste thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye
Agayn another hethen in Turkye;
And evermoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde,
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght.
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay;
Of fustian he wered a gypon
Al bismótered with his habergeon;
For he was late y-come from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

Chaucer begins his description of the characters with the Knight in stanzas four to six of 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue'. The Knight is represented as a distinguished man, for he has followed chivalry, truth, honor freedom, and courtesy. He had been a part of many wars and expeditions at places like Algezir, Belmarye (Benamarin), Lyeys (Ayas), and Satalye (Attalia). Also, he had been on many naval expeditions in the Mediterranean. He has taken part in about fifteen deadly battles. Also, he has fought thrice for his faith (Christianity) and slew his enemies always. This knight has once been with the lord of Palatia against Turkey. The knight is distinguished and wise but as Chaucer describes there is no trace of such pride in his behavior for he is amiable and modest with his companions.

In stanza six, Chaucer gives the detail of his dressing. He has come on a fine horse but wasn't dress up in the manner knight's will dress up in usual. He wore a doublet of fustian (coarse cloth), stained and dark with smudges where his armor had left marks. It looked as if he has come to do his pilgrimages immediately after he had returned home from his service.

Stanza 7 (Lines 79-100)
With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squiér,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his statúre he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie

In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede.
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.
Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde;
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde;
He koude songes make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Chaucer gives a description of the knight's son, a young squire who accompanied him in the pilgrimage. He is a merry bachelor about the age of twenty with curly locks as if they had been laid in press. Like his father, he too bore a remarkable appearance with agility and strength through moderate in height. He had been out once with cavalry and conducted himself valiantly in Flaundres (Flanders), in Artoys (Artios), and Pycar dye (Picardy).

For his dressing, he wore a garment so embroidered as if it were a meadow full of fresh flowers, white and red. He bore a fresh appearance by singing or fluting all the time, like the fresh flowers of May. Also, he seemed to be a talented youth for he can make songs and recite, fight in a tournament and dance, and paint well and write. He is a lover who loved his lady fervently that he could sleep like a nightingale at night. Similar to his father (knight), he was courteous, humble, and serviceable, and carved to serve his father at the table.

Stanza 8 (Lines 101-117)
A Yeman hadde he and servántz namo
At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
A sheef of pecock arwes bright and kene,
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily—
Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe—
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
A not-heed hadde he, with a broun viság̃e.
Of woodecraft wel koude he al the uságe.
Upon his arm he baar a gay bracér,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that oother syde a gay daggere,
Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;

NOTES 

A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene.
An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.
A forster was he, soothly as I gesse.

The knight brought along with him a yeoman, and in the stanza, eight Chaucer speaks of him. The yeoman wore a coat and a hood of green. He carried carefully under his belt a neatly sheathed sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen. On the other, he carried a dagger, sharp as the point of the spear. As a yeoman, he dressed up and bore a mighty bow in his hand. Upon his arms, he bore a saucy brace to ward it from the bowstrings. On his breast, he wore a medal of St. Christopher (the patron saint of travelers), made of bright silver. He also carried a hunting horn and the belt he wore was green, by all these Chaucer states that he could be a forester.

Stanzas 9-10 (Lines 119-163)
Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte Loy,
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle:
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
Thát no drope ne fille upon hire brist;
In curteisie was set ful muchel hir list.
Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.
And sikerly she was of greet desport,
And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel breed;
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,

Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was;
Hire nose tretys, her eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal and ther-to softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And ther-on heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned A,
And after, Amor vincit omnia.
Another Nonne with hire hadde she,
That was hire chapeleyne, and Preestes thre.

Following his description of the knight and his companions in lines 119, Chaucer now turns his direction towards ecclesiastical characters. The prioress has come with a company of another nun, her chaplain, and three priests. She was very simple and shy, known as madam Eglantine. Also, spoke French taught at Stratford-atte-Bowe, not the one spoken in Paris. Moreover, she was very well trained in table manners, for she neither let a morsel fall from her lips nor dips her fingers too deep in the sauce. Though she is a nun, she seems to have a special zest for courtesy and tried to present herself of high stature. She appeared dignified in all her deals and expressed sympathy and tender feels.

In her appearance, she looked elegant with fine features: grey eyes, elegant nose, small but soft and red lips. She also wore an elegant cloak and her veils were gracefully pleated. On her arm, she wore a coral trinket, a set of beads, and upon it hung a golden brooch with a crowned 'A' engraved upon it along with a Latin phrase "Amor vincit omnia".

Stanza 11 (Lines 164-206)

A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gýnglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,
And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle,
Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.
The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,—
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,

NOTES 

Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,—
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
Or swynken with his handes and labóure,
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therfore he was a prikasour aright:
Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves y-púrfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat.
He was nat pale, as a forpyned goost:
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

The Monk was a leader in fashions. He was passionate about inspecting farming and hunting. Also, he had many horses in his stables. When he rode, his bridle jingled like a chapel bell. The monk preferred to ignore the old rules of St. Maur or St. Benet because he felt it to be old and strict. He followed the modern spacious way and never regarded the text that says hunters are not holy men or that a monk who spends his time outside the cloister is like a fish out of water. Ignoring all those words of the saints he preferred to be a hard rider, even though he is a monk. Also, he had hounds as swift as birds. Even his sleeves were furnished with the finest fur in the land. He has fastened his hood under his chin with a fashionable gold pin.

He was a fat and impressive priest with a bald head and a glowing face. His bright eyes rolled in his head and looked like a furnace of lead. His boots were supple and he rode on a fine horse as brown as berry. Thus, Chaucer comments that with his appearance he would definitely pass for a stately prelate. In no way he looked like a tormented soul which is expected of a monk.

NOTES

Stanza 12 (Lines 207-270)

A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solémpne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hym-self, moore than a curát,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun.
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
There as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;
For unto a povre ordre for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel y-shryve;
For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt
He wiste that a man was répentaunt;
For many a man so hard is of his herte
He may nat wepe al-thogh hym soore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepynge and preyéres
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His typet was ay farsed full of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a murye note:
Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
Fór to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
And over-al, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.

NOTES 

Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous;
[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt,
Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;]
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his In principio,
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente:
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe.
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe,
For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scolér,
But he was lyk a maister, or a pope;
Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle, out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed for his wantownesse,
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Hubérd.

In 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue', the next character Chaucer introduces us is the "Friar." The friar is a wanton and merry fellow. He is a limiter and a festive man. Of all the four orders (Dominican, Franciscan, Augustinian) there is no one who knows flattery as his. He seems to be popular among the franklins and also with esteemed women of the town. For, he was qualified to hear confessions and had a special license too from the Pope. Pleasantly he heard confessions and pronounced absolutions. He was an easy man in giving penance for he made a decent living with that. Also, he had a merry voice, and he could sing and play on a harp.

A worthy man as he was, he had acquaintance with every innkeeper and barmaid than with leper or a beggar woman. In the place where it is profitable, he served amiably but with poor, he ensured that he gets a farthing even if he couldn't get a coin. Thus, he earned his income much more than his regular wages. His name as Chaucer said is "Hubérd"

Stanza 13 (Lines 271-285)
A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye, and hye on horse he sat;
Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat;
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
His resons he spak ful solémpnely,
Sownynge alway thencrees of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kept for any thing
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.

This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So estatly was he of his gouvernaunce,
With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.
For sothe he was a worthy man with-alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.

Following the characters of the church, Chaucer introduces us to the merchant who stands to symbolize the people of business. The merchant with a forking beard and in motley dress sat high on a horse. On his head, he had a Flemish beaver hat. His boots were fairly and neatly buckled. He stated his arguments solemnly, talking always of his increasing profit. Further, he expressed his concern about the sea between Middleburg and Orwell being protected against any hostile actions. With his intelligence as an advantage, he managed his situations well. Certainly, Chaucer sees him as a worthy man, but he wonders what would be the reaction of other people.

Stanza 14 (Lines 286-310)
A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde longe y-go.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and ther-to sobrely.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office;
For hym was lévere háve at his beddes heed
Twénty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fíthele, or gay sautrie.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wher-with to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede;
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quyk and ful of hy senténce.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche;
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

In this stanza of 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue', we are moving on to have a look at a learned man, a "clerk" from Oxford. He is a man who learned logic and he came on a horse that looked as lean as a rake. Even he wasn't very fat but looked emaciated and self-disciplined. He also wore a simple dressing. On the whole, he looked like a man

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who preferred to lead a simple life with his books than leading a rich life filled with ornaments and gaudy garments. Even though he was a philosopher, he had but little gold in his strongbox. Still, he diligently prayed for the souls of those who provided him with resources to attend the schools. It was evident that he spent more on study than on anything.

Compared to his other companions he has spoken only a little. Even then he spoke with formality and respect. Further, whatever he spoke was short and lively and full of elevated content filled with virtue. Altogether he seemed a man who would gladly learn and gladly teach.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. **To which age does Chaucer belong?**
2. **What kind of a writer do you consider Chaucer to be?**
3. **What are the main features that are represented by Chaucer in his works?**
4. **What were the main characteristics of the fourteenth century England?**
5. **What was Chaucer's intention while writing this great Prologue To The Cantrabury Tales?**

Stanza 15 (Lines 311-333)

A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the Parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence—
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.
For his science and for his heigh renoun,
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:
Al was fee symple to hym in effect;
His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.
Ther-to he koude endite and make a thyng,
Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

Now, Chaucer diverts his attention towards the man of law, prudent and high ranking attorney. The lawyer seemed to have visited St, Paul's often where the lawyers generally gather. He was judicious and of great dignity, for he has spoken with such knowledge.

It seems that he had been a judge in the court of assizes by royal appointment, for his knowledge and reputation. He had a great yearly income that he spent on buying lands. Moreover, he was a very busy man for in his yearbook, he had all the accounts of the case for which he had found solutions.

Further, he knew how to draw up legal documents that enabled him to be free from flaws in his writing. He also remembered every statute by heart; still, he wore a simple particolored coat, girded with a belt of silk with small stripes. Chaucer makes a unique contradiction with his rich knowledge and simple appearance.

Stanza 16 (Lines 334-364)
A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye.
Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verraily felicitee parfit.
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His breed, his ale, was alweys after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,
Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,
After the sondry sesons of the yeer;
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.
Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;
Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
An anlaas, and a gipser al of silk,
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour;
Was nowher such a worthy vavasour.

On their company, Chaucer had a Frankeleyn (franklin) who had a beard as white as a lily and he is a humorous man. In the morning he loved to have his bread dipped in wine. He leads a life of delight, as Chaucer comments he was a son of Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher, and sage who founded Epicureanism. Considered as Saint Julian (patron of hospitality) in his country, for he was a great householder.

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His hospitality is well known for his house is stocked with wine and never short of baked pies, or fish, or meat. He had the independence of choice that he changed his midday meal and supper depending on the season. And he had many partridges in pens and bream and pike in his fish pond. His dining table was made all through the day to serve anyone on call. Moreover, he presided as lord and sire at court sessions also had been the Member of Parliament many times. He had also been a sheriff and an auditor of taxes. He had a dagger and a purse all of the silk hung at his belt as white as morning milk. Chaucer concludes his description with the note that "Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour" no one could find such a worthy landowner as him anywhere.

Stanza 17 (Lines 365-383)

An Haberdasshere, and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer,—
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
Of a solémpne and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,
But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle, on a deys.
Éverich, for the wisdom that he kan,
Was shaply for to been an alderman;
For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente,
And elles certeyn were they to blame.
It is ful fair to been y-cleped Madame,
And goon to vigilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche y-bore.

In their company, they had the people of the working class: a haberdasher and a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, and a tapestry-maker. They all were clothed in livery of solemn and a great parish guild. They had the equipment adorned all freshly and their knives too were wrought in silver. Their belts and their purses showed that they could be esteemed as solid citizens and occupy the dais in a city hall. Each had enough possessions and income to be an alderman. They had wives who are equal to their worth and success otherwise, they would be blamed. It was a credit to be called "my lady" and to go to feasts on holiday eves heading the procession and have a gown royally carried.

Stanza 18 (Lines 384-393)

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,
And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Máken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.

But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he;
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

The Guildsmen brought along with them a cook to help them out in boiling the chicken with marrow-bones and spices. The cook seems to be an expert in cooking for he knew how to distinguish the London ale by flavor. He was skilled at the roast, seethe, boil and fry. Also, he could make thick soup and bake a tasty pie. Unfortunately, he had an open shore on his shin, although he could make minced capon with cream, sugar and flour, and other best ingredients.

Stanza 19 (Lines 394-411)

A Shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
For aught I woot he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,
In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he y-drawe
Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
His herberwe and his moone, his lode-menage,
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew alle the havenes, as they were,
From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.
His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.

There was a shipman in the company of the pilgrims, who hailed far west, could be from Dartmouth. He rode upon a farmer's horse up to the best of his ability to match up with his other companions. For his clothing, he wore coarse stuff going down to the knee. He had a dagger hanging on a string from his neck under his arm and down. It looked as if the hot summer had tanned his color brown.

Chaucer calls him a good fellow, though he had drawn wine from the merchant when he was asleep without bothering about conscience. But, in his ability to calculate the tides, currents, the approaching perils, the harbor, the position of the moon, and navigation, there was none to equal him from Hull to Cartagena (Spain). He was well versed with all the ports as they stood from Gottland to Cape of Finistere and every creek in Britain and

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Spain. Chaucer concludes the description of the shipman with the name of his vessel as The Maudelayne.

Stanza 20 (Lines 412-445)

With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;
In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel
In houres, by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymáges for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
And where they engendred and of what humour.
He was a verray, parfit praktisour;
The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To sende him drogges and his letuaries;
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And De{“y}scorides, and eek Rufus,
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestíble.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal.
And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial;
Therfore he lovede gold in special.

Along with them rode a Doctour of Phisik (doctor of medicine), who had no match for him in medicine and surgery. It seems like he was well instructed in astronomy too. Being an accomplished practitioner, he knew the cause of every sickness. Once he gets a clue of the sickness he provides the remedy instantaneously. All his apothecaries were aware of the medicine that he would suggest that they are ready always with the medicine. Chaucer makes a comment that they both earn from the other’s guile. The poet says that he rarely

consults the Bible and has an unhealthy love of financial gain. Particularly, he saves his profit in gold for he had a special love for it.

Stanza 21 (Lines 446-477)

A Good Wif was ther of biside Bathe,
But she was som-del deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite y-teyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve;
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe;
But ther-of nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
And thries hadde she been at Jérusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Cologne.
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esily she sat,
Y-wympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
And on hire feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe;
Of remedies of love she knew per chauncé,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.

Following the doctor of medicine, Chaucer takes his readers into the journey of understanding the character "Wife of Bath." It is often considered as Chaucer's masterly creation. It seems that she is a respectable woman in society, unfortunately, has some difficulty in hearing. Her skills in cloth making had surpassed many cloth-makers of Ypres and Ghent. Also, she had the privilege of offering before any women in the parish could do. Further, she wore a hander kerchief as exaggerated by Chaucer could weigh up to ten pounds. Her stockings too were of fine scarlet red and she wore shore very supple and new.

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She had been a worthy woman all her life. Her chief distinction is that she had married five times "Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve," not to mention the several affairs she had in youth. Besides, she was a wide traveler who visited important shrines in Rome, Bologne, Galicia, and Cologne. She had been to Jerusalem too, but the purpose of her visit cannot be claimed to be solely for the purpose of faith. In addition, she knew a trick or two of amatory art: "Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce, / For she koude of that art the olde daunce."

Stanza 22 (Lines 478-529)

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre Person of a Toun;
But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes Gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient;
And swich he was y-preved ofte sithes.
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parisshens aboute,
Of his offrýng and eek of his substaunce;
He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visíte
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte and afterward he taughte.
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
And this figure he added eek therto,
That if gold ruste, what shal iren doo?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive
By his clennesse how that his sheep sholde lyve.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londoun, unto Seinte Poules,
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;

But dwelte at hoom and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde, and noght a mercenarie.
And though he hooly were and vertuous,
He was to synful man nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng díscreet and benygne.
To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
He waited after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience;
But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselve.

Following all these characters, Chaucer presents a good man of religion. He was a poor parson of a town, but with rich holy thoughts. Being a scholar himself he could preach the gospel truth. Also, it seemed that he earnestly preached to his parishioners. To speak of his character he was benign, diligent, and full patient in adversity. He set a noble example to his parishioners for he was a man to act first before speaking. From the Gospel he got a proverb that became the ideology for his life: "if gold gets rusty, what will then iron do?" Similarly, if a priest goes evil way, there is no wonder a commoner would go the same way. Unlike others, he preferred to stay put in his home to look after his sheep (parishioners).

He was wise and gracious in his teaching for he believed that his task is to show fair behavior and draw people to heaven. Unlike, many other priests he had expected any ceremonial show or reverence. He taught the doctrine of Christ and his disciples, at the same time followed what he preached.

Stanza 23 (Lines 530-542)
With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,
That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother;
A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best, with al his hoole herte,
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte.
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
His tithes payede he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.

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The Parson came along with his brother, a plowman. He was a true and good worker, living in peace and perfect charity. He loved God wholeheartedly in all situations even in adversity. Following the scripture, he loved his neighbors' as he loved himself. He would thrash his corn and helped the poor if it was in his power. He paid his taxes in full and on time. Clad in a tabard smoke he rode on a mare.

Stanzas 24-25 (Lines 543-567)

Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,
A Somnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and myself,—ther were namo.
The Millere was a stout carl for the nones;
Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones.
That proved wel, for over-al, ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and thereon stood a toft of herys,
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys;
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.

The other travelers include a Reeve, a Miller, a Summoner, a Pardoner, and then a Manciple and the poet himself. The Miler was a bulky fellow, who sack the ram in all the wrestling matches. He was short shouldered and broad-chested. There was no door he couldn't lift off its hinges or break with his head. He was a wrangler and buffoon and that was worst of sin and lewdness. For his dressing, he wore a white coat and a blue hood. He had a talent for playing the bagpipe. The poet humorously makes a comment that he brought them all out of town by blowing his bagpipe.

Stanza 26 (Lines 568-587)

A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achátours myghte take exemple
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
For, wheither that he payde or took by taille,

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Algate he wayted so in his achaat
That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?
Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To maken hym lyve by his propre good,
In honour dettelees, but if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;
And able for to helpen al a shire
In any caas that myghte falle or happe;
And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe

There was this good-natured Maunciple (Manciple) of the Inner Temple (law school) who also rode with them. All buyers of provisions may learn from him to be wide in buying. For, whether he paid in cash or bought on credit, he was always careful and made a good bargain. He had more than thirsty masters who were well versed in law but he fooled them all. For, he made good bargains to get his own gains.

Stanza 27 (Lines 588-624)
The Reve was a sclendre colerik man.
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
His heer was by his erys round y-shorn;
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
Wel wiste he, by the droghte and by the reyn,
The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
Was hoolly in this reves governyng;
And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
There koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
There nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.
His wonyng was ful fair upon an heeth;
With grene trees shadwed was his place.

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He koude bettre than his lord purchace;
Ful riche he was a-stored pryvely.
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This Reve sat upon a ful good stot,
That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

The Reeve (farm-bailiff) was a slender, irritable man. His beard was shaven as closely as he could, and his hair stood above his ears. His legs were long and lean like a staff. He took good care of his garners and bins. No accountant could get the better of him. For, he knew whether there was rain or drought and how much would be his harvest. He was entrusted with all of his Lord's belonging. There is no one in the neighborhood that does not know of his deceit or tricks yet they are afraid of him to speak a word of it. He impressed his lord with his handicraft. He came on a nag, dappled grey, and called Scot. For his dressing, he put on a long overcoat of dark blue, and by his side hung a rusty sword. He rode on the hindmost of the cavalcade.

Stanza 28 (Lines 625-670)

A Somonour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
With scaled browes blake and piled berd,—
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree,—

No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.
But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
Ay "Questio quid juris" wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
And prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.
And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe,
In swich caas, of the erchedekenes curs,
But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he sholde y-punysshed be:
"Purs is the erchedekenes helle," seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede.
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith;
And also war him of a Significavit.
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,
As greet as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.

The summoner who rode with them had a fiery-red cherub's face for it covered with red pimples. He was as hot and wanton as a sparrow with black scabby brows and a thin beard. His appearance scared the children away. He loved garlic, onions, and leek. Also, he preferred his wines as red as blood. Chaucer ironically calls him a good fellow for he would any man to have his concubine a good quart of wine. Also, he knew many other tricks to have his way. Since he knew the secret of all the people and volunteered himself to be their advisor. He has dissuaded many people from being worried about excommunicated from society. He had a round cake set upon which he intended as a shield. The summoner has a belief that money is everything and he feels that one could have their way out with money.

Stanza 29 (Lines 671-716)

With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
Ful loude he soong, "Com hider, love, to me!"

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This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde.
But thynne it lay, by colpons, oon and oon;
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walét.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
Ne was ther swich another pardoner;
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that, he seyde, was Oure Lady veyl;
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes
He made the person and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie;
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.

Along with the summoner came a pardoner from Rouncivale, his friend and comrade. He had come straight from the court of Rome and sand loudly, Come hither, love to me! He

had hair as yellow as wax that hung as smoothly as a hank of flax. Because of his liveliness of sprit of vanity he had not worn a hood like others. He rode in a new style by looking disheveled and bareheaded except for his cap. Is wallet was full of pardons from Rome. He had a few relics with him and by exhibiting them to poor parsons he earned more money than he could receive in two months. After all, he could sing a song and tell a story or preach in church.

Stanza 30-32 (Lines 717-752)

Now have I toold you shortly, in a clause,
Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this compaignye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
And after wol I telle of our viage
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But first, I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
That ye narette it nat my vileynye,
Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce, as ny as evere he kan,
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
"The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede."
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

In stanza thirty of 'The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue', Chaucer has come to the conclusion of his portrayal of characters: of their rank, dress, the number, and also the purpose of their journey. They all have gathered in this Tabard Inn beside The Bell. Now he goes further to state the way they all conducted themselves on the first night at the Inn.

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First of all, he expects the readers to accept his apology if he speaks plainly for he was about to use the words and phrases exactly as it was spoken by them. Christ spoke out plainly in the Holy Scriptures, and there is no way to reproach it. Similarly, as Plato said, "the words should be as cousin to deed."

Further, he expects his readers to forgive him if he neglects the order and degree and what is due to a social position in this tale here. He also says that he is short of wit. And with that note, he started to speak of the host who cordially welcomed him and all the guests of the day.

Stanzas 33-37 (Lines 753-823)

Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,
And to the soper sette he us anon,
And served us with vitaille at the beste:
Strong was the wyn and wel to drynke us leste.
A semely man Oure Hooste was with-alle
For to been a marchal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe;
Boold of his speche, and wys, and well y-taught,
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek thereto he was right a myrie man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges;
And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
At ones in this herberwe as is now.
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how;
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
"Ye goon to Canterbury—God yow speede,
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
For trewely confort ne myrthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if you liketh alle, by oon assent,
For to stonden at my juggement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,

Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
Hoold up youre hond, withouten moore speche."
Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche;
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted hym withouten moore avys,
And bad him seye his verdit, as hym leste.
"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn;
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye
In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventúres that whilom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth hym beste of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas,
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost,
Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And, for to make yow the moore mury,
I wol myselven gladly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;
And whoso wole my juggement withseye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."
This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
That he wolde vouche-sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And of our tales juge and réportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris;
And we wol reuled been at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus, by oon assent,
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
Withouten any lenger taryynge.

The host seems to be a striking man fit to be a marshall in a hall. He had bright eyes and looked well suited to his atmosphere. He was a merry man thus entertained the guests after supper. At this point, he suggests to the pilgrims about his intention to join

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the company. He further suggests them to tell two tales during their journey towards Canterbury, as well as during their return. In this way, he suggested that they could be saved from boredom. Also, he volunteers to be their guide and a judge for their story if they ever happen to accept his idea of storytelling.

Stanza 38 (Lines 824-843)
Amorwe, whan that day gan for to sprynge,
Up roos oure Hoost and was oure aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok;
And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,
Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas;
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste:
Ye woot youre foreward and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song accorde,
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As ever mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for all that by the wey is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.
Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioresse.
And ye, sire Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,
Ne studieth noght. Ley hond to, every man."

In the morning, their host awakened them all and offered to take up the journey along with them, if they have any intention to follow his suggestion. Further, he offered to listen to the story and be a moderator and an unbiased judge for their stories. The members of the Canterbury party readily agreed to his suggestion and invited him to be their fair judge. They further agreed to go by his guidance and directions. Thus, everything was settled and they all receded without further delay.

Stanza 39 (Lines 844-860)
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And, shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by áventúre, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght;
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By foreward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,

He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."
And with that word we ryden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manére.

In this concluding part of the prologue, Chaucer further explains how the Inn Keeper joined them on the journey. So, the next morning they all set out towards, Canterbury. While they were a few paces away from the Inn, the host reminds them of their agreement. Further, he plans to pick a lot on the names of the passengers. Unanimously, they decide to go by the lot. that the one who is chosen for the first lot will have to lead. Soon everybody began to draw a lot and the first lot fell upon the Knight. It wasn't clear whether it was by chance or destiny or accident. When he saw that it was his turn, the knight accepted it readily as if it was a command from heaven and commences his tale as they resume their journey towards Canterbury.

1.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **How many pilgrims contribute to the pilgrimage and to the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales?**
2. **What was behind Chaucer 's portrayal of his pilgrims and narratives?**
3. **What does the Prologue to Canterbury try to depict?**
4. **Did Chaucer complete his Prologue To The Canterbury Tales?**
5. **Chaucer's group of pilgrims constitute a picture of the society of his times." Discuss how many groups of people are there?**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Do you think that Chaucer was a social reformer? How?**
2. **Write a short note on the ecclesiastical characters is The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.**
3. **What are the main features of Chaucer's characterization?**
4. **Comment on the character of the Wife of Bath.**
5. **Discuss Chaucer's contribution to English Literature.**

1.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **Who did the narrator meet at the Tabbard Inn?**
   a. He met the King of England
   b. He met the Archbishop of Canterbury
   c. He met 29 pilgrims
   d. He met St. Thomas a Becket

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2. Why was everyone at The Tabbard?

a. There was a band of highwaymen on the road and the people were afraid to travel.
b. They were waiting for the King's soldiers to come and escort them.
c. They were on their way making a pilgrimage to Canterbury.
d. They had come to celebrate the baptism of the King's youngest son.
e. Over half the group had taken ill. They were recuperating at the inn.

3. What were they going to see?

a. They were going to see the relics of the True Cross.
b. They were going to see a special presentation of the Passion play.
c. They were going to see a spring that was supposed to have miraculous healing powers.
d. They were going to see the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket.

4. He has been in many battles. He was true and gentle.

a. The Knight
b. The Yeoman
c. The Sergeant at Law
d. The Merchant

5. He was the son of the Knight, in his twenties, agile, strong, and happy-go-lucky.

a. The Plowman
b. The Squire
c. The Reeve
d. The Pardoner

6. He was the Squire's servant. He was a woodsman, a Robin Hood type character.

a. The Host
b. The Shipman
c. The Yeoman
d. The Manciple

7. She spoke French, was dainty and pleasant, and the picture of medieval beauty.

a. The Prioress/Nun
b. The Wife of Bath
c. The Cook
d. The Weaver

8. These people were in the nun's group.

a. One priest and three students
b. Four nuns
c. Two converts, one priest, and one nun
d. One nun and three priests

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9. He was bald and fat. He had a preference for fine clothes and luxuries. He didn't like hard work, but he did like to ride.

a. The Knight
b. The Monk
c. The Squire
d. The Franklin

10. He takes bribes for easy penance. He knows the taverns and barmaids better than he does the lepers and beggars. He is rather aristocratic, and he lisps.

a. The Pardoner
b. The Parson
c. The Friar
d. The Summoner

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT II

ERA OF BRITISH POETRY

STRUCTURE

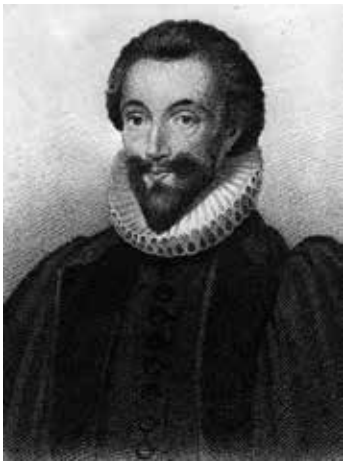
2.1 Learning Objective
2.2 John Donne: “Death be not Proud”
2.3 Andrew Marvell: “To His Coy Mistress”
2.4 Thomas Gray: “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”
2.5 William Blake: “The Poison Tree”
2.6 Review Questions
2.7 Multiple Choice Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will know about:

- Era of British poetry and its themes.
- Famous poets from Britain with their writings.
- Poems that were written by given famous poets.

2.2 JOHN DONNE: "DEATH BE NOT PROUD"



John Donne was born into a Roman Catholic family on the 22nd of January in 1572 in London, United Kingdom. His parents were John Donne, a wealthy Londoner, and Elizabeth Heywood. Thomas More, a famous catholic martyr, was his grandfather. Unfortunately, his father died in 1576 when he was only four, leaving Elizabeth alone with the responsibility of bringing up young children. After his father's demise, his mother remarried with a surgeon, Dr. John Syminges. Later, she became the dean of St. Paul's. Unfortunately, she died in 1632. As John belonged to a religious family, he was educated privately during his early years. In 1583, he took admission at Hart Hall, Oxford University. There, he studied for three years and left without graduation because of his Catholic beliefs. According to him, the Oath of supremacy was against his beliefs. It was required for the completion of the degree. Later, in 1591, he got admission in Thieves Inn Legal School in London to pursue his education. However, during and after his education, he spent much of his precious time on literature, travel, and pastime. In 1615, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University.

John Donne, a great preacher and orator, fell ill in 1624. He documented his illness in his publication, "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions." However, after facing tragedies of life, this prolific figure breathed his last on the 31st of March 1631. He was buried in old St Paul's Cathedral.

John Donne's famous quotes

1. "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
   Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
   For those, whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
   Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me" (Death Be Not Proud)
2. No man is an Island, entire itself;
   Every man is a piece of the Continent,
   A part of the main." (Mediation XVII)
3. "All mankind is of one author, and is one volume;
   When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out
   Of the book, but translated into a better language." (Mediation XVII)
4. "Love built on beauty, soon as beauty, dies."

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Death be not proud

Poem

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Summary

The speaker directly addresses and personifies Death, telling it not to be arrogant just because some people find death scary and intimidating. In fact, death is neither of these things because people don't really die when death—whom the speaker pities—comes to them; nor will the speaker truly die when death arrives for him.

Comparing death to rest and sleep—which are like images of death—the speaker anticipates death to be even more pleasurable than these activities. Furthermore, it's often the best people who go with death—which represents nothing more than the resting of the body and the arrival of the soul in the afterlife.

Death is fully controlled by fate and luck, and often administered by rulers or people acting desperately. The speaker points out that death is also associated with poison, war, and illness. Drugs and magic spells are more effective than death when it comes to rest. With all this in mind, what possible reason could death have for being so puffed up with pride?

Death is nothing but a mere sleep in between people's earthly lives and the eternal afterlife, in which death can visit them no more. It is instead death—or a certain idea of death as something to be scared of—that is going to die.

Explanation

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

The speaker creates a personified version of Death and starts a direct conversation. He presents a strong image of Death and tells it to not be pleased with itself. It tells Death that although people call it powerful and are afraid of it, it is not like this in real life. The speaker acquires a tone of complete superiority over Death. By saying "thou art not so", the speaker uses "apostrophe" by calling a subject who cannot respond at the moment. By using this apostrophe, readers know that there will be only one speaker throughout the poem who will define the characters of others. Death, though personified, cannot respond to the accusations made by the speaker to defend itself.

The speaker tells Death its reality. Death considers itself grandeur because it thinks it has the power of taking people's life away. The speaker says that it is not the truth because Death has no such power. He further degrades Death by calling it "poor Death." He makes fun of Death for living under the misconception of its powers for so long. Next, the speaker challenges Death by saying that it cannot kill the speaker. He is not afraid of threatening Death because Death is powerless. Here, the speaker speaks with confidence. The speaker uses Christian belief in eternity to taunt Death. It means that if Death takes the physical body, it can still not kill the soul.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

In these lines, the speaker compares Death to "rest and sleep." He uses the word "pleasure" to describe how one should feel when Death arrives. People get relieved after a good sleep, so Death should have the same effects. The speaker states that Death is a short sleeping phase; therefore, one must enjoy Death as asleep. Death must be as pleasurable as rest and sleep.

Here, the speaker states that the best men will experience Death soon. Before questioning the speaker why do best men die soon, he provides an immediate answer himself. Best men deserve Death sooner to get a peaceful eternal life without bearing the hardships of the earthly world. Death is described here as "rest of bones" and a means of "soul's delivery" to the next world. For this reason, Death must be welcomed because it brings peace and comfort.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

The speaker adopts a stronger tone here and humiliates Death more than he did before. He says that Death is inferior to luck and fate. It is also a poor submissive slave who is driven by rich people and rulers. Death has linked poison, war, and illness to itself. It cannot work alone. It always depends on other things to perform its job of killing. Its companions are lower beings. This revelation of truth regarding Death gives readers a sense of victory. The speaker himself feels superior to Death and he passes on these feelings to readers also.

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The speaker talks to Death even more boldly. He says that poppy and charms also bring rest. This comparison makes Death not only weak but enjoyable as well. After showing Death its real face, the speaker asks Death why it is still so full of pride.

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

In these last lines, the speaker finally reveals why he is constantly humiliating Death. Those people who die never come back to earth. It does not mean that Death is mighty. Death is still powerless because it is one short sleep. Dead people will wake up in an eternal world. There will be no more Death. The Day of Judgment will announce the death of Death. The speaker reminds Death that it is not only weak, but it will face an end of itself as well.

2.3 ANDREW MARVELL: "TO HIS COY MISTRESS"

Andrew Marvell, (born March 31, 1621, Winestead, Yorkshire, England—died August 18, 1678, London), English poet whose political reputation overshadowed that of his poetry until the 20th century. He is now considered to be one of the best Metaphysical poets. Marvell was educated at Hull grammar school and Trinity College, Cambridge, taking a B.A. in 1639. His father's death in 1641 may have ended Marvell's promising academic career. He was abroad for at least five years (1642–46), presumably as a tutor. In 1651–52 he was tutor to Mary, daughter of Lord Fairfax, the Parliamentary general, at Nun Appleton, Yorkshire, during which time he probably wrote his notable poems "Upon Appleton House" and "The Garden" as well as his series of Mower poems. Marvell was educated at Hull grammar school and Trinity College, Cambridge, taking a B.A. in 1639. His father's death in 1641 may have ended Marvell's promising academic career. He was abroad for at least five years (1642–46), presumably as a tutor. In 1651–52 he was tutor to Mary, daughter of Lord Fairfax, the Parliamentary general, at Nun Appleton, Yorkshire, during which time he probably wrote his notable poems "Upon Appleton House" and "The Garden".

To his coy mistress

Poem

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would

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Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your hea
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Summary

If we had all the time in the world, your prudishness wouldn't be a problem. We would sit together and decide how to spend the day. You would walk by the river Ganges in India and find rubies; I would walk by the river Humber in England and write my poems. I

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would love you from the very start of time, even before the Biblical Flood; you could refuse to consummate our relationship all the way until the apocalypse. My slow-growing love would gradually become bigger than the largest empires. I would spend a hundred years praising your eyes and gazing at your forehead and two hundred years on each of your breasts. I would dedicate thirty thousand years to the rest of your body and give an era of human history to each part of you. In the final age, your heart would reveal itself. Lady, you deserve this kind of dedication—and I don't want to accept any lesser kind of love. But I am always aware of time, the way it flies by. For us, the future will be a vast, unending desert for all of time. Your beauty will be lost. In the grave, my songs in praise of you will no longer be heard. And worms will take the virginity you so carefully protected during life. Your honor will turn to dust and my desire will turn to ashes. The grave may be a quiet, private place—but no one has sex there. Therefore, while your beauty sits right at the surface of your skin, and every pore of your body exudes erotic passion, let's have sex while we can. Let's devour time like lovesick birds of prey instead of lying about letting time eat away at us. Let's put together our strength and our sweetness and use it as a weapon against the iron gates of life. We may not be able to defeat time in this way, but at least we can make it work hard to take us.

Explanation

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
A hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

In these first lines, there are ten couplets, and mimics a traditional format – in this case, the poem itself, although written in the form of a love poem, does not aspire to such lofty heights; the gentleman wishes only for his lady to give in to his sexual advances, and so the use of the traditional love elegy format (otherwise known as 'carpe diem' poetry) might seem as though it is ironically used. However, given that this was written at a

time when such emotion was not freely expressed, the beauty of the language and the overwhelming focus on the woman's beauty, the respect is shown therein, makes the poem quite progressive for its time. The man begins by explaining, to his lady, how he would go about worshipping her if he had the time. He turns their love into far more than the poem can hold by using expressions such as 'love you ten years before the Flood', thus allegorizing it in almost Biblical terms, 'vegetable love', which shows how slow and how steady it grows (hinting, as always, at a huge advancement), and then stating that 'a hundred years' would be spent on praising her: her eyes, her forehead, two hundred years to worship her breasts, and 'thirty thousand to the rest'. Above all, *To His Coy Mistress* does not denigrate or mock the lady's appearance (such as in Shakespeare's 'My Mistress' Eyes are Nothing Like the Sun') as this was not the use of metaphysical poetry. The use of what is known as an erotic blazon – taken directly from Petrarchan love poetry – deifies the lady of the speaker's affection; this is the truest form of love that the man feels as though he can manage.

But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

In the next lines, the mood of To His Coy Mistress swings abruptly. In the first, there was little haste or rush; the poet took his time describing the woman's beauty, and all the ways that she deserved to be worshipped, producing, therefore, a flowing, relaxed poem that does not rush itself to the end. By these lines, however, the mood shifts, and the poet is at once pleading and urgent, telling the lady that he hears 'time's winged chariot hurrying near' (alluding to Greek mythology, another form of deifying his lady love). Here, the poet, though no less praising of his woman's beauty, tells her that he does not have the time to worship her as he sees fit; time is always hurrying closer and closer. 'Deserts of vast eternity' await them, and her beauty will fade, her virginity will 'turn to dust' along with her honour, and all the waiting will be, it is implied, for naught. The feeling of foreboding, although light, is definitely there.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,

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Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

However, in the last set of lines, the mood brightens again; the poet has a solution! They should embrace each other now, while they have the time, be together now when they are young and beautiful, and not think about the future. 'Now let us sport while we may', says the poet, urging his lady love to listen to him – 'sport' is a commonly used word, in the 17th century, for sex. He compares them to 'amorous birds of prey', thus showing the natural and impulsive urges of their nature – at once, they are both elevated above man and below him. The last few lines take on the imagery of roiling passion: the poet wants to 'tear our pleasures with rough strife / through the iron gates of life', thus somehow elevating their own passion above life itself. Note that the last set of lines is the most poetically proficient of all things, and though the feeling is very much a plea to not waste the time that they have, the poet maintains a light-hearted tone through to the end.

2.4 THOMAS GRAY: "ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD"

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,

Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.
Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.
The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.
But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.
Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.
Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,
Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,

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And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.
For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,
Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.
"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.
"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,

Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;
"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.
Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.
No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

Summary

Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," presents the omniscient speaker who talks to the reader. First, he stands alone in a graveyard deep in thought. While there, he thinks about the dead people buried there. The graveyard referred to here is the graveyard of the church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire. The speaker contemplates the end of human life throughout the poem. He remarks on the inevitability of death that every individual has to face.

Besides mourning the loss of someone, the speaker in the elegy reminds the reader that all people will die one day. Death is an unavoidable and natural thing in everyone's life. When one dies today, tomorrow, a stranger will see the person's tombstone. Out of curiosity, he will ask about the person buried there to a villager. The villager will reply that he knew the man. He would add that he had seen him in various spots. Sometimes, he will also remark that he had stopped seeing the man one day, and then there was the tombstone.

In the poem, Gray, the poet himself, writes the epitaph of his own. He says that his life is full of sadness and depression. However, he feels proud of his knowledge. He calls it incomparable. In addition to this, he says that 'No one is perfect in this world.' So, he asks the reader not to judge anyone in the graveyard. Each and every soul is different and takes rest for eternity in the graveyard. In conclusion, the poet, through the speaker, ends the elegy by saying that death is an inevitable event in this world. Also, he says that man's efforts and his struggles to succeed in life comes to an end in death. Thus, death conquers man regardless of his successes and/or failures in his endeavors during his life.

Analysis of Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

Stanzas 1 – 4

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,

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The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

As it opens, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," begins with the description of the evening in a rural place. The evening church bell tells the passing of the day. Cattle bleed as they turn homewards. Tired farmers also follow. Darkness begins to cover the world. The speaker, that is, the poet is standing in a graveyard. All is quiet and. Only the beadle buzzes and the owl hoots. Among a group of elm trees, there is the graveyard. It belongs to the village. There are burials of the villagers' ancestors in the graveyard.

Stanzas 5 – 8

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.
Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

In these stanzas of "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," the poet goes on to talk about the people buried in the graveyard. They are sleeping in beds that are low to the ground. No sound can wake them up. The twittering of the swallow, the morning call of the cock, even a horn cannot wake them. Their wives and their children, nobody care for them anymore. They were hard-working men when they were alive. Their plowing, their

harvesting, and their farming, all were efficient. The speaker asks not to look down upon their simple life and hard work. Ambitious people think of village life as simple. But the villagers had their joy and sorrow much like others.

Stanzas 9 – 12

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

Also, the poet says that the poor are not inferior to the rich in death. Invariably, every human life ends in death. The beauty, the wealth, the glory all lead to the unavoidable end. The villager's grave does not have the grandness in ceremonies and tombstones. But, none of that can bring a person back to life. So, there is no use of them. One should remember that no one knew that one of the dead villagers may have achieved greatness in life. Therefore, there may be a ruler or a poet buried in there.

Stanzas 13 – 16

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.
Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.
Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

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In these stanzas, the poet remarks, the villagers who were dead would also have talent. There might be a Milton or a Cromwell buried there. They did not get opportunities to prove themselves. Like gems hidden deep under the ocean and like desert flowers, they have perished without notice. Given opportunities, they would have also succeeded. People would have read their deeds in history.

Stanzas 17 – 20

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

To put the content of these stanzas in a nutshell, the villagers did not wish to involve in treachery and deceit. They were honest people and wished to lead simple lives. So, they kept themselves away from the mad crowd of the cities and kingdoms. They were true to themselves. They liked peace and honesty. But still, there were markings to note their memory. The tombstones were simple. The language was ordinary. But, there is truth in their memory.

Stanzas 21 – 24

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.
For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;

If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

The dead villagers rest in the graveyard without recognition. Also, this poem will be a tribute to them. They lived their lives with morals. They died in the care of a loving person. And, they closed their eyes with prayers in one's eyes. One day, a kind soul may come and enquire after the dead one out of curiosity.

Stanzas 25 – 29

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.
"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.
"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

If someone asks about the poet who rests in the graveyard, one of the villagers may talk about him. A free-spirited man was the poet. He went to the mountains in the morning, stood under the beach tree sometimes. Then, he went to the brook. Besides, he was sometimes muttering his fancies. The villager would say that he missed seeing the man one day. The poet was missing. The villager did not see him in his usual places. But, he saw the funeral procession and how the man was buried in the graveyard.

Stanzas 30 – 33

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."
THE EPITAPH
Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.
Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

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

In this part of the poem, he says that his epitaph would read thus: Here lies the young man who was not popular. His life was full of sorrow. Knowledge was his only wealth. He gave his life to misery and all he longed was for a friend to support. One need not look away to know about him. All that he did lies with him, close to god in the lap of earth.

Themes

The poem, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", speaks of ordinary people. It is an elegy for poor villagers. They are not famous but they are honest. So, the poet has written this poem in honoring them. The poem talks about death as an equalizer. Rich or poor should end in death. Moreover, no man can escape death. In death, all are equal. Besides, nothing including any amount of rich or glory can bring the dead to life. Even poor people deserve respect for their death. Given opportunities, they would have become great men in their times.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. **What, according to the poet, are the agents of death?**
2. **Comment on the opening of the sonnet 'Death Be Not Proud'.**
3. **Write a note on Thomas Gray as a classicist.**
4. **Account for Gray as a Transitional poet?**
5. **What justifications or reasoning does the speaker employ to persuade his mistress?**

2.5 WILLIAM BLAKE: "THE POISON TREE"

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
And I watered it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.
And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,
And into my garden stole,
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Poem Summary

First Quatrain

On first contact with "A Poison Tree," a reader may be deceived by the apparent simplicity of the poem. It seems like one more example of the children's verses and nursery rhymes that had become popular and were being published in the later part of the eighteenth century. The most famous collection was the one attributed to "Mother Goose." Such verses were intended to teach children moral lessons through easy-to-remember rhymes and catchy rhythms.

"I was angry with my friend; / I told my wrath, my wrath did end," Blake begins. The language and sentiment are simple and hardly need to be explained even to a young child. Someone is speaking of his direct experience: He was angry at his friend. He told his friend that he was angry, and the result was that his anger went away. The whole thing is presented in a neat package tied up and resolved by the rhyme of "friend" and "end." In contrast to this way of handling anger, the speaker says, "I was angry with my foe: / I told it not, my wrath did grow." Again the verse seems clear and simple, and so, too, the lesson. When people do not say how they feel, the bad feeling becomes worse. The latter two lines of the quatrain, furthermore, seem to reinforce the wisdom of the first two: Say what you feel; do not suppress it, or things will get worse.

The analogy the reader is led to draw between the first set of two lines, or rhyming couplet, and the second couplet is not exact. The situations are different. In the first couplet, the speaker is angry at his friend; in the second, at his foe. This difference immediately makes the simple poem less simple. The lines are not really moralizing about confessing or concealing anger. They are referring to the way people classify other people as friends and foes and to the different ways people treat friends and foes. By extension, the poem considers the nature and consequences of anger, exploring how it grows and what it grows into.

Second Quatrain

The second quatrain, composed of two more rhyming couplets, seems less like a child's verse than the first quatrain. "And I waterd it in fears," the speaker says, "Night & morning with my tears: / And I sunned it with smiles, / And with soft deceitful wiles." In these lines, the speaker tells how he has tended and cultivated his anger, how he has made it grow. He is not suggesting a moral, as he does in the first quatrain, but he is examining a process. He is revealing the pleasure he takes in his own slyness. He also begins to speak using metaphor. Metaphor allows one thing to suggest or stand for something else. The "it" of the first line of the second quatrain refers to the speaker's wrath, but he speaks of his wrath not as if it were an emotion, which it is, but as if it were a small plant. He "waterd" his anger with his tears, and, using another metaphor, he "sunned it with smiles / And with soft deceitful wiles."

Wiles are sly tricks, strategies intended to deceive someone into trusting. The speaker is laying a trap for his foe, tempting him to desire something that seems alluring but is harmful. As he pretends to be friendly to his foe, the very act of being friendly strengthens his wrath. The false smiles he bestows on his foe act like sunshine on the plant of his

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wrath. The friendlier the speaker seems, the more hostile he really is, and the worse are his intentions. The clarity of innocence is gone. The speaker's behavior does not look like what it is. He is not what he seems. By using metaphor, by talking about anger as if it were a plant and about hypocrisy as if it were sunshine, the speaker represents the duplicity of his behavior in his language. He makes his behavior appear more attractive than it is.

Third Quatrain

What is a figure of speech, a metaphor, in the second quatrain seems to become the thing itself, an actual tree, in the third. "And it grew both day and night," the speaker says. The "it" must refer to his wrath, which he has been cultivating with "smiles, / And … soft deceitful wiles." In the second line of the third quatrain, however, "it" bears "an apple bright." The wrath has become an actual tree. Anger does not bear apples. Apple trees do. A feeling has been given so much weight that it has become a presence, an actual thing. The fruit of the speaker's wrath, then, is not like an apple on a tree, it is an apple. The speaker has made his anger seem like something else, and then it actually becomes something else. He has made something deadly become alluring and tempting to his foe.

By association, the speaker's anger, which has become a tempting apple, can remind the reader of the apple on the forbidden Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. That fruit seems as if it would offer a world of good, but in the Judeo-Christian story, it actually offers a world of woe. The apple of "A Poison Tree" is the same kind of apple. The reader may have the uneasy feeling that Blake is suggesting that in the Bible story, what is called God's love is really a form of wrath, that the God of the established Judeo-Christian religion is a god of wrath, not of love. Blake does believe that, as his longer poems repeatedly demonstrate. "A Poison Tree," a poem using metaphors becomes a metaphor. The relation of the angry speaker to his foe comes to stand for the story of an angry god and humankind.

Fourth Quatrain

The climax of "A Poison Tree" comes rushing on so swiftly that a break between verse paragraphs, which has marked movement from one quatrain to the next, no longer seems necessary. The first line of the final quatrain follows without a pause after the second couplet of the third: "And my foe beheld it shine. / And he knew that it was mine. / And into my garden stole." The repeated use of the word "and"—a poetic device called polysyndeton—at the beginning of each line shows how clearly one action leads to and follows another. Blake also accelerates the action of the poem by the way he uses the word "stole." "And into my garden stole" means that his foe came secretly into his garden. "Stole," however, also suggests thievery, what the foe sneaks into the garden to do under cover of darkness. By giving the word "stole" the strength he does, the speaker is emphasizing the culpability of his foe.

The culpability, in large part, has been created by the speaker himself. The speaker, the tempter, is the one who has laid snares for his foe and is responsible for them. The poem never reveals whether the person called the "foe" has a feeling of enmity, or ill will, toward the speaker or whether he realizes the speaker even considers him a foe. The poem tells nothing about what sort of person the "foe" is, why the speaker considers him a foe, or why he is angry with him. Stealing into the garden and eating the apple, moreover, is not

necessarily an act of enmity. It is foremost an act of appetite, of desire, which, in fact, has been induced and stimulated by the speaker. The speaker, by using the word "stole," shows his own excitement at luring his foe into blameworthiness and transgression, and, unknowingly, he is indicting himself. The only thing Blake allows the speaker to say about his foe is that he "stole" into the garden "when the night had veild the pole." The polestar, that is, the fixed North Star, the star that mariners use to keep them on course, is obscured. In other words, the foe steals into the garden at a moment when, the metaphor of the veiled polestar reveals, his sense of moral direction has been impaired by the speaker's subterfuge.

The final couplet, "In the morning glad I see; / My foe outstretched beneath the tree," is more ambiguous than at first it may appear. How one decides to understand it determines how to understand the entire poem. The first problem of interpretation is whether "outstretched" means dead. If it does, as the reader is entitled to believe it does because the tree bears poison, then the couplet reveals the baseness of the speaker. It shows the pleasure the speaker takes at the fall of his enemy: In the morning, I am glad to see that my foe lies dead beneath the tree. If, however, "outstretched" means only outstretched—that the foe is not dead but that the apparently friendly relationship is poisoned and the foe realizes that his apparent friend is not his friend—then the problems of human confrontation, anger, and enmity remain, as they do for all people.

Themes

The Cultivation of Anger

The principal theme of "A Poison Tree" is not anger itself but how the suppression of anger leads to the cultivation of anger. Burying anger rather than exposing it and acknowledging it, according to "A Poison Tree," turns anger into a seed that will germinate. Through the cultivation of that seed, which is nourished by the energy of the angry person, wrath grows into a mighty and destructive force.

The Wrathfulness of the Old Testament God

An implicit theme of "A Poison Tree" is that the god of the Old Testament is a god of wrath, cunning, jealousy, and guile. Blake presents this theme in the poem by alluding to the story of the Fall in Genesis. The tree in Blake's poem is intended to remind the reader of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The bright apple represents the fruit on that tree, which God forbids Adam and Eve to eat, thus making it more appealing. The garden into which the foe steals signifies the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve act in stealth and disobey God. The attitude of the speaker himself is to be understood as a reflection of God's attitude. By showing the speaker of the poem acting in a way reminiscent of God, Blake is showing God to be not a god of love but a cruel god and is thus criticizing the commonly held idea of God.

Suppression versus Expression

To the extent that "A Poison Tree" teaches a lesson and asserts a moral proposition rather than offering a critique of a theological system, the lesson is less concerned with anger than with demonstrating that suppressing the expression of feelings leads to a corruption of those feelings, to a decay of innocence, and to the growth of cunning and

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guile. Repeatedly in Songs of Experience, not just in "A Poison Tree," Blake argues that the religious doctrines intended to train people, especially children, in virtue are cruel and cause harm. In addition, Blake depicts those who implement religious discipline as sadistic.

Hypocrisy

Blake called the original draft of "A Poison Tree" "Christian Forbearance," suggesting that what is meant to appear as a gentle attitude is often a mask for disdain and anger. Furthermore, Blake believed that the attitudes of piety that adherents of conventional Christianity were taught to maintain actually led to hypocrisy, causing people to pretend to be friendly and accepting when they were not. The righteousness that the conventional religion prescribed, Blake believed, allowed people to hide evil intent and to perform evil deeds, such as stifling the healthy growth of children, under the cover of appearing virtuous.

Style

Iambic Tetrameter

Poetry is measured speech. Its words are organized in rhythmic patterns called meter. The most common pattern or meter for English poetry is the iambic foot, which is composed of two beats, the first unaccented and the second accented. Most often in English poetry, the iambic foot appears in lines of five feet called iambic pentameter, but lines can be shorter or longer. Blake's "A Poison Tree" is in iambic tetrameter, four iambic feet, but a variation on that pattern is common throughout the poem. In most of the lines, the second beat of the last foot is truncated, or cut off.

The first line of "A Poison Tree" offers an example of truncated iambic tetrameter. "i WAS / an-GRY / with MY / friend" is a line with three and a half feet. The second line is a full tetrameter line. There are four complete iambic feet: "i TOLD / my WRATH, / my WRATH / did END." The missing beat at the end of the first line signals the incompleteness of the thought. The full fourth foot at the end of the second line gives a sense of completion. The pattern is repeated for the same result in the second rhyming couplet. This pattern distinguishes the first quatrain from the ones that follow, as do the straightforward, nonmetaphorical nature of its language and the didactic nature of its content.

In the two middle quatrains and the first couplet of the last quatrain, Blake writes only in truncated iambic tetrameter lines, such as "and I / waTERD / it IN / fears" and "and HE / knew THAT / it WAS / mine." Although the recurring rhymes tie the lines of each couplet together, the missing beat at the end of each line gives a subtle sense of process rather than resolution. In the last couplet, however, Blake returns to the pattern of the first quatrain. The first line of the last couplet, "in THE / mornING / glad I / see," lacks a complete fourth foot. The last line, "my FOE / outSTRETCHED / beNEATH / the TREE," completes the utterance, resolves the poem, and places a final emphasis on the subject and central image of the poem, the word "tree."

Topics For Further Study

1. In "A Poison Tree," Blake maintains that restraining anger, rather than preventing cruelty and aggression, gives extra energy to aggression and strengthens cruelty.

Organize a class debate to argue whether it is better to tell other people how you feel when you are upset with them or have a difference of opinion or to keep it to yourself and try to be accommodating.

2. Stated perhaps overly simply, Blake's idea of correspondences suggests that the way people imagine or think about something affects the way it actually is in the concrete world. Choosing an event from your own experience, write an essay that shows how the way you thought about or imagined something influenced how it "really" was. As an alternative, choose a social, national, or historical event and discuss how expectation influenced outcome.
3. After assembling a questionnaire, conduct a series of interviews with at least ten people. Find out what they think about a widely held or controversial moral or religious value or about a current law. Try to determine whether these people believe the law or moral stance accomplishes what it is supposed to accomplish and whether that goal is a worthy one. Make sure to interview people of different ages, races, sexes, religions, and class backgrounds. Report the results to the class, highlighting both individual differences and similarities among the respondents.
4. Write a poem in rhyming couplets in which you describe a vision you have had. Using the same subject, write a poem that is unrhymed. In a paragraph, describe the difficulties writing each poem presented.
5. Choose any Bible story and write a well-developed essay discussing how it is conventionally interpreted. Then show how it could be interpreted differently.
6. Write a short story in which one character deceives another while pretending to be his or her friend or believes that the deception is for the other person's "own good."
7. Using watercolours or pastels, draw a scene from "A Poison Tree." Afterward, try to find a copy of Songs of Experience with Blake's illustrations to see how he illustrates his poems.

Metaphor, Simile, and Allusion

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing represents another. A metaphor helps to make an abstract idea concrete by turning something intangible into an image. It also reveals the subtle relatedness between things that may seem unrelated to each other. In "A Poison Tree," Blake represents anger as a plant and compares the angry person's relationship to his anger to a gardener's relationship to the plants he tends. Comparison is implicit in metaphor. Blake is saying anger is like a plant. A person who cultivates his anger is like a gardener. Stating the word "like" produces a special class of metaphor called a simile. In "A Poison Tree," the metaphor of the tree, the apple, and the garden not only represents the speaker's anger, its result, and its boundaries but also alludes to the biblical Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the forbidden fruit that grows on it in the Garden of Eden. An allusion is an indirect reference a speaker or a figure of speech makes to something else not specifically named. By means of allusion to the story of the Fall in Genesis, Blake gives greater depth of meaning to "A Poison Tree."

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2.6 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **What conclusion do you derive about Donne's religious faith from your reading of "Death Be Not Proud"?**
2. **Do you agree with Donne that Death is nothing but 'poor death'?**
3. **The poem "To His Coy Mistress" is speaker's plea for romantic affair. Explain.**
4. **Summarize the poem "To His Coy Mistress" in a single sentence.**
5. **What is the meaning of this poem?**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Write about a time you were angry at someone. Did your wrath grow or did it go away?**
2. **Why is it important to express your feelings to your friends, even if you are angry?**
3. **Discuss Thomas Gray as a poet?**
4. **Write a critical appreciation of Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard?**
5. **How would you describe his tone? Do the tone and message remain constant throughout, or is there a shift in the poem?**

2.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **According to Donne, death is a slave to _____.**
   a. Poison
   b. Chance
   c. Sleep
   d. Fate
2. **According to Donne, the thing that is better than the stroke of death is _____.**
   a. Sleep
   b. Poison
   c. Poppy
   d. Dreams
3. **Figure of speech in" Weary Way" is _____.**
   a. Transferred Epithet
   b. Simili
   c. Metaphor
   d. Diction
4. **Gray was educated at _____.**
   a. London
   b. USA
   c. Eton and Cambridge
   d. Australia

5. Elegy published in _____.

a. 1750
b. 1752
c. 1753
d. 1751

6. Elegy has a —–stanza

a. 33
b. 32
c. 34
d. 36

7. The inevitable hours in" Elegy" is _____.

a. The hour or birth
b. The hour of death
c. Both
d. None

8. Gray belongs to _____.

a. Churchyard School of Poetry
b. Graveyard School of Poetry
c. Both
d. None

9. " He is the scientist classics" who said this _____.

a. Shakespeare
b. Jonson
c. Arnold
d. None

10. Thomas" Season" and Gray's Elegy revealed _____.

e. Pre-Romantic Note
f. Description of Nature
g. Both
h. None

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT III

JOHN MILTON

STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning objective
3.2 About Author
3.3 Paradise Lost (Book 1)
3.4 Review Questions
3.5 Multiple Choice Questions

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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will know about:

- John Milton and his one of the famous poem paradise lost (book 1).

3.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

John Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608, into a middle-class family. He was educated at St. Paul's School, then at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he began to write poetry in Latin, Italian, and English, and prepared to enter the clergy.

After university, however, he abandoned his plans to join the priesthood and spent the next six years in his father's country home in Buckinghamshire following a rigorous course of independent study to prepare for a career as a poet. His extensive reading included both classical and modern works of religion, science, philosophy, history, politics, and literature. In addition, Milton was proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, and Italian, and obtained a familiarity with Old English and Dutch as well.

During his period of private study, Milton composed a number of poems, including "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "On Shakespeare," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and the pastoral elegy "Lycidas." In May of 1638, Milton began a 13-month tour of France and Italy, during which he met many important intellectuals and influential people, including the astronomer Galileo, who appears in Milton's tract against censorship, "Areopagitica."

In 1642, Milton returned from a trip into the countryside with a 16-year-old bride, Mary Powell. Even though they were estranged for most of their marriage, she bore him three daughters and a son before her death in 1652. Milton later married twice more: Katherine Woodcock in 1656, who died giving birth in 1658, and Elizabeth Minshull in 1662.

During the English Civil War, Milton championed the cause of the Puritans and Oliver Cromwell, and wrote a series of pamphlets advocating radical political topics including the morality of divorce, the freedom of the press, populism, and sanctioned regicide. Milton served as secretary for foreign languages in Cromwell's government, composing official statements defending the Commonwealth. During this time, Milton steadily lost his eyesight, and was completely blind by 1651. He continued his duties, however, with the aid of Andrew Marvell and other assistants.

After the Restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, Milton was arrested as a defender of the Commonwealth, fined, and soon released. He lived the rest of his life in seclusion in the country, completing the blank-verse epic poem Paradise Lost in 1667, as well as its sequel Paradise Regained and the tragedy Samson Agonistes both in 1671. Milton oversaw

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the printing of a second edition of Paradise Lost in 1674, which included an explanation of "why the poem rhymes not," clarifying his use of blank verse, along with introductory notes by Marvell. He died shortly afterwards, on November 8, 1674, in Buckinghamshire, England.

Paradise Lost, which chronicles Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Eden, is widely regarded as his masterpiece and one of the greatest epic poems in world literature. Since its first publication, the work has continually elicited debate regarding its theological themes, political commentary, and its depiction of the fallen angel Satan who is often viewed as the protagonist of the work.

The epic has had wide-reaching effect, inspiring other long poems, such as Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock, William Wordsworth's The Prelude and John Keats's Endymion, as well as Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein, and deeply influencing the work of Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake, who illustrated an edition of the epic.

3.3 PARADISE LOST (BOOK 1)

This first Book proposes, first in brief, the whole Subject, Mans disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was plac't: Then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many Legions of Angels, was by the command of God driven out of Heaven with all his Crew into the great Deep. Which action past over, the Poem hasts into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his Angels now fallen into Hell, describ'd here, not in the Center (for Heaven and Earth may be suppos'd as yet not made, certainly not yet accurst) but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest call'd Chaos: Here Satan with his Angels lying on the burning Lake, thunder-struck and astonisht, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in Order and Dignity lay by him; they confer of

thir miserable fall. Satan awakens all his Legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded; They rise, thir Numbers, array of Battel, thir chief Leaders nam'd, according to the Idols known afterwards in Canaan and the Countries adjoyning. To these Satan directs his Speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining Heaven, but tells them lastly of a new World and new kind of Creature to be created, according to an ancient Prophesie or report in Heaven; for that Angels were long before this visible Creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this Prophesie, and what to determin thereon he refers to a full Councel. What his Associates thence attempt. Pandemonium the Palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the Deep: The infernal Peers there sit in Councel.

OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, [5]
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: Or if Sion Hill [10]
Delight thee more, and Siloa's Brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues [15]
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread [20]
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence, [25]
And justifie the wayes of God to men.
Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off [30]
From thir Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?

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Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd [35]
The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High, [40]
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie [45]
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms.
Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night [50]
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
Confounded though immortal: But his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain [55]
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate:
At once as far as Angels kenn he views
The dismal Situation waste and wilde, [60]
A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd onely to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace [65]
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd:
Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd [70]
For those rebellious, here thir Prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and thir portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell! [75]
There the companions of his fall, o'rewhelm'd
With Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,

He soon discerns, and weltring by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd [80]
Beelzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.
If thou beest he; But O how fall'n! how chang'd
From him, who in the happy Realms of Light [85]
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-shine
Myriads though bright: If he Whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the Glorious Enterprize,
Joynd with me once, now misery hath joynd [90]
In equal ruin: into what Pit thou seest
From what highth fall'n, so much the stronger prov'd
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those,
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage [95]
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre; that fixt mind
And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit,
That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along [100]
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd
In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost? [105]
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might [110]
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deifie his power,
Who from the terrour of this Arm so late
Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath [115]
This downfall; since by Fate the strength of Gods
And this Empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In Arms not worse, in foresight much advanc't,
We may with more successful hope resolve [120]
To wage by force or guile eternal Warr

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Irreconcileable, to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n.
So spake th' Apostate Angel, though in pain,
Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despare:
And him thus answer'd soon his bold Compeer.
O Prince, O Chief of many Throned Powers,
That led th' imbattelld Seraphim to Warr
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds
Fearless, endanger'd Heav'ns perpetual King;
And put to proof his high Supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or Chance, or Fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty Host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as Gods and Heav'nly Essences
Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
Though all our Glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conquerour, (whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Then such could hav orepow'rd such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength intire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of Warr, what e're his business be
Here in the heart of Hell to work in Fire,
Or do his Errands in the gloomy Deep;
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminisht, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?
Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-fiend reply'd.
Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable
Doing or Suffering: but of this be sure,
To do ought good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his Providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;

Which oft times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from thir destind aim.
But see the angry Victor hath recall'd
His Ministers of vengeance and pursuit [170]
Back to the Gates of Heav'n: The Sulphurous Hail
Shot after us in storm, oreblown hath laid
The fiery Surge, that from the Precipice
Of Heav'n receiv'd us falling, and the Thunder,
Wing'd with red Lightning and impetuous rage, [175]
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.
Seest thou yon dreary Plain, forlorn and wilde, [180]
The seat of desolation, voyd of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbour there, [185]
And reassembling our afflicted Powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire Calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from Hope, [190]
If not what resolution from despare.
Thus Satan talking to his neerest Mate
With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large [195]
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast [200]
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:
Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam
The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell, [205]
With fixed Anchor in his skaly rind
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delayes:
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay

NOTES 

Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence [210]
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought [215]
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd. [220]
Forthwith upright he rears from off the Pool
His mighty Stature; on each hand the flames
Drivn backward slope thir pointing spires, and rowld
In billows, leave i'th' midst a horrid Vale.
Then with expanded wings he stears his flight [225]
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky Air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry Land
He lights, if it were Land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire;
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force [230]
Of subterranean wind transports a Hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thundring Ætna, whose combustible
And fewel'd entrals thence conceiving Fire,
Sublim'd with Mineral fury, aid the Winds, [235]
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoak: Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next Mate,
Both glorying to have scap't the Stygian flood
As Gods, and by thir own recover'd strength, [240]
Not by the sufferance of supernal Power.
Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime,
Said then the lost Arch-Angel, this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he [245]
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: fardest from him is best
Whom reason hath equald, force hath made supream
Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields
Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrours, hail [250]
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.

The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. [255]
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then he
Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence: [260]
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th' associates and copartners of our loss [265]
Lye thus astonisht on th' oblivious Pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy Mansion, or once more
With rallied Arms to try what may be yet
Regaind in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell? [270]
So Satan spake, and him Beelzebub
Thus answer'd. Leader of those Armies bright,
Which but th' Onmipotent none could have foyld,
If once they hear that voyce, thir liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft [275]
In worst extreams, and on the perilous edge
Of battel when it rag'd, in all assaults
Thir surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lye
Groveling and prostrate on yon Lake of Fire, [280]
As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd,
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious highth.
He scarce had ceas't when the superiour Fiend
Was moving toward the shoar; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round, [285]
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands, [290]
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.
His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with to support uneasie steps [295]
Over the burning Marle, not like those steps
On Heavens Azure, and the torrid Clime

NOTES 

Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;
Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach
Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd [300]
His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High overarch't imbowr; or scatterd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce Winds Orion arm'd [305]
Hath vext the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves orethrew
Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore thir floating Carkases [310]
And broken Chariot Wheels, so thick bestrown
Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood,
Under amazement of thir hideous change.
He call'd so loud, that all the hollow Deep
Of Hell resounded. Princes, Potentates, [315]
Warriers, the Flowr of Heav'n, once yours, now lost,
If such astonishment as this can sieze
Eternal spirits; or have ye chos'n this place
After the toyl of Battel to repose
Your wearied vertue, for the ease you find [320]
To slumber here, as in the Vales of Heav'n?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
To adore the Conquerour? who now beholds
Cherube and Seraph rowling in the Flood
With scatter'd Arms and Ensigns, till anon [325]
His swift pursuers from Heav'n Gates discern
Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked Thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this Gulfe.
Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n. [330]
They heard, and were abasht, and up they sprung
Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.
Nor did they not perceave the evil plight [335]
In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;
Yet to thir Generals Voyce they soon obeyd
Innumerable. As when the potent Rod
Of Amrams Son in Egypts evill day
Wav'd round the Coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud [340]
Of Locusts, warping on the Eastern Wind,

That ore the Realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of Nile:
So numberless were those bad Angels seen
Hovering on wing under the Cope of Hell [345]
'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding Fires;
Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted Spear
Of thir great Sultan waving to direct
Thir course, in even ballance down they light
On the firm brimstone, and fill all the Plain; [350]
A multitude, like which the populous North
Pour'd never from her frozen loyns, to pass
Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous Sons
Came like a Deluge on the South, and spread
Beneath Gibralter to the Lybian sands. [355]
Forthwith from every Squadron and each Band
The Heads and Leaders thither hast where stood
Thir great Commander; Godlike shapes and forms
Excelling human, Princely Dignities,
And Powers that earst in Heaven sat on Thrones; [360]
Though of thir Names in heav'nly Records now
Be no memorial blotted out and ras'd
By thir Rebellion, from the Books of Life.
Nor had they yet among the Sons of Eve
Got them new Names, till wandring ore the Earth, [365]
Through Gods high sufferance for the tryal of man,
By falsities and lyes the greatest part
Of Mankind they corrupted to forsake
God thir Creator, and th' invisible
Glory of him that made them, to transform [370]
Oft to the Image of a Brute, adorn'd
With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold,
And Devils to adore for Deities:
Then were they known to men by various Names,
And various Idols through the Heathen World. [375]
Say, Muse, thir Names then known, who first, who last,
Rous'd from the slumber, on that fiery Couch,
At thir great Emperors call, as next in worth
Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
While the promiscuous croud stood yet aloof? [380]
The chief were those who from the Pit of Hell
Roaming to seek thir prey on earth, durst fix
Thir Seats long after next the Seat of God,
Thir Altars by his Altar, Gods ador'd
Among the Nations round, and durst abide [385]

NOTES

Jehovah thundring out of Sion, thron'd
Between the Cherubim; yea, often plac'd
Within his Sanctuary it self thir Shrines,
Abominations; and with cursed things
His holy Rites, and solemn Feasts profan'd, [390]
And with thir darkness durst affront his light.
First Moloch, horrid King besmear'd with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents tears,
Though for the noyse of Drums and Timbrels loud
Thir childrens cries unheard, that past through fire [395]
To his grim Idol. Him the Ammonite
Worshipt in Rabba and her watry Plain,
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart [400]
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His Temple right against the Temple of God
On that opprobrious Hill, and made his Grove
The pleasant Vally of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gehenna call'd, the Type of Hell. [405]
Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moabs Sons,
From Aroar to Nebo, and the wild
Of Southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seons Realm, beyond
The flowry Dale of Sibma clad with Vines, [410]
And Eleale to th' Asphaltick Pool.
Peor his other Name, when he entic'd
Israel in Sittim on thir march from Nile
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
Yet thence his lustful Orgies he enlarg'd [415]
Even to that Hill of scandal, by the Grove
Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate;
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.
With these came they, who from the bordring flood
Of old Euphrates to the Brook that parts [420]
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general Names
Of Baalim and Ashtaroth, those male,
These Feminine. For Spirits when they please
Can either Sex assume, or both; so soft
And uncompounded is thir Essence pure, [425]
Not ti'd or manacl'd with joynt or limb,
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
Dilated or condens't, bright or obscure,

Can execute thir aerie purposes, [430]
And works of love or enmity fulfill.
For those the Race of Israel oft forsook
Thir living strength, and unfrequented left
His righteous Altar, bowing lowly down
To bestial Gods; for which thir heads as low [435]
Bow'd down in Battel, sunk before the Spear
Of despicable foes. With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians call'd
Astarte, Queen of Heav'n, with crescent Horns;
To whose bright Image nightly by the Moon [440]
Sidonian Virgins paid thir Vows and Songs,
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her Temple on th' offensive Mountain, built
By that uxorious King, whose heart though large,
Beguil'd by fair Idolatresses, fell [445]
To Idols foul. Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian Damsels to lament his fate
In amorous dittyes all a Summers day,
While smooth Adonis from his native Rock [450]
Ran purple to the Sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the Love-tale
Infected Sions daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred Porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the Vision led [455]
His eye survay'd the dark Idolatries
Of alienated Judah. Next came one
Who mourn'd in earnest, when the Captive Ark
Maim'd his brute Image, head and hands lopt off
In his own Temple, on the grunsel edge, [460]
Where he fell flat, and sham'd his Worshipers:
Dagon his Name, Sea Monster, upward Man
And downward Fish: yet had his Temple high
Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the Coast
Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon [465]
And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.
Him follow'd Rimmon, whose delightful Seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertil Banks
Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.
He also against the house of God was bold: [470]
A Leper once he lost and gain'd a King,
Ahaz his sottish Conquerour, whom he drew
Gods Altar to disparage and displace

NOTES

For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
His odious off'rings, and adore the Gods [475]
Whom he had vanquisht. After these appear'd
A crew who under Names of old Renown,
Osiris, Isis, Orus and their Train
With monstrous shapes and sorceries abus'd
Fanatic Egypt and her Priests, to seek [480]
Thir wandring Gods disguis'd in brutish forms
Rather then human. Nor did Israel scape
Th' infection when thir borrow'd Gold compos'd
The Calf in Oreb: and the Rebel King
Doubl'd that sin in Bethel and in Dan, [485]
Lik'ning his Maker to the Grazed Ox,
Jehovah, who in one Night when he pass'd
From Egypt marching, equal'd with one stroke
Both her first born and all her bleating Gods.
Belial came last, then whom a Spirit more lewd [490]
Fell not from Heaven, or more gross to love
Vice for it self: To him no Temple stood
Or Altar smoak'd; yet who more oft then hee
In Temples and at Altars, when the Priest
Turns Atheist, as did Ely's Sons, who fill'd [495]
With lust and violence the house of God.
In Courts and Palaces he also Reigns
And in luxurious Cities, where the noyse
Of riot ascends above thir loftiest Towrs,
And injury and outrage: And when Night [500]
Darkens the Streets, then wander forth the Sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
Witness the Streets of Sodom, and that night
In Gibeah, when the hospitable door
Expos'd a Matron to avoid worse rape. [505]
These were the prime in order and in might;
The rest were long to tell, though far renown'd,
Th' Ionian Gods, of Javans Issue held
Gods, yet confest later then Heav'n and Earth
Thir boasted Parents; Titan Heav'ns first born [510]
With his enormous brood, and birthright seis'd
By younger Saturn, he from mightier Jove
His own and Rhea's Son like measure found;
So Jove usurping reign'd: these first in Creet
And Ida known, thence on the Snowy top [515]
Of cold Olympus rul'd the middle Air
Thir highest Heav'n; or on the Delphian Cliff,

Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
Of Doric Land; or who with Saturn old
Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian Fields, [520]
And ore the Celtic roam'd the utmost Isles.
All these and more came flocking; but with looks
Down cast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd
Obscure some glimps of joy, to have found thir chief
Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost [525]
In loss it self; which on his count'nance cast
Like doubtful hue: but he his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
Semblance of worth, not substance, gently rais'd
Thir fainting courage, and dispel'd thir fears. [530]
Then strait commands that at the warlike sound
Of Trumpets loud and Clarions be upreard
His mighty Standard; that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a Cherube tall:
Who forthwith from the glittering Staff unfurld [535]
Th' Imperial Ensign, which full high advanc't
Shon like a Meteor streaming to the Wind
With Gemms and Golden lustre rich imblaz'd,
Seraphic arms and Trophies: all the while
Sonorous mettal blowing Martial sounds: [540]
At which the universal Host upsent
A shout that tore Hells Concave, and beyond
Frighted the Reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand Banners rise into the Air [545]
With Orient Colours waving: with them rose
A Forest huge of Spears: and thronging Helms
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable: Anon they move
In perfect Phalanx to the Dorian mood [550]
Of Flutes and soft Recorders; such as rais'd
To hight of noblest temper Hero's old
Arming to Battel, and in stead of rage
Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat, [555]
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches, troubl'd thoughts, and chase
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they
Breathing united force with fixed thought [560]
Mov'd on in silence to soft Pipes that charm'd

NOTES

Thir painful steps o're the burnt soyle; and now
Advanc't in view, they stand, a horrid Front
Of dreadful length and dazling Arms, in guise
Of Warriers old with order'd Spear and Shield, [565]
Awaiting what command thir mighty Chief
Had to impose: He through the armed Files
Darts his experienc't eye, and soon traverse
The whole Battalion views, thir order due,
Thir visages and stature as of Gods, [570]
Thir number last he summs. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hardning in his strength
Glories: For never since created man,
Met such imbodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more then that small infantry [575]
Warr'd on by Cranes: though all the Giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' Heroic Race were joyn'd
That fought at Theb's and Ilium, on each side
Mixt with auxiliar Gods; and what resounds
In Fable or Romance of Uthers Son [580]
Begirt with British and Armoric Knights;
And all who since, Baptiz'd or Infidel
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore [585]
When Charlemain with all his Peerage fell
By Fontarabbia. Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
Thir dread commander: he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent [590]
Stood like a Towr; his form had yet not lost
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
Less then Arch Angel ruind, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air [595]
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
In dim Eclips disastrous twilight sheds
On half the Nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes Monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shon
Above them all th' Arch Angel: but his face [600]
Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under Browes
Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold [605]

The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
For ever now to have thir lot in pain,
Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc't
Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendors flung [610]
For his revolt, yet faithfull how they stood,
Thir Glory witherd. As when Heavens Fire
Hath scath'd the Forrest Oaks, or Mountain Pines,
With singed top thir stately growth though bare
Stands on the blasted Heath. He now prepar'd [615]
To speak; whereat thir doubl'd Ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round
With all his Peers: attention held them mute.
Thrice he assayd, and thrice in spight of scorn,
Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last [620]
Words interwove with sighs found out thir way.
O Myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers
Matchless, but with th' Almighty, and that strife
Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,
As this place testifies, and this dire change [625]
Hateful to utter: but what power of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the Depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,
How such united force of Gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse? [630]
For who can yet beleeve, though after loss,
That all these puissant Legions, whose exile
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to re-ascend
Self-rais'd, and repossess thir native seat?
For mee be witness all the Host of Heav'n, [635]
If counsels different, or danger shun'd
By me, have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
Sat on his Throne, upheld by old repute,
Consent or custome, and his Regal State [640]
Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd,
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
Henceforth his might we know, and know our own
So as not either to provoke, or dread
New warr, provok't; our better part remains [645]
To work in close design, by fraud or guile
What force effected not: that he no less
At length from us may find, who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.

NOTES

Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife [650]
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation, whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the Sons of Heaven:
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps [655]
Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere:
For this Infernal Pit shall never hold
Cælestial Spirits in Bondage, nor th' Abyss
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
Full Counsel must mature: Peace is despaird, [660]
For who can think Submission? Warr then, Warr
Open or understood must be resolv'd.
He spake: and to confirm his words, out-flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze [665]
Far round illumin'd hell: highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on thir sounding Shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.
There stood a Hill not far whose griesly top [670]
Belch'd fire and rowling smoak; the rest entire
Shon with a glossie scurff, undoubted sign
That in his womb was hid metallic Ore,
The work of Sulphur. Thither wing'd with speed
A numerous Brigad hasten'd. As when Bands [675]
Of Pioners with Spade and Pickax arm'd
Forerun the Royal Camp, to trench a Field,
Or cast a Rampart. Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected Spirit that fell
From heav'n, for ev'n in heav'n his looks and thoughts [680]
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav'ns pavement, trod'n Gold,
Then aught divine or holy else enjoy'd
In vision beatific: by him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught, [685]
Ransack'd the Center, and with impious hands
Rifl'd the bowels of thir mother Earth
For Treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Op'nd into the Hill a spacious wound
And dig'd out ribs of Gold. Let none admire [690]
That riches grow in Hell; that soyle may best
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell

Of Babel, and the works of Memphian Kings
Learn how thir greatest Monuments of Fame, [695]
And Strength and Art are easily out-done
By Spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they with incessant toyle
And hands innumerable scarce perform.
Nigh on the Plain in many cells prepar'd, [700]
That underneath had veins of liquid fire
Sluc'd from the Lake, a second multitude
With wondrous Art found out the massie Ore,
Severing each kind, and scum'd the Bullion dross:
A third as soon had form'd within the ground [705]
A various mould, and from the boyling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an Organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breaths.
Anon out of the earth a Fabrick huge [710]
Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With Golden Architrave; nor did there want [715]
Cornice or Freeze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n,
The Roof was fretted Gold. Not Babilon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equal'd in all thir glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis thir Gods, or seat [720]
Thir Kings, when Ægypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxurie. Th' ascending pile
Stood fixt her stately highth, and strait the dores
Op'ning thir brazen foulds discover wide
Within, her ample spaces, o're the smooth [725]
And level pavement: from the arched roof
Pendant by suttle Magic many a row
Of Starry Lamps and blazing Cressets fed
With Naphtha and Asphaltus yeilded light
As from a sky. The hasty multitude [730]
Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise
And some the Architect: his hand was known
In Heav'n by many a Towred structure high,
Where Scepter'd Angels held thir residence,
And sat as Princes, whom the supreme King [735]
Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
Each in his Hierarchie, the Orders bright.

NOTES 

Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
Men call'd him Mulciber; and how he fell [740]
From Heav'n, they fabl'd, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o're the Chrystal Battlements: from Morn
To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,
A Summers day; and with the setting Sun
Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star, [745]
On Lemnos th' Ægean Ile: thus they relate,
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before; nor aught avail'd him now
To have built in Heav'n high Towrs; nor did he scape
By all his Engins, but was headlong sent [750]
With his industrious crew to build in hell.
Meanwhile the winged Haralds by command
Of Sovran power, with awful Ceremony
And Trumpets sound throughout the Host proclaim
A solemn Councel forthwith to be held [755]
At Pandæmonium, the high Capital
Of Satan and his Peers: thir summons call'd
From every Band and squared Regiment
By place or choice the worthiest; they anon
With hunderds and with thousands trooping came [760]
Attended: all access was throng'd, the Gates
And Porches wide, but chief the spacious Hall
(Though like a cover'd field, where Champions bold
Wont ride in arm'd, and at the Soldans chair
Defi'd the best of Paynim chivalry [765]
To mortal combat or carreer with Lance)
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brusht with the hiss of russling wings. As Bees
In spring time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth thir populous youth about the Hive [770]
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
Flie to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
The suburb of thir Straw-built Cittadel,
New rub'd with Baum, expatiate and confer
Thir State affairs. So thick the aerie crowd [775]
Swarm'd and were straitn'd; till the Signal giv'n.
Behold a wonder! they but now who seemd
In bigness to surpass Earths Giant Sons
Now less then smallest Dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pigmean Race [780]
Beyond the Indian Mount, or Faerie Elves,

Whose midnight Revels, by a Forrest side
Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the Moon
Sits Arbitress, and neerer to the Earth [785]
Wheels her pale course, they on thir mirth and dance
Intent, with jocond Music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.
Thus incorporeal Spirits to smallest forms
Reduc'd thir shapes immense, and were at large, [790]
Though without number still amidst the Hall
Of that infernal Court. But far within
And in thir own dimensions like themselves
The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat [795]
A thousand Demy-Gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full. After short silence then
And summons read, the great consult began.
The End of the First Book.

Summary: Lines 1–26: The Prologue and Invocation

Milton opens Paradise Lost by formally declaring his poem's subject: humankind's first act of disobedience toward God, and the consequences that followed from it. The act is Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the first line, Milton refers to the outcome of Adam and Eve's sin as the "fruit" of the forbidden tree, punning on the actual apple and the figurative fruits of their actions. Milton asserts that this original sin brought death to human beings for the first time, causing us to lose our home in paradise until Jesus comes to restore humankind to its former position of purity.

Milton's speaker invokes the muse, a mystical source of poetic inspiration, to sing about these subjects through him, but he makes it clear that he refers to a different muse from the muses who traditionally inspired classical poets by specifying that his muse inspired Moses to receive the Ten Commandments and write Genesis. Milton's muse is the Holy Spirit, which inspired the Christian Bible, not one of the nine classical muses who reside on Mount Helicon—the "Aonian mount" of I.15. He says that his poem, like his muse, will fly above those of the Classical poets and accomplish things never attempted before, because his source of inspiration is greater than theirs. Then he invokes the Holy Spirit, asking it to fill him with knowledge of the beginning of the world, because the Holy Spirit was the active force in creating the universe.

Milton's speaker announces that he wants to be inspired with this sacred knowledge because he wants to show his fellow man that the fall of humankind into sin and death was part of God's greater plan, and that God's plan is justified.

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Analysis

The beginning of Paradise Lost is similar in gravity and seriousness to the book from which Milton takes much of his story: the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The Bible begins with the story of the world's creation, and Milton's epic begins in a similar vein, alluding to the creation of the world by the Holy Spirit. The first two sentences, or twenty-six lines, of Paradise Lost are extremely compressed, containing a great deal of information about Milton's reasons for writing his epic, his subject matter, and his attitudes toward his subject. In these two sentences, Milton invokes his muse, which is actually the Holy Spirit rather than one of the nine muses. By invoking a muse, but differentiating it from traditional muses, Milton manages to tell us quite a lot about how he sees his project. In the first place, an invocation of the muse at the beginning of an epic is conventional, so Milton is acknowledging his awareness of Homer, Virgil, and later poets, and signaling that he has mastered their format and wants to be part of their tradition. But by identifying his muse as the divine spirit that inspired the Bible and created the world, he shows that his ambitions go far beyond joining the club of Homer and Virgil. Milton's epic will surpass theirs, drawing on a more fundamental source of truth and dealing with matters of more fundamental importance to human beings. At the same time, however, Milton's invocation is extremely humble, expressing his utter dependence on God's grace in speaking through him. Milton thus begins his poem with a mixture of towering ambition and humble self-effacement, simultaneously tipping his hat to his poetic forebears and promising to soar above them for God's glorification.

Milton's approach to the invocation of the muse, in which he takes a classical literary convention and reinvents it from a Christian perspective, sets the pattern for all of Paradise Lost. For example, when he catalogs the prominent devils in Hell and explains the various names they are known by and which cults worshipped them, he makes devils of many gods whom the Greeks, Ammonites, and other ancient peoples worshipped. In other words, the great gods of the classical world have become—according to Milton—fallen angels. His poem purports to tell of these gods' original natures, before they infected humankind in the form of false gods. Through such comparisons with the classical epic poems, Milton is quick to demonstrate that the scope of his epic poem is much greater than those of the classical poets, and that his worldview and inspiration is more fundamentally true and all-encompassing than theirs. The setting, or world, of Milton's epic is large enough to include those smaller, classical worlds. Milton also displays his world's superiority while reducing those classical epics to the level of old, nearly forgotten stories. For example, the nine muses of classical epics still exist on Mount Helicon in the world of Paradise Lost, but Milton's muse haunts other areas and has the ability to fly above those other, less-powerful classical Muses. Thus Milton both makes himself the authority on antiquity and subordinates it to his Christian worldview.

The Iliad and the Aeneid are the great epic poems of Greek and Latin, respectively, and Milton emulates them because he intends Paradise Lost to be the first English epic. Milton wants to make glorious art out of the English language the way the other epics had done for their languages. Not only must a great epic be long and poetically well-constructed, its subject must be significant and original, its form strict and serious, and its aims noble and

heroic. In Milton's view, the story he will tell is the most original story known to man, as it is the first story of the world and of the first human beings. Also, while Homer and Virgil only chronicled the journey of heroic men, like Achilles or Aeneas, Milton chronicles the tragic journey of all men—the result of humankind's disobedience. Milton goes so far as to say that he hopes to "justify," or explain, God's mysterious plan for humankind. Homer and Virgil describe great wars between men, but Milton tells the story of the most epic battle possible: the battle between God and Satan, good and evil.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. **How does Milton depict Satan's leadership qualities in Paradise Lost?**
2. **In Milton's Paradise Lost, how are the ways of God reconciled with the theme of free will?**
3. **In Paradise Lost, how and why does Milton's portrayal of Satan change?**
4. **In Milton's Paradise Lost, is Satan's revenge justified?**
5. **In Paradise Lost, how does Milton characterize Adam and Eve?**

Summary: Lines 27–722: Satan and Hell

Immediately after the prologue, Milton raises the question of how Adam and Eve's disobedience occurred and explains that their actions were partly due to a serpent's deception. This serpent is Satan, and the poem joins him and his followers in Hell, where they have just been cast after being defeated by God in Heaven.

Satan lies stunned beside his second-in-command, Beelzebub, in a lake of fire that gives off darkness instead of light. Breaking the awful silence, Satan bemoans their terrible position, but does not repent of his rebellion against God, suggesting that they might gather their forces for another attack. Beelzebub is doubtful; he now believes that God cannot be overpowered. Satan does not fully contradict this assessment, but suggests that they could at least pervert God's good works to evil purposes. The two devils then rise up and, spreading their wings, fly over to the dry land next to the flaming lake. But they can undertake this action only because God has allowed them to loose their chains. All of the devils were formerly angels who chose to follow Satan in his rebellion, and God still intends to turn their evil deeds toward the good.

Once out of the lake, Satan becomes more optimistic about their situation. He calls the rest of the fallen angels, his legions, to join him on land. They immediately obey and, despite their wounds and suffering, fly up to gather on the plain. Milton lists some of the more notable of the angels whose names have been erased from the books of Heaven, noting that later, in the time of man, many of these devils come to be worshipped as gods.

Among these are Moloch, who is later known as a god requiring human sacrifices, and Belial, a lewd and lustful god. Still in war gear, these fallen angels have thousands of banners raised and their shields and spears in hand. Even in defeat, they are an awesome army to behold.

Satan's unrepentant evil nature is unwavering. Even cast down in defeat, he does not consider changing his ways: he insists to his fellow devils that their delight will be in doing evil, not good. In particular, as he explains to Beelzebub, he wishes to pervert God's

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will and find a way to make evil out of good. It is not easy for Satan to maintain this determination; the battle has just demonstrated God's overwhelming power, and the devils could not even have lifted themselves off the lake of fire unless God had allowed it. God allows it precisely because he intends to turn their evil designs toward a greater good in the end. Satan's envy of the Son's chosen status led him to rebel and consequently to be condemned. His continued envy and search for freedom leads him to believe that he would rather be a king in Hell than a servant in Heaven. Satan's pride has caused him to believe that his own free intellect is as great as God's will. Satan remarks that the mind can make its own Hell out of Heaven, or in his case, its own Heaven out of Hell.

Satan addresses his comrades and acknowledges their shame in falling to the heavenly forces, but urges them to gather in order to consider whether another war is feasible. Instantly, the legions of devils dig into the bowels of the ground, unearthing gold and other minerals. With their inhuman powers they construct a great temple in a short time. It is called Pandemonium (which means "all the demons" in Greek), and the hundreds of thousands of demonic troops gather there to hold a summit. Being spirits, they can easily shrink from huge winged creatures to the smallest size. Compacting themselves, they enter Pandemonium, and the debate begins.

Theme

The Importance of Obedience to God

The first words of Paradise Lost state that the poem's main theme will be "Man's first Disobedience." Milton narrates the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience, explains how and why it happens, and places the story within the larger context of Satan's rebellion and Jesus' resurrection. Raphael tells Adam about Satan's disobedience in an effort to give him a firm grasp of the threat that Satan and humankind's disobedience poses. In essence, Paradise Lost presents two moral paths that one can take after disobedience: the downward spiral of increasing sin and degradation, represented by Satan, and the road to redemption, represented by Adam and Eve.

While Adam and Eve are the first humans to disobey God, Satan is the first of all God's creation to disobey. His decision to rebel comes only from himself—he was not persuaded or provoked by others. Also, his decision to continue to disobey God after his fall into Hell ensures that God will not forgive him. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, decide to repent for their sins and seek forgiveness. Unlike Satan, Adam and Eve understand that their disobedience to God will be corrected through generations of toil on Earth. This path is obviously the correct one to take: the visions in Books XI and XII demonstrate that obedience to God, even after repeated falls, can lead to humankind's salvation.

The Hierarchical Nature of the Universe

Paradise Lost is about hierarchy as much as it is about obedience. The layout of the universe—with Heaven above, Hell below, and Earth in the middle—presents the universe as a hierarchy based on proximity to God and his grace. This spatial hierarchy leads to a social hierarchy of angels, humans, animals, and devils: the Son is closest to God, with the archangels and cherubs behind him. Adam and Eve and Earth's animals come next, with Satan and the other fallen angels following last. To obey God is to respect this hierarchy.

Satan refuses to honor the Son as his superior, thereby questioning God's hierarchy. As the angels in Satan's camp rebel, they hope to beat God and thereby dissolve what they believe to be an unfair hierarchy in Heaven. When the Son and the good angels defeat the rebel angels, the rebels are punished by being banished far away from Heaven. At least, Satan argues later, they can make their own hierarchy in Hell, but they are nevertheless subject to God's overall hierarchy, in which they are ranked the lowest. Satan continues to disobey God and his hierarchy as he seeks to corrupt mankind.

Likewise, humankind's disobedience is a corruption of God's hierarchy. Before the fall, Adam and Eve treat the visiting angels with proper respect and acknowledgement of their closeness to God, and Eve embraces the subservient role allotted to her in her marriage. God and Raphael both instruct Adam that Eve is slightly farther removed from God's grace than Adam because she was created to serve both God and him. When Eve persuades Adam to let her work alone, she challenges him, her superior, and he yields to her, his inferior. Again, as Adam eats from the fruit, he knowingly defies God by obeying Eve and his inner instinct instead of God and his reason. Adam's visions in Books XI and XII show more examples of this disobedience to God and the universe's hierarchy, but also demonstrate that with the Son's sacrifice, this hierarchy will be restored once again.

The Fall as Partly Fortunate

After he sees the vision of Christ's redemption of humankind in Book XII, Adam refers to his own sin as a felix culpa or "happy fault," suggesting that the fall of humankind, while originally seeming an unmitigated catastrophe, does in fact bring good with it. Adam and Eve's disobedience allows God to show his mercy and temperance in their punishments and his eternal providence toward humankind. This display of love and compassion, given through the Son, is a gift to humankind. Humankind must now experience pain and death, but humans can also experience mercy, salvation, and grace in ways they would not have been able to had they not disobeyed. While humankind has fallen from grace, individuals can redeem and save themselves through continued devotion and obedience to God. The salvation of humankind, in the form of The Son's sacrifice and resurrection, can begin to restore humankind to its former state. In other words, good will come of sin and death, and humankind will eventually be rewarded. This fortunate result justifies God's reasoning and explains his ultimate plan for humankind.

3.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Milton asks the Heavenly Muse to**
2. **Where is Satan imprisoned according to Book 1? (Hint: the answer isn't Hell.)**
3. **How long does Satan lie "vanquished" or beaten?**
4. **Why did Satan's defeat cause him more pain?**
5. **Why is Hell totally dark?**

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LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Who is Beelzebub?**
2. **What will their only delight be according to Satan?**
3. **Why does God allow Satan to escape?**
4. **From what book have the fallen angel's names been erased?**
5. **Satan says they cannot win the war by direct assault. What will they use instead?**

3.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **Milton's "unholy trinity" of characters includes:**
   a. Satan, sin, and death
   b. Error, temptation, and Satan
   c. Sin, death and temptation
   d. Sin, temptation, and Satan

2. **"Paradise Lost" is considered a(n):**
   a. Novel
   b. First Person Narrative
   c. Short Story
   d. Epic Poem

3. **Satan's name before he fell from heaven was:**
   a. Beelzebub
   b. Lucifer
   c. Belial
   d. Michael

4. **The battle between God's army and Satan's rebels in heaven lasted:**
   a. Seven days
   b. Three days
   c. One day
   d. One hour

5. **In the phrase, "thy seed shall bruise our foe," the "seed" refers to:**
   a. Jesus Christ
   b. The tree of knowledge
   c. Cane and Abel
   d. Adam

6. **In the phrase, "thy seed shall bruise our foe," "thy" refers to:**
   a. Eden
   b. Eve
   c. Sin
   d. Satan

7. **The two archangels who serve as generals in God's army are:**
   a. Michael and lucifer

b. Raphael and Gabriel
c. Michael and Raphael
d. Michael and Gabriel

8. For inspiration in writing the poem, Milton says he depends on:

a. The holy spirit
b. The son
c. Wine
d. His favourite pen

9. Earth is described as being connected to heaven by a:

a. Golden rope
b. Golden chain
c. Ladder
d. "Stepping stones of clouds"

10. Sin was born out of Satan's:

a. Rib
b. Lust
c. Anger
d. Head

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT IV

ALEXANDER POPE

STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objective
4.2 About Author
4.3 The Rape of the Lock
4.4 Review Questions
4.5 Multiple Choice Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will know about:

- Alexander pope life history.
- Pope's poem named as "The Rape of the Lock"

4.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

In the Spring of 1688, Alexander Pope was born an only child to Alexander and Edith Pope. The elder Pope, a linen-draper and recent convert to Catholicism, soon moved his family from London to Binfield, Berkshire in the face of repressive, anti-Catholic legislation from Parliament. Described by his biographer, John Spence, as "a child of a particularly sweet temper," and with a voice so melodious as to be nicknamed the "Little Nightingale," the child Pope bears little resemblance to the irascible and outspoken moralist of the later poems. Barred from attending public school or university because of his religion, Pope was largely self-educated. He taught himself French, Italian, Latin, and Greek, and read widely, discovering Homer at the age of six.

At twelve, Pope composed his earliest extant work, Ode to Solitude; the same year saw the onset of the debilitating bone deformity that would plague Pope until the end of his life. Originally attributed to the severity of his studies, the illness is now commonly accepted as Pott's disease, a form of tuberculosis affecting the spine that stunted his growth—Pope's height never exceeded four and a half feet—and rendered him hunchbacked, asthmatic, frail, and prone to violent headaches. His physical appearance would make him an easy target for his many literary enemies in later years, who would refer to the poet as a "hump-backed toad."

Pope's Pastorals, which he claimed to have written at sixteen, were published in Jacob Tonson's Poetical Miscellanies of 1710 and brought him swift recognition. Essay on Criticism, published anonymously the year after, established the heroic couplet as Pope's principal measure and attracted the attention of Jonathan Swift and John Gay, who would become Pope's lifelong friends and collaborators. Together they formed the Scriblerus Club, a congregation of writers endeavoring to satirize ignorance and poor taste through the invented figure of Martinus Scriblerus, who would serve as a precursor to the dunces in Pope's late masterpiece, the Dunciad.

1712 saw the first appearance of the The Rape of the Lock, Pope's best-known work and the one that secured his fame. Its mundane subject—the true account of a squabble between two prominent Catholic families over the theft of a lock of hair—is transformed by Pope into a mock-heroic send-up of classical epic poetry.

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Turning from satire to scholarship, Pope in 1713 began work on his six-volume translation of Homer's Iliad. He arranged for the work to be available by subscription, with a single volume being released each year for six years, a model that garnered Pope enough money to be able to live off his work alone, one of the few English poets in history to have been able to do so.

In 1719, following the death of his father, Pope moved to an estate at Twickenham, where he would live for the remainder of his life. Here he constructed his famous grotto, and went on to translate the Odyssey—which he brought out under the same subscription model as the Iliad—and to compile a heavily-criticized edition of Shakespeare, in which Pope "corrected" the Bard's meter and made several alterations to the text, while leaving corruptions in earlier editions intact.

Critic and scholar Lewis Theobald's repudiation of Pope's Shakespeare provided the catalyst for his Dunciad, a vicious, four-book satire in which Pope lampoons the witless critics and scholars of his day, presenting their "abuses of learning" as a mock-Aeneid, with the dunces in service to the goddess Dulness; Theobald served as its hero.

Though published anonymously, there was little question as to its authorship. Reaction to the Dunciad from its victims and sympathizers was more hostile than that of any of his previous works; Pope reportedly would not leave his house without two loaded pistols in his pocket. "I wonder he is not thrashed," wrote William Broome, Pope's former collaborator on the Odyssey who found himself lambasted in the Dunciad, "but his littleness is his protection; no man shoots a wren."

Pope published Essay on Man in 1734, and the following year a scandal broke out when an apparently unauthorized and heavily sanitized edition of Pope's letters was released by the notoriously reprobate publisher Edmund Curll (collections of correspondence were rare during the period). Unbeknownst to the public, Pope had edited his letters and delivered them to Curll in secret.

Pope's output slowed after 1738 as his health, never good, began to fail. He revised and completed the Dunciad, this time substituting the famously inept Colley Cibber—at that time, the country's poet laureate—for Theobald in the role of chief dunce. He began work on an epic in blank verse entitled Brutus, which he quickly abandoned; only a handful of lines survive. Alexander Pope died at Twickenham, surrounded by friends, on May 30, 1744.

Since his death, Pope has been in a constant state of reevaluation. His high artifice, strict prosody, and, at times, the sheer cruelty of his satire were an object of derision for the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century, and it was not until the 1930s that his reputation was revived. Pope is now considered the dominant poetic voice of his century, a model of prosodic elegance, biting wit, and an enduring, demanding moral force.

4.3 THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

Canto I

WHAT dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,
What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things,

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I sing — This Verse to Caryll, Muse! is due;
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the Subject, but not so the Praise,
If She inspire, and He approve my Lays.
Say what strange Motive, Goddess! cou'd compel
A well-bred Lord t'assault a gentle Belle?
Oh say what stranger Cause, yet unexplor'd,
Cou'd make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?
In Tasks so bold, can Little Men engage,
and in soft Bosoms dwells such Mighty Rage?
Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray,
And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day;
Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing Shake,
And sleepless Lovers, just at Twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the Bell, the Slipper knock'd the Ground,
And the press'd Watch return'd a silver Sound.
Belinda still her downy Pillow prest,
Her Guardian Sylph prolong'd the balmy Rest.
'Twas he had summon'd to her silent Bed
The Morning-Dream that hover'd o'er her Head.
A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau,
(That ev'n in Slumber caus'd her Cheek to glow)
Seem'd to her Ear his winning Lips to lay,
And thus in Whispers said, or seem'd to say.
Fairest of Mortals, thou distinguish'd Care
Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!
If e'er one Vision touch'd thy infant Thought,
Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught,
Of airy Elves by Moonlight Shadows seen,
The silver Token, and the circled Green,
Or Virgins visited by Angel-Pow'rs,
With Golden Crowns and Wreaths of heav'nly Flowers,
Hear and believe! thy own Importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow Views to Things below.
Some secret Truths from Learned Pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:
What tho' no Credit doubting Wits may give?
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.
Know then, unnumbered Spirits round thee fly,
The light Militia of the lower Sky;
These, tho' unseen, are ever on the Wing,
Hang o'er the Box, and hover round the Ring.
Think what an Equipage thou hast in Air,
And view with scorn Two Pages and a Chair.

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As now your own, our Beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous Mold;
Thence, by a soft Transition, we repair
From earthly Vehicles to these of Air.
Think not, when Woman's transient Breath is fled,
That all her Vanities at once are dead:
Succeeding Vanities she still regards,
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the Cards.
Her Joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,
And Love of Ombre, after Death survive.
For when the Fair in all their Pride expire,
To their first Elements the Souls retire:
The Sprights of fiery Termagants in Flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's Name.
Soft yielding Minds to Water glide away,
And sip with Nymphs, their Elemental Tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of Mischief still on Earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the Fields of Air.
Know farther yet; Whoever fair and chaste
Rejects Mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
For Spirits, freed from mortal Laws, with ease
Assume what Sexes and what Shapes they please.
What guards the Purity of melting Maids,
In Courtly Balls, and Midnight Masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous Friend, the daring Spark,
The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,
When Musick softens, and when Dancing fires?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the Word with Men below.
Some Nymphs there are, too conscious of their Face,
For Life predestin'd to the Gnomes Embrace.
These swell their Prospects and exalt their Pride,
When Offers are disdain'd, and Love deny'd.
Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant Brain;
While Peers and Dukes, and all their sweeping Train,
And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,
And in soft Sounds, Your Grace salutes their Ear.
'Tis these that early taint the Female Soul,
Instruct the Eyes of young Coquettes to roll,
Teach Infants Cheeks a bidden Blush to know,
And little Hearts to flutter at a Beau.

ALEXANDER POPE

Oft when the World imagine Women stray,
The Sylphs thro' mystick Mazes guide their Way,
Thro' all the giddy Circle they pursue,
And old Impertinence expel by new.
What tender Maid but must a Victim fall
To one Man's Treat, but for another's Ball?
When Florio speaks, what Virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her Hand?
With varying Vanities, from ev'ry Part,
They shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart;
Where Wigs with Wigs, with Sword-knots Sword-knots strive,
Beaus banish Beaus, and Coaches Coaches drive.
This erring Mortals Levity may call,
Oh blind to Truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.
Of these am I, who thy Protection claim,
A watchful Sprite, and Ariel is my Name.
Late, as I rang'd the Crystal Wilds of Air,
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star
I saw, alas! some dread Event impend,
E're to the Main this Morning Sun descend.
But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn'd by thy Sylph, oh Pious Maid beware!
This to disclose is all thy Guardian can.
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!
He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leapt up, and wak'd his Mistress with his Tongue.
'Twas then Belinda, if Report say true,
Thy Eyes first open'd on a Billet-doux.
Wounds, Charms, and Ardors, were no sooner read,
But all the Vision vanish'd from thy Head.
And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,
Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.
First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores
With Head uncover'd, the cosmetic Pow'rs.
A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears;
Th' inferior Priestess, at her Altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
The various Off'rings of the World appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.
This Casket India's glowing Gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder Box.

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The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
Transform'd to Combs, the speckled and the white.
Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows,
Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;
The Fair each moment rises in her Charms,
Repairs her Smiles, awakens ev'ry Grace,
And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face;
Sees by Degrees a purer Blush arise,
And keener Lightnings quicken in her Eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling Care;
These set the Head, and those divide the Hair,
Some fold the Sleeve, while others plait the Gown;
And Betty's prais'd for Labours not her own.

Canto II

Not with more Glories, in th' Etherial Plain,
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled Main,
Than issuing forth, the Rival of his Beams
Lanch'd on the Bosom of the Silver Thames.
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,
But ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white Breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
Her lively Looks a sprightly Mind disclose,
Quick as her Eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends,
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the Sun, her Eyes the Gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful Ease, and Sweetness void of Pride,
Might hide her Faults, if Belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some Female Errors fall,
Look on her Face, and you'll forget 'em all.
This Nymph, to the Destruction of Mankind,
Nourish'd two Locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal Curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining Ringlets her smooth Iv'ry Neck.
Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,
And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.
With hairy Sprindges we the Birds betray,
Slight Lines of Hair surprize the Finny Prey,
Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare,
And Beauty draws us with a single Hair.

Th' Adventrous Baron the bright Locks admir'd,
He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;
For when Success a Lover's Toil attends,
Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends.
For this, e're Phoebus rose, he had implor'd
Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love — to Love an Altar built,
Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves;
And all the Trophies of his former Loves.
With tender Billet-doux he lights the Pyre,
And breathes three am'rous Sighs to raise the Fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent Eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the Prize:
The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r,
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.
But now secure the painted Vessel glides,
The Sun-beams trembling on the floating Tydes,
While melting Musick steals upon the Sky,
And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die.
Smooth flow the Waves, the Zephyrs gently play
Belinda smil'd, and all the World was gay.
All but the Sylph — With careful Thoughts opprest,
Th' impending Woe sate heavy on his Breast.
He summons strait his Denizens of Air;
The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:
Soft o'er the Shrouds Aerial Whispers breathe,
That seem'd but Zephyrs to the Train beneath.
Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold.
Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew;
Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.
Amid the Circle, on the gilded Mast,
Superior by the Head, was Ariel plac'd;
His Purple Pinions opening to the Sun,
He rais'd his Azure Wand, and thus begun.

NOTES 

Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your Chief give Ear,
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Daemons hear!
Ye know the Spheres and various Tasks assign'd,
By Laws Eternal, to th' Aerial Kind.
Some in the Fields of purest Aether play,
And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.
Some guide the Course of wandring Orbs on high,
Or roll the Planets thro' the boundless Sky.
Some less refin'd, beneath the Moon's pale Light
Hover, and catch the shooting stars by Night;
Or suck the Mists in grosser Air below,
Or dip their Pinions in the painted Bow,
Or brew fierce Tempests on the wintry Main,
Or o'er the Glebe distill the kindly Rain.
Others on Earth o'er human Race preside,
Watch all their Ways, and all their Actions guide:
Of these the Chief the Care of Nations own,
And guard with Arms Divine the British Throne.
Our humbler Province is to tend the Fair,
Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious Care.
To save the Powder from too rude a Gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd Essences exhale,
To draw fresh Colours from the vernal Flow'rs,
To steal from Rainbows ere they drop in Show'rs
A brighter Wash; to curl their waving Hairs,
Assist their Blushes, and inspire their Airs;
Nay oft, in Dreams, Invention we bestow,
To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelo.
This Day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair
That e'er deserv'd a watchful Spirit's Care;
Some dire Disaster, or by Force, or Slight,
But what, or where, the Fates have wrapt in Night.
Whether the Nymph shall break Diana's Law,
Or some frail China Jar receive a Flaw,
Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,
Forget her Pray'rs, or miss a Masquerade,
Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball;
Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall.
Haste then ye Spirits! to your Charge repair;
The flutt'ring Fan be Zephyretta's Care;
The Drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And Momentilla, let the Watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock;
Ariel himself shall be the Guard of Shock.

ALEXANDER POPE

To Fifty chosen Sylphs, of special Note,
We trust th' important Charge, the Petticoat.
Oft have we known that sev'nfold Fence to fail;
Tho' stiff with Hoops, and arm'd with Ribs of Whale.
Form a strong Line about the Silver Bound,
And guard the wide Circumference around.
Whatever spirit, careless of his Charge,
His Post neglects, or leaves the Fair at large,
Shall feel sharp Vengeance soon o'ertake his Sins,
Be stopt in Vials, or transfixt with Pins.
Or plung'd in Lakes of bitter Washes lie,
Or wedg'd whole Ages in a Bodkin's Eye:
Gums and Pomatums shall his Flight restrain,
While clog'd he beats his silken Wings in vain;
Or Alom-Stypticks with contracting Power
Shrink his thin Essence like a rivell'd Flower.
Or as Ixion fix'd, the Wretch shall feel
The giddy Motion of the whirling Mill,
In Fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the Sea that froaths below!
He spoke; the Spirits from the Sails descend;
Some, Orb in Orb, around the Nymph extend,
Some thrid the mazy Ringlets of her Hair,
Some hang upon the Pendants of her Ear;
With beating Hearts the dire Event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the Birth of Fate.

Canto III

CLOSE by those Meads for ever crown'd with Flow'rs,
Where Thames with Pride surveys his rising Tow'rs,
There stands a Structure of Majestick Frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its Name.
Here Britain's Statesmen oft the Fall foredoom
Of Foreign Tyrants, and of Nymphs at home;
Here Thou, great Anna! whom three Realms obey,
Dost sometimes Counsel take--and sometimes Tea.
Hither the Heroes and the Nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the Pleasures of a Court;
In various Talk th' instructive hours they past,
Who gave the Ball, or paid the Visit last:
One speaks the Glory of the British Queen,
And one describes a charming Indian Screen.
A third interprets Motions, Looks, and Eyes;
At ev'ry Word a Reputation dies.

NOTES

Snuff, or the Fan, supply each Pause of Chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.
Mean while declining from the Noon of Day,
The Sun obliquely shoots his burning Ray;
The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,
And Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine;
The Merchant from th'exchange returns in Peace,
And the long Labours of the Toilette cease—
Belinda now, whom Thirst of Fame invites,
Burns to encounter two adventrous Knights,
At Ombre singly to decide their Doom;
And swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come.
Strait the three Bands prepare in Arms to join,
Each Band the number of the Sacred Nine.
Soon as she spreads her Hand, th' Aerial Guard
Descend, and sit on each important Card,
First Ariel perch'd upon a Matadore,
Then each, according to the Rank they bore;
For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient Race,
Are, as when Women, wondrous fond of place.
Behold, four Kings in Majesty rever'd,
With hoary Whiskers and a forky Beard;
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a Flow'r,
Th' expressive Emblem of their softer Pow'r;
Four Knaves in Garbs succinct, a trusty Band,
Caps on their heads, and Halberds in their hand;
And Particolour'd Troops, a shining Train,
Draw forth to Combat on the Velvet Plain.
The skilful Nymph reviews her Force with Care;
Let Spades be Trumps, she said, and Trumps they were.
Now move to War her Sable Matadores,
In Show like Leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable Lord!
Led off two captive Trumps, and swept the Board.
As many more Manillio forc'd to yield,
And march'd a Victor from the verdant Field.
Him Basto follow'd, but his Fate more hard
Gain'd but one Trump and one Plebeian Card.
With his broad Sabre next, a Chief in Years,
The hoary Majesty of Spades appears;
Puts forth one manly Leg, to sight reveal'd;
The rest his many-colour'd Robe conceal'd.
The Rebel-Knave, who dares his Prince engage,
Proves the just Victim of his Royal Rage.

Ev'n mighty Pam that Kings and Queens o'erthrow,
And mow'd down Armies in the Fights of Lu,
Sad Chance of War! now, destitute of Aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the Victor Spade.
Thus far both Armies to Belinda yield;
Now to the Baron Fate inclines the Field.
His warlike Amazon her Host invades,
Th' Imperial Consort of the Crown of Spades.
The Club's black Tyrant first her Victim dy'd,
Spite of his haughty Mien, and barb'rous Pride:
What boots the Regal Circle on his Head,
His Giant Limbs in State unwieldy spread?
That long behind he trails his pompous Robe,
And of all Monarchs only grasps the Globe?
The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;
Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his Face,
And his refulgent Queen, with Pow'rs combin'd,
Of broken Troops an easie Conquest find.
Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild Disorder seen,
With Throngs promiscuous strow the level Green.
Thus when dispers'd a routed Army runs,
Of Asia's Troops, and Africk's Sable Sons,
With like Confusion different Nations fly,
In various habits and of various Dye,
The pierc'd Battalions dis-united fall,
In Heaps on Heaps; one Fate o'erwhelms them all.
The Knave of Diamonds now tries his wily Arts,
And wins (oh shameful Chance!) the Queen of Hearts.
At this, the Blood the Virgin's Cheek forsook,
A livid Paleness spreads o'er all her Look;
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching Ill,
Just in the Jaws of Ruin, and Codille.
And now, (as oft in some distemper'd State)
On one nice Trick depends the gen'ral Fate.
An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen
Lurk'd in her Hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen.
He springs to Vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like Thunder on the prostrate Ace.
The Nymph exulting fills with Shouts the Sky,
The Walls, the Woods, and long Canals reply.
Oh thoughtless Mortals! ever blind to Fate,
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!
Sudden these Honours shall be snatch'd away,
And curs'd for ever this Victorious Day.

NOTES

For lo! the Board with Cups and Spoons is crown'd,
The Berries crackle, and the Mill turns round.
On shining Altars of Japan they raise
The silver Lamp; the fiery Spirits blaze.
From silver Spouts the grateful Liquors glide,
And China's Earth receives the smoking Tyde.
At once they gratify their Scent and Taste,
While frequent Cups prolong the rich Repast.
Strait hover round the Fair her Airy Band;
Some, as she sip'd, the fuming Liquor fann'd,
Some o'er her Lap their careful Plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich Brocade.
Coffee, (which makes the Politician wise,
And see thro' all things with his half shut Eyes)
Sent up in Vapours to the Baron's Brain
New Stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain.
Ah cease rash Youth! desist e'er 'tis too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's Fate!
Chang'd to a Bird, and sent to flit in Air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd Hair!
But when to Mischief Mortals bend their Will,
How soon they find fit Instruments of Ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting Grace
A two-edg'd Weapon from her shining Case;
So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,
Present the Spear, and arm him for the Fight.
He takes the Gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little Engine on his Finger's Ends:
This just behind Belinda's Neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant Steams she bends her Head:
Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprights repair,
A thousand Wings, by turns, blow back the Hair,
And thrice they twitch'd the Diamond in her Ear,
Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the Foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close Recesses of the Virgin's Thought;
As on the Nosegay in her Breast reclin'd,
He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her Mind,
Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her Art,
An Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart.
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his Pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to Fate, and with a Sigh retir'd.
The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring Forfex wide,
T'inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.

ALEXANDER POPE

Ev'n then, before the fatal Engine clos'd,
A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd;
Fate urg'd the Sheers, and cut the Sylph in twain,
(But Airy Substance soon unites again)
The meeting Points that sacred Hair dissever
From the fair Head, for ever and for ever!
Then flash'd the living Lightnings from her Eyes,
And Screams of Horror rend th' affrighted Skies.
Not louder Shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,
When Husbands or when Lap-dogs breath their last,
Or when rich China Vessels, fal'n from high,
In glittring Dust and painted Fragments lie!
Let Wreaths of Triumph now my Temples twine,
(The Victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!
While Fish in Streams, or Birds delight in Air,
Or in a Coach and Six the British Fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small Pillow grace a Lady's Bed,
While Visits shall be paid on solemn Days,
When numerous Wax-lights in bright Order blaze,
While Nymphs take Treats, or Assignations give,
So long my Honour, Name, and Praise shall live!
What Time wou'd spare, from Steel receives its date,
And Monuments, like Men, submit to Fate!
Steel cou'd the Labour of the Gods destroy,
And strike to Dust th' Imperial Tow'rs of Troy.
Steel cou'd the Works of mortal Pride confound,
And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground.
What Wonder then, fair Nymph! thy Hairs shou'd feel
The conqu'ring Force of unresisted Steel?

Canto IV

But anxious Cares the pensive Nymph opprest,
And secret Passions labour'd in her Breast.
Not youthful Kings in Battel seiz'd alive,
Not scornful Virgins who their Charms survive,
Not ardent Lovers robb'd of all their Bliss,
Not ancient Ladies when refus'd a Kiss,
Not Tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her Manteau's pinn'd awry,
E'er felt such Rage, Resentment and Despair,
As Thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair.
For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew,
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,

NOTES 

Umbriel, a dusky melancholy Spright,
As ever sully'd the fair face of Light,
Down to the Central Earth, his proper Scene,
Repairs to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.
Swift on his sooty Pinions flitts the Gnome,
And in a Vapour reach'd the dismal Dome.
No cheerful Breeze this sullen Region knows,
The dreaded East is all the Wind that blows.
Here, in a Grotto, sheltred close from Air,
And screen'd in Shades from Day's detested Glare,
She sighs for ever on her pensive Bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim at her Head.
Two Handmaids wait the Throne: Alike in Place,
But diff'ring far in Figure and in Face.
Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient Maid,
Her wrinkled Form in Black and White array'd;
With store of Pray'rs, for Mornings, Nights, and Noons,
Her Hand is fill'd; her Bosom with Lampoons.
There Affectation with a sickly Mien
Shows in her Cheek the Roses of Eighteen,
Practis'd to Lisp, and hang the Head aside,
Faints into Airs, and languishes with Pride;
On the rich Quilt sinks with becoming Woe,
Wrapt in a Gown, for Sickness, and for Show.
The Fair ones feel such Maladies as these,
When each new Night-Dress gives a new Disease.
A constant Vapour o'er the Palace flies;
Strange Phantoms rising as the Mists arise;
Dreadful, as Hermit's Dreams in haunted Shades,
Or bright as Visions of expiring Maids.
Now glaring Fiends, and Snakes on rolling Spires,
Pale Spectres, gaping Tombs, and Purple Fires:
Now Lakes of liquid Gold, Elysian Scenes,
And Crystal Domes, and Angels in Machines.
Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are seen
Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by Spleen.
Here living Teapots stand, one Arm held out,
One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout:
A Pipkin there like Homer's Tripod walks;
Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose Pie talks;
Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,
And Maids turn'd Bottels, call aloud for Corks.
Safe past the Gnome thro' this fantastick Band,
A Branch of healing Spleenwort in his hand.

Then thus addrest the Pow'r--Hail wayward Queen!
Who rule the Sex to Fifty from Fifteen,
Parent of Vapors and of Female Wit,
Who give th' Hysteric or Poetic Fit,
On various Tempers act by various ways,
Make some take Physick, others scribble Plays;
Who cause the Proud their Visits to delay,
And send the Godly in a Pett, to pray.
A Nymph there is, that all thy Pow'r disdains,
And thousands more in equal Mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a Grace,
Or raise a Pimple on a beauteous Face,
Like Citron-Waters Matron's Cheeks inflame,
Or change Complexions at a losing Game;
If e'er with airy Horns I planted Heads,
Or rumpled Petticoats, or tumbled Beds,
Or caus'd Suspicion when no Soul was rude,
Or discompos'd the Head-dress of a Prude,
Or e'er to costive Lap-Dog gave Disease,
Which not the Tears of brightest Eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda with Chagrin;
That single Act gives half the World the Spleen.
The Goddess with a discontented Air
Seems to reject him, tho' she grants his Pray'r.
A wondrous Bag with both her Hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the Winds;
There she collects the Force of Female Lungs,
Sighs, Sobs, and Passions, and the War of Tongues.
A Vial next she fills with fainting Fears,
Soft Sorrows, melting Griefs, and flowing Tears.
The Gnome rejoicing bears her Gift away,
Spreads his black Wings, and slowly mounts to Day.
Sunk in Thalestris' Arms the Nymph he found,
Her Eyes dejected and her Hair unbound.
Full o'er their Heads the swelling Bag he rent,
And all the Furies issued at the Vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal Ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising Fire.
O wretched Maid! she spread her hands, and cry'd,
(While Hampton's Ecchos, wretched Maid reply'd)
Was it for this you took such constant Care
The Bodkin, Comb, and Essence to prepare;
For this your Locks in Paper-Durance bound,
For this with tort'ring Irons wreath'd around?

NOTES 

For this with Fillets strain'd your tender Head,
And bravely bore the double Loads of Lead?
Gods! shall the Ravisher display your Hair,
While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrival'd Shrine
Ease, Pleasure, Virtue, All, our Sex resign.
Methinks already I your Tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded Toast,
And all your Honour in a Whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your helpless Fame defend?
'Twill then be Infamy to seem your Friend!
And shall this Prize, th' inestimable Prize,
Expos'd thro' Crystal to the gazing Eyes,
And heighten'd by the Diamond's circling Rays,
On that Rapacious Hand for ever blaze?
Sooner shall Grass in Hide Park Circus grow,
And Wits take Lodgings in the Sound of Bow;
Sooner let Earth, Air, Sea, to Chaos fall,
Men, Monkies, Lap-dogs, Parrots, perish all!
She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her Beau demand the precious Hairs:
(Sir Plume, of Amber Snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice Conduct of a clouded Cane)
With earnest Eyes, and round unthinking Face,
He first the Snuff-box open'd, then the Case,
And thus broke out—"My Lord, why, what the Devil?
"Z—ds! damn the Lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
"Plague on't! 'tis past a Jest—nay prithee, Pox!
"Give her the Hair—he spoke, and rapp'd his Box.
It grieves me much (reply'd the Peer again)
Who speaks so well shou'd ever speak in vain.
But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear,
(Which never more shall join its parted Hair,
Which never more its Honours shall renew,
Clipt from the lovely Head where late it grew)
That while my Nostrils draw the vital Air,
This Hand, which won it, shall for ever wear.
He spoke, and speaking, in proud Triumph spread
The long-contended Honours of her Head.
But Umbriel, hateful Gnome! forbears not so;
He breaks the Vial whence the Sorrows flow.
Then see! the Nymph in beauteous Grief appears,
Her Eyes half languishing, half drown'd in Tears;

On her heav'd Bosom hung her drooping Head,
Which, with a Sigh, she rais'd; and thus she said.
For ever curs'd be this detested Day,
Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite Curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy, had I been,
If Hampton-Court these Eyes had never seen!
Yet am not I the first mistaken Maid,
By Love of Courts to num'rous Ills betray'd.
Oh had I rather un-admir'd remain'd
In some lone Isle, or distant Northern Land;
Where the gilt Chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea!
There kept my Charms conceal'd from mortal Eye,
Like Roses that in Desarts bloom and die.
What mov'd my Mind with youthful Lords to rome?
O had I stay'd, and said my Pray'rs at home!
'Twas this, the Morning Omens seem'd to tell;
Thrice from my trembling hand the Patch-box fell;
The tott'ring China shook without a Wind,
Nay, Poll sate mute, and Shock was most Unkind!
A Sylph too warn'd me of the Threats of Fate,
In mystic Visions, now believ'd too late!
See the poor Remnants of these slighted Hairs!
My hands shall rend what ev'n thy Rapine spares:
These, in two sable Ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new Beauties to the snowie Neck.
The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its Fellow's Fate foresees its own;
Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal Sheers demands;
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious Hands.
Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!

Canto V

SHE said: the pitying Audience melt in Tears,
But Fate and Jove had stopp'd the Baron's Ears.
In vain Thalestris with Reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half to fixt the Trojan cou'd remain,
While Anna begg'd and Dido rag'd in vain.
Then grave Clarissa graceful wav'd her Fan;
Silence ensu'd, and thus the Nymph began.
Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain Man's Toast?

NOTES

Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?
Why round our Coaches crowd the white-glov'd Beaus,
Why bows the Side-box from its inmost Rows?
How vain are all these Glories, all our Pains,
Unless good Sense preserve what Beauty gains:
That Men may say, when we the Front-box grace,
Behold the first in Virtue, as in Face!
Oh! if to dance all Night, and dress all Day,
Charm'd the Small-pox, or chas'd old Age away;
Who would not scorn what Huswife's Cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly Thing of Use?
To patch, nay ogle, might become a Saint,
Nor could it sure be such a Sin to paint.
But since, alas! frail Beauty must decay,
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey,
Since paint'd, or not paint'd, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid;
What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use,
And keep good Humour still whate'er we lose?
And trust me, Dear! good Humour can prevail,
When Airs, and Flights, and Screams, and Scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll;
Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul.
So spake the Dame, but no Applause ensu'd;
Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her Prude.
To Arms, to Arms! the fierce Virago cries,
And swift as Lightning to the Combate flies.
All side in Parties, and begin th' Attack;
Fans clap, Silks rustle, and tough Whalebones crack;
Heroes and Heroines Shouts confus'dly rise,
And base, and treble Voices strike the Skies.
No common Weapons in their Hands are found,
Like Gods they fight, nor dread a mortal Wound.
So when bold Homer makes the Gods engage,
And heav'nly Breasts with human Passions rage;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;
And all Olympus rings with loud Alarms.
Jove's Thunder roars, Heav'n trembles all around;
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing Deeps resound;
Earth shakes her nodding Tow'rs, the Ground gives way;
And the pale Ghosts start at the Flash of Day!
Triumphant Umbriel on a Sconce's Height
Clapt his glad Wings, and sate to view the Fight,

Propt on their Bodkin Spears, the Sprights survey
The growing Combat, or assist the Fray.
While thro' the Press enrag'd Thalestries flies,
And scatters Deaths around from both her Eyes,
A Beau and Witling perish'd in the Throng,
One dy'd in Metaphor, and one in Song.
O cruel Nymph! a living Death I bear,
Cry'd Dapperwit, and sunk beside his Chair.
A mournful Glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
Those Eyes are made so killing---was his last:
Thus on Meander's flow'ry Margin lies
Th' expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies.
When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stept in, and kill'd him with a Frown;
She smil'd to see the doughty Hero slain,
But at her Smile, the Beau reviv'd again.
Now Jove suspends his golden Scales in Air,
Weighs the Mens Wits against the Lady's Hair;
The doubtful Beam long nods from side to side;
At length the Wits mount up, the Hairs subside.
See fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual Lightning in her Eyes;
Nor fear'd the Chief th' unequal Fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his Foe to die.
But this bold Lord, with manly Strength indu'd,
She with one Finger and a Thumb subdu'd,
Just where the Breath of Life his Nostrils drew,
A Charge of Snuff the wily Virgin threw;
The Gnomes direct, to ev'ry Atome just,
The pungent Grains of titillating Dust.
Sudden, with starting Tears each Eye o'erflows,
And the high Dome re-ecchoes to his Nose.
Now meet thy Fate, incens'd Belinda cry'd,
And drew a deadly Bodkin from her Side.
(The same, his ancient Personage to deck,
Her great great Grandsire wore about his Neck
In three Seal-Rings which after, melted down,
Form'd a vast Buckle for his Widow's Gown:
Her infant Grandame's Whistle next it grew,
The Bells she gingled, and the Whistle blew;
Then in a Bodkin grac'd her Mother's Hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)
Boast not my Fall (he cry'd) insulting Foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low.

NOTES

Nor think, to die dejects my lofty Mind;
All that I dread, is leaving you behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's Flames,---but burn alive.
Restore the Lock! she cries; and all around
Restore the Lock! the vaulted Roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a Strain
Roar'd for the Handkerchief that caus'd his Pain.
But see how oft Ambitious Aims are cross'd,
And Chiefs contend 'till all the Prize is lost!
The Lock, obtain'd with Guilt, and kept with Pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain:
With such a Prize no Mortal must be blest,
So Heav'n decrees! with Heav'n who can contest?
Some thought it mounted to the Lunar Sphere,
Since all things lost on Earth, are treasur'd there.
There Heroe's Wits are kept in pondrous Vases,
And Beau's in Snuff-boxes and Tweezer-Cases.
There broken Vows, and Death-bed Alms are found,
And Lovers Hearts with Ends of Riband bound;
The Courtiers Promises, and Sick Man's Pray'rs,
The Smiles of Harlots, and the Tears of Heirs,
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak a Flea;
Dry'd Butterflies, and Tomes of Casuistry.
But trust the Muse---she saw it upward rise,
Tho' mark'd by none but quick Poetic Eyes:
(So Rome's great Founder to the Heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confess'd in view.)
A sudden Star, it shot thro' liquid Air,
And drew behind a radiant Trail of Hair.
Not Berenice's Locks first rose so bright,
The heav'ns bespangling with dishevel'd light.
The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleas'd pursue its Progress thro' the Skies.
This the Beau-monde shall from the Mall survey,
And hail with Musick its propitious Ray.
This, the blest Lover shall for Venus take,
And send up Vows from Rosamonda's Lake.
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless Skies,
When next he looks thro' Galilaeo's Eyes;
And hence th' Egregious Wizard shall foredoom
The Fate of Louis, and the Fall of Rome.
Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn the ravish'd Hair
Which adds new Glory to the shining Sphere!

Not all the Tresses that fair Head can boast
Shall draw such Envy as the Lock you lost.
For, after all the Murders of your Eye,
When, after Millions slain, yourself shall die;
When those fair Suns shall sett, as sett they must,
And all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust;
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,
And mid'st the Stars inscribe Belinda's Name!

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. **Comment on the allusion of " Strike to dust the imperial towers of Troy" in "The Rape of the Lock"?**
2. **Comment on the real-life incident on which "The Rape of the Lock" is composed.**
3. **Comment on the theme "The Rape of the Lock".**
4. **Comment on the caskets of Belinda.**
5. **Comment on the allusion of ".... Scylla's Fate/ Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air/ She dearly pays for Nisus's injured hair".**

Summary and Analysis

The Rape of the Lock is a mock-heroic poem (in five cantos published in 1714) of great power. Here Pope satirises the trivial matter of snipping a lock of hair from the head of Miss Arabella Fermor by Lord Petre in a grand heroic style.

The society darling Belinda wakes at noon and after elaborate toilet sails up the Thames to Hampton Court. Belinda flirts with all the gentlemen aboard ship and plays the fashionable game of ombre. As Belinda pours coffee, the baron from behind cuts off a lock of the hair. Belinda cries and the ladies decide to take stem measures against the men. Tossing snuff at the Baron's nose, Belinda causes him to sneeze. At the point of a hair pin he is ordered to return the lock.

Dr. Johnson called the poem "the most attractive of all ludicrous compositions". Pope satirises the fashions and follies of the society. The didactic success of the poem is achieved by the big gap between the silliness of the episode and the deadly seriousness with which its participants regard it. The mock-heroic style brings the whole quarrel into absurdity. The delicate manner and gay wit are its principal charms.

Pope imitates the maximum elements of epic poetry - its invocation, games, battle, journey similes and descriptions and supernatural machinary sylphs and gnomes. The contrast between the grand style and the silly matter produces the irony. The sylphs and gnomes give the delicacy to the poem. Indeed, the satire is full of delicate fancy and humour. Here the imaginative fervour of Pope is in evidence in his nature-descriptions

Of this philosophy Pope had small knowledge; but he was well acquainted with the discredited Boling broke, his "guide, philosopher and friend," who was a fluent exponent of the new doctrine, and from Boling broke came the general scheme of the Essay on Man. The poem appears in the form of four epistles, dealing with man's place in the universe,

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with his moral nature, with social and political ethics, and with the problem of happiness. These were discussed from a common-sense viewpoint, and with feet always on solid earth. As Pope declares: Know then thyself, presume not God nto scan; The proper study of mankind is man.... Created half to rise, and half to fall; Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all; Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled; The glory, jest and riddle of the world.

Pope's most famous poem is The Rape of the Lock, first published in 1712, with a revised version published in 1714. A mock-epic, it satirises a high-society quarrel between Arabella Fermor (the "Belinda" of the poem) and Lord Petre, who had snipped a lock of hair from her head without her permission. The satirical style is tempered, however, by a genuine and almost voyeuristic interest in the "beau-monde" (fashionable world) of 18th-century English society.

Throughout the poem these two doctrines of Deism are kept in sight: that there is a God, a Mystery, who dwells apart from the world; and that man ought to be contented, even happy, in his ignorance of matters beyond his horizon: "All nature is but art, unknown to thee; All chance, direction which thou canst not see; All discord, harmony not understood; All partial evil, universal good; And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite, One truth is clear: whatever is, is right."

The result is rubbish, so far as philosophy is concerned, but in the heap of incongruous statements which Pope brings together are a large number of quotable lines, such as: "Honour and shame from no condition rise; Act well your part, there all the honour lies." It is because of such lines, the care with which the whole poem is polished, and the occasional appearance of real beauty (such as the passage beginning, "Lo, the poor Indian") that the Essay on Man occupies such a high place in eighteenth- century literature.

It is hardly necessary to examine other works of Pope, since the poems already named give us the full measure of his strength and weakness. His talent is to formulate rules of poetry, to satirize fashionable society, to make brilliant epigrams in faultless couplets. His failure to move or even to interest us greatly is due to his second-hand philosophy, his inability to feel or express emotion, his artificial life apart from nature and humanity. When we read Chaucer or Shakespeare, we have the impression that they would have been at home in any age or place, since they deal with human interests that are the same yesterday, to-day and forever; but we can hardly imagine Pope feeling at ease anywhere save in his own set and in his own generation. He is the poet of one period, which set great store by formality, and in that period alone he is supreme.

Themes

Pope's poetry, especially 'The Rape of the Lock 'holds up a faithful mirror to the 18th century English 'beau monde'. It was Queen Anne's regime that faced new born urban industrialization and huge advances of science, technology, and merchant-economy created a new class: the 'noveau riche' middle class, who imitated the lifestyle of the aristocracy. 'The Rape of the Lock 'depicts the eighteenth-century practices and pastimes, the false standards of living in a very big panorama. The card games, parties, lap-dogs, pleasure-boating, snuff-taking, scandal-mongering, love-letter writing and collecting, idle

gossip- everything, presented in the poem, are culled from the pages of the contemporary history.

Though the male folk was no less glued to this external resplendence, it was the fair sex who really stole the show. In their obsession with vagant dress, jewellery, and toiletry, in their desperate attempt in aping, and in surpassing one another's fashion display, in their feigned nonchalance, in their preoccupation with worthless Bric-à-Brac, in their artificial gentleness veiling their aggressive sensuality and finally, in their inherent frivolity- the women of their time surpassed all feminine vanity of the preceding ages. Pope has left no dart in his stock unused, to banter this innately empty embellished society, especially its female folk.

Literary Devices

- **Mock-Heroic elements:** The poem starts with mock-heroic elements. The engagement of inconstant deities in the lives of human beings is an epic element. The way of presenting the central problem of the poem is a mock-heroic element. The emotions and passions in the poem, the satiric tone with which Pope criticizes the 18 th century society is an example of a mock-heroic element. The usage of supernatural elements can be seen in the mock-heroic aspect.
- **Satire:** Pope's satire is very much lively and jovial. The device he uses to arouse comic laughter and to rectify the follies of the age was the unexpected juxtaposition of the serious and the petty. The readers recognized that the society took its foppery solemnly and its religion frivolously.
- **Images and their significances:** Pope compare Belinda's glamour with the sun. There are images of silver and gold. Belinda's lock symbolizes the importance given to a woman's beauty in society. The card symbolizes the trivial nature of life at court. The Bodkin symbolizes the swords and spears of a warrior. 'Atar', 'The Sacred Rites of Pride' are instances of religious imagery.
- **The main device is Hyperbole**, Pope uses this device to describe Belinda, her activities and to exaggerate the common places. In lines 13 and 14 readers can see hyperbole used to describe Belinda's beauty.

4.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Describe Belinda as she is described at the beginning of Canto-2.**
2. **Why could not Ariel protect Belinda?**
3. **To which genre of verse does "The Rape of the Lock" belong? Define the genre.**
4. **Comment on the setting of "The Rape of the Lock".**
5. **How does Ariel threaten the sylphs in case they are negligent of their duties to Belinda?**

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LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Name two specific duties assigned by Ariel to his band of sylphs to protect Belinda.**
2. **How to coffee prepared and served in Canto-3 of "The Rape of the Lock".**
3. **Give one example of anticlimax in "The Rape of the Lock".**
4. **What is Diana's Law?**
5. **"Make Dorimant betray and Loviet rage"- Who are Dorimant and Loveit?**

4.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **The Rape of the Lock is a parody of which epic poem?**
   a. Paradise lost
   b. The Iliad
   c. The odyssey
   d. The Aeneid
2. **Arabella Fermor was the historical inspiration for which character?**
   a. Ariel
   b. Clarissa
   c. Belinda
   d. Thalestris
3. **Robert, Lord Petre was the historical inspiration for which character?**
   a. Sir fopling
   b. Sir plume
   c. The baron
   d. Dapperwit
4. **Who asked Pope to write a comic poem about the historical incident between Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre in order to reconcile their families?**
   a. Henry St. John, lord Bolingbroke
   b. John Caryll
   c. Jonathan swift
   d. Joseph Addison
5. **From which Shakespeare play does Pope take the name "Ariel?"**
   a. A midsummer night's dream
   b. Macbeth
   c. The tempest
   d. Twelfth night
6. **Which character is named for an Amazonian Queen in Greek mythology?**
   a. Belinda
   b. Thalestris
   c. Umbriel
   d. Clarissa

7. In Canto I, which character warns Belinda in a dream that some dire disaster will befall her that day?

a. Thalestris
b. Umbriel
c. Ariel
d. Clarissa

8. According to Pope's depiction of the supernatural sprites, what do termagants (scolds) become?

a. Nymphs
b. Salamanders
c. Gnomes
d. Sylphs

9. According to Pope's depiction of the supernatural sprites, what do indecisive women become?

a. Nymphs
b. Gnomes
c. Sylphs
d. Salamanders

10. According to Pope's depiction of the supernatural sprites, what do prudes become?

a. Salamanders
b. Gnomes
c. Sylphs
d. Nymphs

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT V

POEMS

STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objective
5.2 William Cowper: “Light Shining Out of Darkness”
5.3 William Collins: “Ode to Evening”
5.4 Review Questions
5.5 Multiple Choice Questions

NOTES

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to:

- Know about the famous British poet William Cowper.
- Know more about William Cowper's poem light shining out of darkness.
- Grab some knowledge about William Collins and his writings.

5.2 WILLIAM COWPER: "LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS"

About Author

The first child of Reverend John Cowper and Ann Donne Cowper, William Cowper was born on November 26, 1731, in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England. The poet's mother died when he was six and Cowper was sent to Dr. Pittman's boarding school, where he was routinely bullied. In 1748, he enrolled in the Middle Temple in order to pursue a law degree. Shortly thereafter, he fell in love with Theodora Cowper, a cousin. Her father did not approve, and their relationship ended in 1755. Cowper wrote a sequence of poems, Delia, chronicling this affair but the book was not published until 1825.

In 1763, through family connections, he accepted a clerkship of the journals in the House of Lords. A rival faction, however, challenged his appointment and the ordeal caused Cowper to enter Nathaniel Cotton's Collegium Insanorum at St. Albans. While there he converted to Evangelicalism. In 1765, He moved to Huntingdon and took a room with the Rev. Morley Unwin and his wife Mary. Unwin died of a riding accident in 1767 and Cowper and Mary Unwin moved together to the town of Olney in 1768. They were not separated until her death in 1796. While at Olney, Cowper became close friends with the Evangelical clergyman John Newton; together they co-authored the Olney Hymns, which was first published in 1779 and included Newton's famous hymn "Amazing Grace." Of the 68 hymns Cowper wrote, "Oh for a closer walk with God" and "God moves in a mysterious way" are the most well-known.

In 1773, Cowper became engaged to Mary Unwin, but he suffered another attack of madness. He had terrible nightmares, believing that God has rejected him. Cowper would never again enter a church or say a prayer. When he recovered his health, he kept busy by gardening, carpentry, and keeping animals. In spite of periods of acute depression, Cowper's twenty-six years in Olney and later at Weston Underwood were marked by great achievement as poet, hymn-writer, and letter-writer. His first volume of poetry, Poems by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple was published in 1782 to wide acclaim. His work was compared to late Neo-Classical writers like Samuel Johnson as well as to poets such as Thomas Gray.

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His major work was undertaken when Lady Austen complained to Cowper that he lacked a subject. She encouraged him to write about the sofa in his parlour. The Task grew into an opus of six books and nearly five thousand lines. Although the poem begins as a mock-heroic account of a wooden stool developing into a sofa, in later sections of the poem Cowper meditates on the immediate world around him (his village, garden, animals, and parlour) as well as larger religious and humanitarian concerns. His work found a wide audience; Samuel Taylor Coleridge called him "the best modern poet." His attention to nature and common life along with the foregrounding of his personal life prefigured the concerns of Romantic poets such as Wordsworth. William Cowper died of dropsy on April 25, 1800. At the time of his death, his Poems had already reached their tenth printing.

Poem: "Light Shining Out of Darkness"

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage takes,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.
Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

Analysis

This poem is based on the wonders of God, and his magnanimity. The poem was written in 1772 by William Cowper.

Cowper's image of God is such a magnificent and regal one. It is as if he is so amazed by this god, and his brilliance that he had to write this poem to share it with the world. The title immediately says something about his image of God: that he is the light in a dark and clouded tunnel.

The first stanza is introducing god, and starting to build up the reader's vision and idea about god. 3rd and 4th lines:

"he plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm."

This builds up the profile of Cowper's god; he is so powerful and strong that he 'rides' upon the storm. We, as humans see a storm as a powerful natural hazard, which if strong enough can cause a lot of destruction. Yet God rides upon the storm. This puts his splendour into perspective.

The 2nd stanza talks about God's ways of thinking, and how it is superior to the brains of humans.

"Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill…"

God's skill is so great that, for a measly human to understand, it would be like going into a maze of millions of tunnels – we would just get lost and confused.

So, the 2nd stanza is about how God has a superior way of thinking to humans, and this is where he "…works his sovereign will."

Summary

.....God carries out his plans in a mysterious way, the speaker says. Even though you may not understand what He does, He fashions and executes His designs for humanity with "never failing skill" (line 6). Be not afraid of the celestial clouds, the speaker says; they rain with divine mercy. The speaker tells the reader to trust God, for "Behind a frowning providence/ He hides a smiling face (lines 15-16).

.....God works fast, the speaker says, and if the bud of His work taste bitter, the flower will be sweet.

.....Those who lack faith in Him—those who attempt to fathom his mind—are certain to err, the speaker observes. Only God alone can interpret His ways, and He will make them plain.

Theme

.....The theme of the poem is the mysterious way that the benevolent Almighty works on behalf of humanity.

End Rhyme

.....Except for lines 1 and 3, the rhyme scheme of the poem is abab. The third stanza demonstrates the pattern.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

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5.3 WILLIAM COLLINS: "ODE TO EVENING"

William Collins is regarded as one of the most skilled 18th-century lyric poets. Marking a transitional period in English literature, Collins's style is formally Neoclassical but presages the themes of the Romantic period. His treatment of individual experience and descriptions of emotion influenced his peers as well as the next generation of writers.

Collins was born in Chichester, England, where his father served as mayor. He enrolled in Winchester College at age 11 and began publishing poems, later earning a BA in art under scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford. His 1742 publication, Persian Eclogues, was warmly received by both readers and critics, and he followed his success with Verses Humbly Addressed to Sir Thomas Hanmer (1743). Collins moved to London to write, forfeiting his scholarship, but was forced to leave the city after his extravagant lifestyle created a significant debt.

While they garnered little attention during Collins's lifetime, the poems in his Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects (1746) are among his most celebrated and include "Ode to Evening" and "Ode to Fear." Collins's mental health began to fail during the final decade of his life, and his writing suffered as a result. He began drafting his final poem, "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands," in 1749, but at the time of his death 10 years later, it had yet to be completed.

Poem: "Ode to Evening"

If aught of oaten stop, or past'ral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales,
O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed;
Now air is hushed, save where the weak-ey'd bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path
Against the pilgrim, borne in heedless hum:
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,
Whose numbers stealing through thy dark'ning vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,

As musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return.
For when thy folding star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours, and elves
Who slept in flowers the day,
And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and lovelier still,
The pensive pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shad'wy car.
Then lead, calm votress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile
Or upland fallows grey
Reflect its last cool gleam.
But when chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.
While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy ling'ring light;
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;
So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipp'd Health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy fav'rite name!

Summary

'Ode to Evening' by William Collins describes the natural beauty of evening by using vivid imagery. This picturesque poem presents a variety of images that beautifully depict the natural setting in the evening. The speaker of this piece who represents Collins' poetic voice, converses directly with "Eve" or evening to please her. At first, by describing the sky, he details how the day is about to end and the night is approaching. The creatures like a bat and beetle give the readers an auditory effect. By painting the ambiance, he tries to depict the calmness of nature in the evening. In the end, Collins presents the effect of seasons on her (Eve).

NOTES

Meaning

This poem is about the poetic address to evening and a trial to please it. Collins compares the evening to a divine being and seeks divine inspiration from her. He hopes to please her with his poetry. At some point, he feels there is a dearth of appropriate expressions in his poetry. For this reason, he tries to imitate the natural mood that can be felt at the end of the day, just before the night.

Besides, the poet presents several images to depict the natural scene after the day-end. Those images are not uncommon and can be observed easily. As it is an ode to evening, readers can find some movements inside the text. For example, the first part deals with the description of nature in the evening. Moving on, it explores the poet's plea to it. Lastly, it depicts the seasonal change and its reflection on it.

Structure

This poem is separated into two parts. The first part is longer than the following one. There is not any specific rhyme scheme in this text. It is in free verse. The rhythm mostly depends on the rhyming of neighboring words in a single line. Therefore, the internal rhythm sustains the flow.

The contraction and expansion of the lines depict the speaker's mood. There is a specified metrical pattern in this poem. It is composed in the iambic pentameter and iambic trimeter alternatively. As the structure imitates the poet's state of mind, so does its metrical scheme. The rising rhythm depicts how he feels while talking about the evening.

Literary Devices

Collins uses several literary devices that make this impassioned address to evening more engaging and thought-provoking to the readers. In this poem, readers come across the use of metonymy at first. The "oaten stop" contains metonymy.

The poet uses personification for infusing human-like qualities in the evening. He compares it to the chaste spirit in the second line. In the third line, readers come across a simile. The comparison is made between the solemn sound during the evening to the song of the poet.

In "dying gales," there is a personal metaphor. One can find the use of an apostrophe in the line, "O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun." In the phrase, "short shrill shriek," there is an alliteration of the "s" sound. This phrase also contains an onomatopoeia.

Readers can find a metaphor in the usage of the word "pilgrim". The poet compares the sun to a pilgrim. He also uses oxymoron, and synecdoche in this poem.

Themes

Some important themes of 'Ode to Evening' are transition or change, nature, darkness, life, and death. The most important theme is transition. Collins depicts how nature takes a new shape after the day-end. In the critical juncture of the evening, he shows the natural change that is similar to the cycle of life. It seems the evening is a metaphorical reference to the moment just before death. It also depicts a new beginning that is unlike that of the day.

Another important theme is darkness. To be specific, Collins revolves around the theme of light vs darkness. Besides, the theme of nature is impregnated in this piece. How the natural scene takes a calm shape after the daylong spontaneity gets featured here. Last but not least, there are several implicit references to death. For example, the line, "Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile" contains this theme.

Detailed Analysis

Lines 1–8

If aught of oaten stop, or past'ral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales,
O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed;

'Ode to Evening' contains a reference to the tune of an oaten flute and the pastoral poetry at the very beginning. In a pastoral poem or eclogue, a shepherd is often shown playing the oaten flute enjoying the spontaneity of the day and the lush, green pasture. In contrast, as the day is about to end and the night is arriving quickly in the scene, Collins' poetic persona takes permission from the spirit of Eve to allow him to compose something else.

At such a critical juncture, nothing other than an ode is the best medium to convey the evening's calm mood. Therefore, the speaker hopes to compose an ode to soothe Eve's "modest ear." In the quoted phrase, the poet uses a transferred epithet and synecdoche as well.

This ode imitates the sound of the "solemn springs" and "dying gales." Readers can feel how the poet creates a monotonous mood from the beginning.

By addressing directly the evening as a reserved nymph, the speaker shows how the "bright-haired sun" sits in the western sky, metaphorically the "western tent." The cloudy skirts of the sky are woven with "ethereal brede." It overhangs behind the sun's "wavy bed."

Lines 9–14

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-ey'd bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path
Against the pilgrim, borne in heedless hum:

The air is hushed as if it is also sad as the day is about to end. Peace lingers everywhere. But a few creatures such as the bat and beetle begins their soft musical composition praising the night-break. The "weak-eyed bat" with its short shrill shriek flies by on its "leathern wing."

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There is a humming sound of the beetle that winds its small but sullen horn. It rises amidst the "twilight path" against the sun, referred to as a "pilgrim." He is borne by the beetle's "heedless hum." In the quoted phrase, readers can find the use of consonance and onomatopoeia.

Lines 15–20

Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,
Whose numbers stealing through thy dark'ning vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return.

After providing an auditory and visual picture of the evening, the speaker requests the "composed maid" to teach him "some softened strain." It is a reference to the ode that the poet is composing. The lines of the ode imitate the mood of the "darkening vale." It is not unseemly with natural stillness. With this slow musing, Collins wishes to return Eve's "genial love." It is important to note here that this section of 'Ode to Evening' contains an inversion as the lines are reverted from the conventional order.

Lines 21–28

For when thy folding star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours, and elves
Who slept in flowers the day,
And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and lovelier still,
The pensive pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shad'wy car.

When the folding star, another metaphorical reference to the sun, shows its "paly circlet," it appears as a "warning lamp," marking the "fragrant Hours." The elves who sleep in flowers in the morning and the nymph who wreathes her brows with the sedge (a grasslike plant) are shedding the "freshening dew." They are lovelier still. With the sweet but pensive pleasures (an example of an oxymoron), nature prepares Eve's "shadowy car." The scenes of the evening are sweet to look at. But, they trigger a pensive mood in the onlooker's mind.

Lines 29–32

Then lead, calm votress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile
Or upland fallows grey
Reflect its last cool gleam.

The "calm votress," or the personified evening, leads the speaker to some other scenes in 'Ode to Evening'. "Votress" means a nun who has dedicated herself to religion by taking vows. She leads him to some "sheety lake" that cheers the lonely heath or some "time-hallowed pile" or pyre. The quoted phrase acts as a symbol of death. Besides, there are

"grey fallows" that reflect Eve's "last cool gleam." Collings uses sensory imagery to portray what the cold evening breeze feels like.

Lines 33–40

But when chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

In this section, the speaker talks about a situation when he is unable to enjoy the calm beauty of the evening. If the "chill blustering wind" or "driving rain" forbids his willingness to go outside, he implores her to be with her in his little hut.

From there he can watch the mountain's side viewing the wilds, swelling floods, brown hamlets, and dim-discovered spires. Readers can see that here the poet uses a repetition of the conjunction "and". It is an example of polysyndeton and is used to portray continuity.

He can hear the toll of the spire-bell and observe the day-end. The use of a beautiful image soothes a reader's mind in the last two lines. Here, Eve is shown drawing the dusky veil over the sky with her dewy fingers.

Lines 41–45

While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy ling'ring light;
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;

The second stanza of 'Ode to Evening' deals especially with the seasonal change and how it transforms the evening scene. According to Collins, in Spring, the showers bathe Eve's "breathing tresses." It is a reference to someone's nearing death. Often there is no rain at all that can drench the meekest Eve.

While Summer loves to sport beneath her lingering light. The sallow Autumn fills her lap with withering leaves. In this way, the poet uses several colors for painting different pictures of the evening in a reader's mind.

Lines 46–52

Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;
So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipp'd Health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy fav'rite name!

NOTES

In Winter, the yell of the troublesome air affrights the shrinking strain of Eve. It rudely rends her robes. The repetition of the "r" sound creates a trembling sensation. Moving on to the following lines, the speaker found some personified beings beneath the "sylvan shed." There are Fancy, Friendship, Science, and "rose-lipped Health."

Here, the absence of conjunction presents asyndeton. In the quoted phrase, the poet uses synecdoche and metaphor as well. Besides, the poet personifies health as a beautiful lady.

They own the "gentlest influence" of the evening and sing a hymn dedicated to her favourite name. Readers can understand that here Collins is referring to his 'Ode to Evening'.

5.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **How has 'evening' been personified in the poem Ode to Evening?**
2. **How does the poem Ode to Evening begin?**
3. **Write your own poem on a religious theme.**
4. **What is the difference between a lyric poem and a narrative poem?**
5. **Write an informative essay that evaluates Cowper's influence on later poets.**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Write a brief explanation of given below lines:**

   If aught of oaten stop, or past'ral song,

   May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,

   Like thy own solemn springs,

   Thy springs and dying gales,

   O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun

   Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,

   With brede ethereal wove,

   O'erhang his wavy bed;

2. **Write a brief note on poet "William Cowper".**
3. **Discuss about "William Collins" life.**
4. **Write a brief summary of poem "Ode to Evening".**
5. **Write a brief summary of poem "Light Shining Out of Darkness".**

5.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **William Cowper was born on November _____, 1731.**
   a. 26
   b. 27
   c. 28
   d. 29

2. William Cowper died of _____.

a. Cardiac arrest
b. Liver failure
c. Dropsy
d. Natural death

3. William Cowper died on _____ 25, 1800.

a. May
b. April
c. June
d. July

4. Collins was born in Chichester, _____.

a. America
b. Germany
c. Philippines
d. England

5. In poem "Ode to Evening" There is _____ specific rhyme scheme in this text.

a. abcb
b. Not any
c. adcd
d. None of the above

6. Themes of 'Ode to Evening' are transition or change, _____ and death.

a. Nature
b. Darkness
c. Life
d. All of the above

7. The rhyme scheme of the poem "Light Shining Out of Darkness" is _____.

a. abcb
b. acdc
c. abab
d. None of the above

8. The poem "Light Shining Out of Darkness" was written in _____ by William Cowper.

a. 1772
b. 1778
c. 1776
d. 1775

9. His work found a wide audience; Samuel Taylor Coleridge called him _____.

a. "The best romantic poet"
b. "The best drama poet"

NOTES 

c. "The best modern poet"
d. None of the above

10. Collins began drafting his final poem, "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands," in _____.

a. 1777
b. 1768
c. 1798
d. 1749

♦♦♦♦♦

ANSWER KEY

UNIT I

QUES.	ANSWER	QUES.	ANSWER
1.	c.	6.	c.
2.	c.	7.	a.
3.	d.	8.	d.
4.	a.	9.	b.
5.	b.	10.	c.

UNIT II

QUES.	ANSWER	QUES.	ANSWER
1.	b.	6.	b.
2.	c.	7.	b.
3.	a.	8.	a.
4.	c.	9.	c.
5.	d.	10.	c.

UNIT III

QUES.	ANSWER	QUES.	ANSWER
1.	a.	6.	b.
2.	d.	7.	d.
3.	b.	8.	a.
4.	b.	9.	b.
5.	a.	10.	d.

UNIT IV

QUES.	ANSWER	QUES.	ANSWER
1.	b.	6.	b.
2.	c.	7.	c.
3.	c.	8.	b.
4.	b.	9.	a.
5.	c.	10.	b.

UNIT V

QUES.	ANSWER	QUES.	ANSWER
1.	a.	6.	d.
2.	c.	7.	c.
3.	b.	8.	a.
4.	d.	9.	c.
5.	b.	10.	d.

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Suggestive Reading

Books

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Web Resources

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- En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old-English-Literature
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