Master of Arts

(English)

Restoration to Modern Drama

Semester-II

Author- Dr. Yogmaya vashishtha

SURESH GYAN VIHAR UNIVERSITY

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Restoration to Modern Drama

Learning Outcomes

The student will be able to understand:

Unit I

- Students can gain insights into the characteristics of this genre, including its wit, satire, complex plotting, and examination of social manners and relationships.
- Studying the play delves into the social mores and moral values of the Restoration period.
- "The Way of the World" can be compared with other plays of the Restoration period, allowing students to discern common themes, stylistic features, and social commentary within the genre.

Unit II

- Studying the characteristics of this genre, including its wit, humor, satire, and exploration of social manners and relationships during the late 17th century.
- A study of the historical context of the play, including political, social, and cultural factors of the Restoration era.
- Students can analyze the linguistic choices, clever dialogue, and rhetorical techniques employed by Wycherley, enhancing their understanding of Restoration drama.

Unit III

- Studying "Man and Superman" showcases Shaw's distinctive dramatic style, characterized by witty dialogue, intellectual debates, and social commentary.
- A study of the historical and cultural context of the play provides students with a deeper understanding of the intellectual climate of the time, including the influence of philosophical and social movements on Shaw's work.
- Studying "Man and Superman" can be compared with other plays by Shaw, allowing students to discern common themes, stylistic features, and the evolution of Shaw's ideas over time.

Unit IV

- Analyze the religious symbolism, moral dilemmas, and theological questions presented in the play.
- Students can analyze the function of these choral elements, exploring how they contribute to the overall structure and meaning of the play.
- Studying "Murder in the Cathedral" addresses the complex relationship between political power and spiritual authority.

Unit V

- Studying the characteristics of this movement, which critiqued the established social norms and institutions in post-war Britain.
- Analyze how Osborne captures the sense of frustration, class conflict, and social change in his portrayal of the characters.
- "Look Back in Anger" had a significant impact on British theatre, challenging traditional theatrical conventions.

RESTORATION TO MODERN DRAMA
SYLLABUS

UNIT I
W. CONGREVE
The Way of the World

UNIT II
W. WYCHERLEY
The Country Wife

UNIT III
G. B. SHAW
Man and Superman

UNIT IV
T. S. ELIOT
Murder in the Cathedral

UNIT V
J. OSBORNE
Look Back in Anger

UNIT I

W. CONGREVE

STRUCTURE

NOTES

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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

- Know about W. Congreve the famous play writer.
- Learn about his one of the famous plays "The Way of the World".

1.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

William Congreve, 1670-1729, was born in Yorkshire, England. As his father was an officer in the army and the commander of a garrison near Cork in Ireland, Congreve was educated at Kilkenny and then at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was a slightly younger college-mate of Jonathan Swift. In 1691, he was admitted to the Middle Temple in London to study law. It is likely that, like Young Witwoud in The Way of the World, his interest in law was only a means to take him to London, the center of all excitement.

By 1692, Congreve was already a recognized member of the literary world. His first play, The Old Bachelor, was first acted in January 1693, before he was twenty-three years old, and was triumphantly successful. His other plays, The Double-Dealer, Love for Love, The Mourning Bride, and The Way of the World, all followed at short intervals. The last of them was presented in March 1700.

For the rest of his life, Congreve wrote no plays. The Way of the World was not successful on the stage, and this disappointment may have had something to do with his decision. He engaged in controversy with Jeremy Collier on the morality of the stage, a frustrating experience. He suffered from gout and bad sight. He became an elder statesman of letters at the age of thirty, honored by the nobility, highly respected by younger writers.

In his later years, Congreve conducted an ambiguous romance with Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough. When he died, she erected a tablet to his memory in Westminster Abbey. She also ordered a life-size figure of him and had it seated in his regular place at her table. The feet were swathed in bandages and a doctor "treated" Congreve for gout daily. This rather surprising memento casts its own odd light on the Duchess, perhaps on Congreve, and certainly on the status of the medical profession at the time.

1.3 THE WAY OF THE WORLD

The Way of the World Summary

The Way of the World is a restoration comedy written by William Congreve. Through the way of the world summary, we will get a better understanding of the play. It begins with Mirabell and Fainall playing cards. A man enters to inform Mirabell that his servant, Whitwell, and Lady Wishfort's servant, Foible got married. Thus, Mirabell confesses to Fainall about his love for Millamant. Further, Mirabell learns that on Lady Wishfort's marriage, Millamant will lose the fortune she is to inherit from her aunt. Thus, they can get the money only if Lady Wishfort agrees to their marriage.

In the second act of the way of the world summary, Mrs Fainall and Mrs Marwood talk about their abhorrence for men. Suddenly, Fainall arrives to accuse Mrs Marwood of being in love with Mirabell. In the interim, Mrs Fainall expresses her hatred for her husband to Mirabell. Thus, they begin plotting to trick Lady Wishfort into agreeing to the marriage.

Next, we see Foible, encouraging Lady Wishfort to marry Sir Rowland (Whitwell in disguise). Thus, the main plan is to trap her in marriage which won't go ahead as it will be bigamy and also a social disgrace because of the class differences. Thus, Mirabell will lend her a helping hand to sort it out if she agrees to the marriage.

As Mrs Fainfall discusses this plan with Foible, Mrs Marwood overhears the conversation. She reveals the plan to Fainall who has decided to take Mrs Fainall's money and elope with Mrs Marwood. Further, in the way of the world summary, Mirabell proposes to Millamant and she accepts happily. As Mirabell leaves, Lady Wishfort enters and tells Millimant, she wants her to marry her nephew, Sir Wilfull. After that, Lady Wishfort receives a letter that reveals the Sir Rowland plot. He then accuses Mirabell of harming their wedding. Thus, Whitewell is arrested by Fainall. Lady Wishfort is grateful to Mrs Marwood for revealing the plot.

Then, we see Fainall using the information of Mrs Fainall's former affair with Mirabell plus Millimant's contract of blackmailing Lady Wishfort. He tells her to not remarry and transfer her fortune to him. However, Mirabell comes to the rescue to save her fortune and honour. Thus, all the blackmailing stops and everything is gets back in place. Finally, Millimant gets her inheritance and blessings to marry Mirabell.

Character List

Mirabell A young man-about-town, in love with Millamant.

Millamant A young, very charming lady, in love with, and loved by, Mirabell. She is the ward of Lady Wishfort because she is the niece of Lady Wishfort's long-dead husband. She is a first cousin of Mrs. Fainall.

Fainall A man-about-town. He and Mirabell know each other well, as people do who move in the same circles. However, they do not really like each other. Fainall married his wife for her money.

Mrs. Fainall Wife of Fainall and daughter of Lady Wishfort. She was a wealthy young widow when she married Fainall. She is Millamant's cousin and was Mirabell's mistress, presumably after her first husband died.

Mrs. Marwood Fainall's mistress. It does appear, however, that she was, and perhaps still is, in love with Mirabell. This love is not returned.

Young Witwoud A fop. He came to London from the country to study law but apparently found the life of the fashionable man-about-town more pleasant. He has pretensions to being a wit. He courts Millamant, but not seriously; she is merely the fashionable belle of the moment.

Petulant A young fop, a friend of Witwoud's. His name is indicative of his character.

Lady Wishfort A vain woman, fifty-five years old, who still has pretensions to beauty. She is the mother of Mrs. Fainall and the guardian of Millamant. She is herself in love with Mirabell, although she is now spiteful because he offended her vanity.

Sir Wilfull Witwoud The elder brother of Young Witwoud, he is forty years old and is planning the grand tour of Europe that was usually made by young men to complete their education. He is Lady Wishfort's nephew, a distant, non-blood relative of Millamant's, and Lady Wishfort's choice as a suitor for Millamant's hand.

Waitwell Mirabell's valet. At the beginning of the play, he has just been married to Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid. He masquerades as Sir Rowland, Mirabell's nonexistent uncle, and woos Lady Wishfort.

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Foible Lady Wishfort's maid, married to Waitwell.

Mincing Millamant's maid.

Peg A maid in Lady Wishfort's house.

Character analysis

Mirabell

He is the ideal Restoration beau, a combination of the cynical and the gracious. He has the vices and the virtues of his kind. In his day, he has been a successful woman-chaser. As a cover for an affair, he cynically arranged for the marriage of his mistress to a man presumably his friend. He cynically flattered Lady Wishfort, for whom he feels contemptuous amusement. He devises a plot that would blackmail Lady Wishfort into consenting to her ward's marriage; it would also humiliate her grossly. And he has no faith in his assistants in his plot; before Waitwell can masquerade and woo Lady Wishfort, he makes certain that Waitwell be married, for he "would not tempt [his] servant to betray [him] by trusting him too far." It is easy to see why he would trust very few people; he has only to consider how he would act under similar circumstances. He can anticipate treachery on Waitwell's part. He can distrust Fainall and forestall his villainy to protect Mrs. Fainall's future.

Yet the character is made acceptable even from the point of view of a generation that disapproves. Mirabell handles the situation with dignity and the style of his period. The irony in his comments on other people reveals his common sense; his judgment of Fainall is ruthless, but it is clear-eyed. The comments on young Witwoud are shrewd and accurate, and it is worth observing that he directs little irony against Sir Wilfull Witwoud. On the other hand, his ironic self-criticism leads him to realize that he is indeed in love with Millamant.

In the play, we are most interested in Mirabell as lover. He never loses his control, despite provocation, in his affair with Millamant. He laughs at himself — but his speech indicates the depth of his feeling. He accepts Millamant's mischievous mistreatment with some resentment, but he still manages to remain the polished courtier. Even though he loves her, he does not lose sight of the importance of her money.

His love must be seen within the context of the play. Neither he nor Millamant can sink into any sentimental act or mood. The depth and sincerity of the emotion must be conveyed by the manner which is a necessary part of the ideal gentleman. He is in love — but he is still the completely accomplished gallant.

Millamant

Millamant is generally conceded to be the most charming heroine in Restoration comedy. She is a fitting partner-antagonist to Mirabell. She maintains the same self-control to the very end of the proviso scene. She too loves but shows no sentiment. She is airy, teasing, light, beautiful, tantalizing, and infuriating. Mirabell is aware of her faults — and comes to love them. The reader is aware of her faults and comes to love them too. She is affected, coy, and arch, and we would have her no other way. She can be sweet and charming, but there can be acid and irony in her wit.

Millamant appears significantly in five scenes: her first appearance, her dialogue with Mrs. Marwood, her scene with Sir Wilfull, the proviso scene with Mirabell, and the drunken scene immediately following. The first and fourth are the most important for revealing her character.

Millamant's first appearance is prepared for carefully. When she arrives, trailing her court, Mincing and young Witwoud, she automatically takes the center of the stage as if it is her right, as indeed it is. Her character is outlined in the passage about putting up one's hair: Prose would never do, only poetry, a piece of flippancy in which Mincing immediately abets her. Here she is revealed as the complete belle. She is affectation that is fully conscious of itself, and flippancy that delights in its own irreverence. She is completely sure of her feminine power, and Congreve has given her the lines to justify her assurance. The lines concerning suitors — one makes them, one destroys them, and one makes others — are all flippant. She knows her power and can laugh at herself, just as she can tease Mirabell.

Within the limited world where she operates, she is intelligent. She sees through the forced false wit of young Witwoud's humor and handles him gracefully and efficiently. "Truce with your similitudes" and "Mincing stand between me and his wit" are deft lines which give Witwoud precisely the attention he merits; incidentally, they gracefully dispose of the small deer, for Millamant stalks more worthy game. She is shrewd enough to see through Mrs. Marwood:

That Mirabell loves me is no more a secret than it is a secret that you discovered it to my aunt, or than the reason why you discovered it is a secret. Above all, Millamant's character is Millamant in love. She and Mirabell are worthy partners. She, too, will not admit her love to him, for to do so would be to give up one's position of vantage in the game. It is the control of the skillful Restoration wit, which overlays her love, and through which it must operate, that makes the proviso scene so completely successful.

Fainall

In two speeches, Fainall is characterized by himself and by Mirabell. Fainall describes himself, in our terms, as an opportunist, a man who can veer with the winds of circumstance. Mirabell describes him as a man on the fringes of respectability, a man who is almost acceptable. To these two complementary descriptions we must add another quality noted before — Fainall's intense suspicion. He distrusts his mistress as naturally as he breathes; he distrusts everything Mirabell says. It is not that he assumes Mirabell is lying, necessarily; rather he looks for snide implications in the words and finds them. In justice to Fainall, it should be noted that the snide implications are there.

The one disreputable act we can attribute to him before the play starts is his marriage. The fact that he married for money can hardly be held against him in his society, but to marry for money to finance a love affair is more difficult to accept. Yet it is hard to see that his part in marrying the rich widow is worse than Mirabell's in arranging for the marriage of his mistress to his friend so as to protect her from scandal should she become pregnant through his, the lover's, attentions.

In each of the items mentioned above, Fainall is a somewhat tarnished version of Mirabell. Mirabell's deftness in handling his world becomes Fainall's "bustling" opportunism. Mirabell's caution in trusting people becomes Fainall's almost pathological suspicion of every word anyone says.

It is in their loves that we can see, glaringly, Fainall's attitude to life as a smirched version of Mirabell's. Possibly against their wills, both are in love. Mirabell moves to a marriage based on mutual respect. Fainall will try to shut his eyes to what he sees and pretend to believe against clear evidence in a love affair hemmed in on all sides by indignity and deceit.

Come, I ask your pardon — no tears — I was to blame, I could not love you and be easy in my doubts. Pray, forbear — I believe you: I'm convinced I've done you wrong, and any

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way, every way will make amends. I'll hate my wife, yet more, damn her! I'll part with her, rob her of all she's worth, and we'll retire somewhere — anywhere — to another world.

When Fainall's suspicions about his wife are confirmed, he moves from a kind of generalized unpleasantness to quite specific action. Once his plans are made, he proceeds ruthlessly.

Mrs. Marwood

Mrs. Marwood is not carefully drawn. The mistress of Fainall, she loves Mirabell. Hypocrisy is a necessary part of the way of their world for everyone, but it is the most significant characteristic of Mrs. Marwood.

We first meet Mrs. Marwood talking to Mrs. Fainall. Both women speak hypocritically, both are engaged in delicate maneuvers designed to gain information but to reveal none, both are suspicious. Mrs. Marwood is hypocritical in her relation with Fainall. She can pretend to be wholeheartedly and unreservedly in love with him, while actually she is disguising her feelings for Mirabell, not with complete success. Her disguised love for Mirabell is an important motivation in the action. It is one-although only one — of the reasons why she encourages Fainall in his plot. When Millamant insults her, taunting her with love for Mirabell and her greater age, she is like the traditional villain of the tragedies of the period, revengeful because her vanity is offended.

But Mrs. Marwood's essential hypocrisy and villainy show up most clearly in her relations with Lady Wishfort. Here she feigns friendship. She tries to spoil Mirabell's plan; as confidante and adviser, she tries to get Lady Wishfort to accede to Fainall's demands. There is, in short, no one on the stage with whom her relations are not based on an important lie.

Lady Wishfort

Lady Wishfort is a character type with a long tradition in drama — the over-eager, man-seeking widow. Her first offense, and that which initially makes her an object of ridicule, is the breach of taste, for she should know better. She is first described by Mirabell, who points out that her character is defined in the tag-name, Lady Wish-fort. She is fifty-five years of age, an age that certainly seemed very old to the precocious and brilliant thirty-year-old whose play was being produced. She is also the character with most lines in the final acts of the play.

Her vanity is made clear from the first. She misinterpreted Mirabell's flattery, which he describes in the first act. In the third act, the picture of Lady Wishfort at her toilette ridicules the woman who does not accept the fact of her age gracefully. Her indecorous interest in men is a part of her character and important for the action. It is the reason she can misinterpret Mirabell and the reason Mirabell can hope that Waitwell's wooing may be successful.

As a woman who controls considerable wealth, she is accustomed to having her own way; she is abrupt and tyrannical with her maid; she plans her ward's marriage. It is clear she does not like to be crossed and does not expect to be.

Congreve has probed this character further. Her vanity and man-chasing both have a common source; she lives in a world of fantasy. She looks into mirrors constantly but does not see what everyone else sees. In her mind, she can still be a girl of sixteen or a beautiful young woman. She is, therefore, especially susceptible to flattery, for there is no touch of good sense to help her see through it. Because of her susceptibility to flattery, her friends are always ill-chosen. Everyone she trusts betrays her to a greater or lesser

degree: apparently her closest friend is Mrs. Marwood; her daughter and ward are both prepared to go along with a plot that would trick her in a most humiliating way; her maid, Foible, on whom she depends, plays a major part in the plot. In her dilemma in the last act, she is bewildered and helpless.

The humorous character is not often shown in situations that display aspects of his character other than his humour. However, Lady Wishfort as mother and guardian has a depth beyond the usual for her type. As a mother, she did not always act wisely:

She [her daughter] was never suffered to play with a male child . . . nay, her very babies [dolls] were of the feminine gender. Oh, she never looked a man in the face but her own father, or the chaplain, and him we made a shift to put upon her for a woman, by the help of his long garments and his sleek face.

Yet Fainall's demands could prove successful only because she loves her daughter and wants to protect her. Her choice of a husband for her ward might be incongruous, but it is certainly well-intentioned. Sir Wilfull does have sterling qualities, although he is hardly the right choice for Millamant.

The result is that Lady Wishfort, by the end of the play, has gained a certain measure of good will from the audience. She is a complex creation, the butt of the author's satire and actors' ridicule, yet the object of some painful sympathy.

Sir Wilfull Witwoud

The country bumpkin, as butt of the city wit, is a traditional character type in comedy. Like other characters in the play, Sir Wilfull does not quite conform to type. He is shown as having country manners: he calls for slippers; he drinks too heavily; he is very shy with Millamant, awed by the city lady. However, his intention to tour Europe even though he is well beyond the usual age for the grand tour is an odd characteristic, not observable in the type. He is justifiably angry in his encounter with his brother. His attitude in other matters suggests a sensible person; he certainly does not wish to marry Millamant if she does not choose; he obviously likes Mirabell, presumably a sign of good judgment, and gladly helps to foil Fainall.

Young Witwoud

Presumably young Witwoud came to London from the country recently to study law. He took to London life enthusiastically but not always wisely. He thinks of himself as a wit, but his judgment is not sound. He serves as a contrast to Mirabell; he is the false picture, the affectation of the Restoration ideal, which Mirabell represents.

Although somewhat forced, his lines are typical Restoration wit:

Fainall, how does your lady? . . . I beg pardon that I should ask a man of pleasure and the town a question at once so foreign and domestic. . . . A wit should no more be sincere than a woman constant; one argues a decay of parts, as to other of beauty.

He is thus characterized by Mirabell:

He is a fool with a good memory and some few scraps of other folks' wit. He is one whose conversation can never be approved: yet it is now and then to be endured.

He is also so anxious to appear to understand raillery that he does not realize that he is insulted. He courts Millamant only because she is the current belle; he actually dislikes her because she is so anxious to be a wit herself that she gives him no opportunity to demonstrate his own wittiness.

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The most telling attack on him by Congreve is in the scene with Sir Wilfull, for no gentleman would refuse to recognize his own brother.

Petulant

Petulant is best characterized by his name. Obviously, as young Witwoud is excessively good-natured, not even recognizing an insult, Petulant is ill-natured, too eager to prove himself by ill manners. He too, like young Witwoud, is a pretender to status. He is a liar, says young Witwoud, a poser, and, of course, petulant.

He is an interesting specimen in that he talks of "having a humour" to do something or other — the sure sign that he is affecting the humour, although it may by long use have come to be, by Congreve's distinction, a habit.

Waitwell

The valet is obviously very clever and himself a wit of some accomplishment:

Married, knighted, and attended all in one day! 'Tis enough to make any man forget himself. The difficulty will be how to recover my acquaintance and familiarity with my former self, and fall from my transformation to a reformation into Waitwell. Nay, I shan't be quite the same Waitwell neither: for now, I remember me, I'm married and can't be my own man again.

Aye, there's the grief: that's the sad change of life, To lose my title, and yet keep my wife.

As Sir Rowland he performs well but must perform as a burlesque of the gentleman. It is one of the conventions of the drama of the time that the servant will try to model himself on his master. He is, therefore, an awkward imitation of Mirabell. Only Lady Wishfort could be taken in by him.

Foible

Foible is obviously a very intelligent young woman and, like all servants, presumably eager to play the go-between. Her loyalties are not clear; although Lady Wishfort's maid, she is prepared to deceive her; her loyalty to Mirabell is based on clear pecuniary interest. In the final analysis, she is like everybody else in the play: Her loyalty is only to herself.

Mincing

A pale attempt to copy her mistress, she can second Millamant's statement that it is impossible to put up one's hair in prose. Worth noting is the fact that even the maids are differentiated.

Mrs. Fainall

Mrs. Fainall has some important functions in the play. She is the mainspring in Fainall's counterplot; when she is made aware of Mirabell's plot, she talks too freely with Foible and is overheard. She helps fill out the gallery of portraits: How would one see the world properly without a woman who was one of the conquests of the hero before he found his true love? The cast mistress, now a sadder but wiser person, is, in fact, a common character in Restoration comedy. (The curious may look at Etherege's famous play, The Man of Mode.) She is not as well drawn as the other characters, and it is perhaps easier to see why Mirabell tired of her than why he ever loved her in the first place.

The Way of the World Themes

Social Etiquette and Reputation

"Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? To save that idol, reputation." (Act II, Scene II)

W. CONGREVE

A Comedy of Manners is named as such to call attention to one of its most central themes - manners, or social etiquette, and the comedy that can ensue because of the importance, especially to the upper class during the Restoration, of preserving one's position in society. In the climax of the play, the actions and reactions largely stop being concerned with love or even money, and what Lady Wishfort seems to fear most is a loss of good reputation for herself and her daughter. Much of the demonstrated love seen in the show - for example, Witwoud and Petulant's love for Ms. Millamant - is done purely in hopes of raising one's reputation. Fun is made of social etiquette especially in the acting of Petulant, Sir Wilfull, and Sir Rowland, three characters that to varying degrees are unable to live up to upper class standards, but must try to put on a show for others.

Women

The question of a woman's role in society is brought to the foreground in some progressive (and some not so) in The Way of the World. Like baking cookies, we are introduced to the mixing of the two gendered factions of Restoration society, men and women, separately before they are mixed all together. The women, when we first meet them in early Act II, are discussing the need to find happiness in one another since men only provide a fickle, distrustful love that cannot be relied upon. However, the audience comes to realize that these women are not totally trusting of one another either; they love the same man and turn against each other in later schemes to ensure the romantic and monetary outcome they want. The freedoms a woman can have in and out of marriage are also shown and discussed in the play, from the famous "proviso scene" to Lady Wishfort's ability to overlook Waitwell's disguise for the chance to marry a man at an older age.

Marriage, Adultery, and Inheritance

Marriage and adultery are of course main themes in The Way of the World, and it seems that characters have much more of a problem with the potential for a tainted reputation than with any moral or emotional imperative not to cheat on their spouse. This starts in the first place with the problem that, though the primary marriage being arranged in the play seems to be based on love, many of the marriages set in place before the play, like Mrs. Fainall's marriage to Fainall, were done more tactically as ways to ensure money and reputation. A major conflict in the play too is who will have claim to Ms. Millamant's inheritance, with Fainall attempting to leverage his wife's apparent adultery to get claim to her, and Ms. Millamant's, inheritance.

Friendship

Same-gender and opposite gender friendships are called into question in this play, as it is said and demonstrated that none of these relationships is particularly strong or trusting. The women-women and men-men pairings, though originally posing as friends, join schemes against one another based mostly on money and reputation. As for women-men pairings, we do not see many in the play that are not based on either mutual love or the love of one and disdain of the other. Certainly, friendship is as falsely fashionable and tactical as anything else in the play.

Religion

The characters in the play throw around invocation of God, as in "Odso", all the time, but this is used basically as a flippant linguistic note, and often said colloquially in the same way people in contemporary society throw out "God bless you" without a thought. Mention is also made of drinking and religion, with reference to Islam. However, it is important to note that accusations of adultery do not seem to be based in a religious morality, and

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women seem to keep in mind the ability to divorce (Mrs. Fainall seems largely undisturbed by the fact that she and Fainall cannot stay married after the play's end).

Money

Money and love are tied closely in The Way of the World, and perhaps as much as reputation, Lady Wishfort's fate after the play rests on her being able to dole out inheritances appropriately. However, as members of the upper class, much regarding money is dealt with quite flippantly, like having dance performers over at the house or, early in the play, ordering chocolate and drinks. It is important to note that Ms. Millamant's half-inheritance of 6,000 pounds would amount today to many, many thousands of dollars, making the point of multiple characters lusting after it clearer.

Social Class

The presence of two main classes in the play - upper class and servants - calls attention to social class as a theme in the play, though one that is not written with the satirical eye Congreve gives to upper class behavior alone. As Congreve writes it, Foible and Waitwell, servants to Lady Wishfort and Mirabell, seem delighted to be married against their will and participate in a romantic scheme at the beck and call of Mirabell. This is perhaps not true to life, though it gives them both the ability to exert secretive power over members of the upper class. Within the upper class, it is also demonstrated through jokes about one another that being well-educated and well-mannered is of utmost importance, and there can be social division atop economic based on these elements of etiquette and status.

1.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **What does the title "The Way of the World" mean and how does the title foreshadow the action of the play?**
2. **Why do you think Congreve wrote The Way of the World?**
3. **What does the Restoration audience's reaction to the play say about society at that time? What does the play's contemporary success say about audiences after that time and about the play itself?**
4. **Does The Way of the World have a protagonist? An antagonist? Explain.**
5. **How do issues of gender affect the plot of the play?**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **What is the importance of social class to the play?**
2. **Pick a character in The Way of the World. Is this character archetypal to Restoration Comedy? What do they add to the plot of the play? Are they humorous or tragic? Do their character traits speak to any major themes?**
3. **If you were the director of a production of The Way of the World, what choices would you make regarding staging, costuming, scenery, and song/ dance. How would these affect the meaning of the play and the reception of the audience.**
4. **What would you change in a modern adaptation of The Way of the World? Who are the Mirabells, Millamants, and Lady Wishforts of the 21st century?**
5. **How does the epigraph "Audire est operae pretium, procedere recte/ Qui maechis non vultis" or "You who seek retribution against adulterers will be happy to learn that they are impeded on all sides" foreshadow the plot of the play?**

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1.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who is the author of "The Way of the World"
- a. Grade saver
- b. Aristotle
- c. William Congreve
- d. William Shakespeare

2. What year was "The Way of the World" written?
- a. 1750
- b. 1800
- c. 1650
- d. 1700

3. During what time period was "The Way of the World" written?
- a. The reconstruction
- b. The restoration
- c. The rehabilitation
- d. The reformation

4. What genre of play is "The Way of the World"?
- a. Restoration comedy/comedy of manners
- b. Comedy
- c. Tragedy
- d. Commedia dell'arte

5. Who are the Commendatory Verses written by?
- a. Ricky iron
- b. Rich copper
- c. Dick bismuth
- d. Richard Steele

6. Who is the play dedicated to?
- a. Romeo, earl of Montague
- b. William Shakespeare
- c. Charles ii
- d. Ralph, earl of Montague

7. Who delivers the prologue?
- a. The actor playing Mirabell
- b. Ms. Millamant
- c. The actor playing Ms. Millamant
- d. Mirabell

8. Following your knowledge that the order of the Dramatis Personae follows the order of power in Restoration England, what character is highest on the listing?
- a. Fainall
- b. Ms. Millamant

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c. Wait well
d. Lady wish fort

9. What year does "The Way of the World" take place in?

a. Around 1800
b. Around 1650
c. Around 1700
d. Around 1450

10. Where does "The Way of the World" take place?

a. Rome
b. Boston
c. Greece
d. London

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT II

W. WYCHERLEY

STRUCTURE

NOTES

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to get some knowledge about famous English dramatist William Wycherley and in this unit, we go through with his one of the Drama "The Country Wife".

2.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

William Wycherley, (born 1641—died Jan. 1, 1716, London), English dramatist who attempted to reconcile in his plays a personal conflict between deep-seated puritanism and an ardent physical nature. He perhaps succeeded best in The Country-Wife (1675), in which satiric comment on excessive jealousy and complacency was blended with a richly comic presentation, the characters unconsciously revealing themselves in laughter-provoking colloquies. It was as satirist that his own age most admired him: William Congreve regarded Wycherley as one appointed "to lash this crying age."

Wycherley's father was steward to the marquess of Winchester. Wycherley was sent to be educated in France at age 15. There he became a Roman Catholic. After returning to England to study law, in 1660 he entered Queen's College, Oxford. He soon left without a degree, though he had converted back to Protestantism. Little is known of his life in the 1660s; he may have traveled to Spain as a diplomat, and he probably fought in the naval war against the Dutch in 1665. In this period, he drafted his first play, Love in a Wood; or, St. James's Park, and in the autumn of 1671, it was presented in London, bringing its author instant acclaim. Wycherley was taken up by Barbara Villiers, duchess of Cleveland, whose favours he shared with King Charles II, and he was admitted to the circle of wits at court. His next play, The Gentleman Dancing-Master, was presented in 1672 but proved unsuccessful. These early plays—both of which have some good farcical moments—followed tradition in "curing excess" by presenting a satiric portrait of variously pretentious characters—fops, rakes, would-be wits, and the solemn of every kind. The Plain-Dealer, presented in 1676, satirizes rapacious greed. The satire is crude and brutal, but pointed and effective. In The Country-Wife, acted a year earlier, the criticism of manners and society remains severe, but there is no longer a sense of the author despising his characters.

Wycherley, who had led a fashionably dissolute life during these years, fell ill in 1678. In 1680 he secretly married the countess of Drogheda, a rigid puritan who kept him on such a short rein that he lost his favour at court. A year later the lady died, leaving her husband a considerable fortune. But the will was contested, and Wycherley ruined himself fighting the case. Cast into a debtor's prison, he was rescued seven years later by King James II, who paid off most of his debts and allowed him a small pension. This was lost when James was deposed in 1688. In the early 18th century, Wycherley befriended the young Alexander Pope, who helped revise his poems. On his deathbed, Wycherley received the last rites of the Roman Catholic church, to which he had apparently reverted after being rescued from prison.

2.3 THE COUNTRY WIFE

NOTES

Summary: The country wife

Harry Horner, a notorious womanizer, spreads a rumor that he has contracted venereal disease and that, while being treated for this by a French surgeon, he has accidentally been made impotent. He persuades his doctor, a Quack, to spread this story all over town, hoping that gullible men will leave their wives, sisters, and daughters with Horner without suspicion that he might seduce them.

As soon as the rumor has been circulated, Horner is pleased to find that Sir Jasper Fidget, a businessman who works in the city, comes to call and leaves his wife, Lady Fidget, and her companions, Mrs. Dainty Fidget and Mrs. Squeamish, in Horner's care. When they are told that Horner is impotent, however, the ladies (who have a reputation for being extremely virtuous) are disgusted and refuse to stay with him. They storm out just as Horner's friends, Harcourt and Dorliant, arrive to commiserate with him about his new impotence.

As they are talking, Sparkish arrives and the friends scramble to find a way to get rid of him. Sparkish is a bore and so arrogant that he does not understand when they insult him and ask him to leave. They eventually succeed in seeing Sparkish off just in time for Mr. Pinchwife to arrive. Pinchwife was a womanizer in his youth but has recently married a young woman from the country. He has not heard the rumors about Horner and becomes extremely jealous when Horner inquiries about his wife and suggests that she may make Pinchwife a "cuckold." Pinchwife replies that his wife is too simple and stupid to be taken into town and so he plans to leave her at home. He is only in town briefly to arrange Sparkish's marriage to his sister, Alithea.

Horner notices how jealous Pinchwife is of his wife and decides to tease him. He tells Pinchwife that he saw him at the theatre the previous night with a beautiful young woman. Pinchwife is insulted and storms out and Horner understands, from his reaction, that this woman is his wife.

At Pinchwife's house, his young wife, Margery, complains to Alithea that Pinchwife will not let her go out and enjoy the town. She tells Alithea that she loved going to the theatre the night before and found the actors extremely handsome. Pinchwife returns and overhears them and berates Alithea for setting a bad example for Margery. Margery begs Pinchwife to let her go into town and Pinchwife tells her that she cannot go because, if she does, young men may fall in love with her. This only increases Margery's enthusiasm, so Pinchwife tells her that a man has already seen her at the theatre and is in love with her. Margery is excited by this, and begs to know the young man's name, so Pinchwife locks her in her room to punish her.

Just then, Sparkish arrives with Harcourt to visit Alithea and to show his fiancée off to his friend. Harcourt falls in love with Alithea instantly and begins to court her, brazenly, in front of Sparkish. Although Alithea protests, Sparkish does not notice and seems incapable of jealousy. Harcourt, Alithea, and Sparkish head off to the theatre, Alithea still protesting because Sparkish plans to seat her with Harcourt. Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish arrive at Pinchwife's house to take Margery to see the play. Pinchwife chases them off, much to their amusement.

While they wait for Sir Jasper, Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish lament that they are always being passed over by men in favor of common women. They feel that men no longer seek out "virtuous" women to have affairs with. While they are talking, Sir Jasper arrives with Horner and Dorilant and tells the ladies that these young men will

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take them to the theatre. The ladies are horrified and refuse. Dorilant leaves but Sir Jasper insists that it will not harm their reputations to be seen with Horner. Horner takes Lady Fidget aside and whispers to her that he is not actually impotent and says that he has lied for her sake, to get close to her. Thoroughly flattered, Lady Fidget relents and persuades the others to allow Horner to take them out. Sir Jasper rushes off to attend to business, feeling very pleased with himself and the entertainment he has provided for his wife.

Margery, still cooped up in Pinchwife's house, eventually puts her foot down and forces Pinchwife to take her into town. He agrees on the condition that she dress up like a man so that Horner and his friends will not recognize her. Alithea and her maid, Lucy, accompany them. Horner, Harcourt and Dorilant are also in town and Harcourt tells Horner about his predicament; he is in love with Alithea, Sparkish's fiancée. Horner tells him that Sparkish will help him to woo her and Sparkish joins them at that moment.

As they are talking, Pinchwife, Margery, Alithea and Lucy walk past, and the men pursue them. Pinchwife tries to avoid them, but the men accost the party and ask who the young man among them is. Pinchwife says that the young man, who is Margery in disguise, is his wife's brother. Sparkish begins to push Harcourt and Alithea together and implore her to forgive Harcourt for offending her that morning.

Meanwhile, Horner begins to flirt with Margery and kisses her in front of Pinchwife, begging her to take the kiss "to her sister." Pinchwife, desperate to get Margery away from Horner, tries to hail a carriage but, while he is gone, Horner leads Margery away down another street. Pinchwife is frantic when he returns but Margery reappears a few moments later with a bundle of fruit that Horner has given her. Sir Jasper Fidget arrives and reminds Horner that he must take the ladies to the theatre. He leads Horner off and leaves a disgruntled Pinchwife in the street.

The next morning, Sparkish arrives at Pinchwife's house to marry Alithea. However, the parson he has brought with him to conduct the wedding is really Harcourt in disguise. Alithea easily sees through this trick and refuses to allow the wedding, much to the confusion of Sparkish. Meanwhile, Pinchwife grills Margery about the time she spent alone with Horner the evening before. When Margery tells Pinchwife that Horner put his tongue in her mouth when he kissed her, Pinchwife can no longer contain his jealousy and forces Margery to write a letter to Horner in which she tells him that she finds him disgusting and will not tolerate his advances. Margery is upset because she has fallen in love with Horner and thinks of a way to trick her husband. Since he has taught Margery to write letters, which before she did not know how to do, she writes a second letter to Horner, in which she confesses her love to him. When he returns with the letter seal, Margery swaps the letters and seals the one she has written herself, rather than Pinchwife's, to send to Horner.

Horner is at home with the Quack, who is eager to hear how Horner's experiment is going. He is impressed with what he hears and even more impressed when Lady Fidget arrives alone. Horner ushers the Quack behind a screen and the doctor watches as Lady Fidget throws herself at Horner. The pair begin to fondle each other but are interrupted by Sir Jasper. Lady Fidget thinks quickly and tells her husband that she is tickling Horner because he has refused to take her shopping. Sir Jasper watches in amusement as Lady Fidget rushes into another room and locks the door, claiming she is going to steal some of Horner's fine china. Horner rushes in after her and Sir Jasper laughs at the sounds coming through the door.

Mrs. Squeamish arrives moments later and tries to break into the room. She is followed by her grandmother, Old Lady Squeamish. Horner and Lady Fidget re-emerge, Lady Fidget

carrying some china, and Mrs. Squeamish tries to persuade Horner to give her some china, too. Pinchwife enters and the ladies immediately leave with Sir Jasper to avoid being seen by another man. Pinchwife has brought Horner the letter from Margery. Horner reads it and is extremely confused about Pinchwife's triumphant attitude. Pinchwife leaves, but he is brought back a moment later by Sparkish, who insists they must join him for his wedding dinner.

Margery, meanwhile, pines for Horner's love, and begins to write him another letter. Pinchwife bursts in on her and forces her to finish what she is writing. He is confused when she signs the letter from Alithea and tells him that it is Alithea who is in love with Horner. Pinchwife agrees to take his sister to see Horner and Margery dresses up as Alithea, puts on a mask, and tricks Pinchwife into taking her in the disguise.

Horner is shocked when Pinchwife reappears, this time bringing him a masked woman. The woman says that she will only speak to Horner alone so Pinchwife leaves them. Before Margery can explain herself to Horner, however, Sir Jasper arrives and tells him that Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty, and Mrs. Squeamish are on their way up. Horner hides Margery in another room and meets the ladies, who are preparing to get very drunk and have a bawdy evening with him.

Outside Horner's house, Pinchwife meets Sparkish and shows him the letter which is addressed to Horner and signed with Alithea's name. Sparkish is insulted and confronts Alithea in the street to break off their engagement. Alithea is confused but relieved. Inside, Horner drinks with the "honorable" ladies who begin to get tipsy. Lady Fidget finally announces that Horner is her secret lover and is surprised when Mrs. Dainty and Mrs. Squeamish confess that he is theirs, too. The group agree to keep each other's secrets.

When Sir Jasper arrives to take the ladies home, Horner releases Margery, who tells him that she is to be his wife now. While they are in discussion, Sparkish, Alithea, Pinchwife, Harcourt, Lucy, and a chaplain arrive. Pinchwife insists that Horner and Alithea should marry but Alithea denies any knowledge of this affair. Eventually she points out that Margery is dressed up as her and Alithea and Harcourt are united and agree to marry instead. Pinchwife is furious with Horner for "cuckolding" him and prepares to duel him.

Sir Jasper and the ladies return as this scene is underway and Pinchwife tells Sir Jasper that Horner has made a "cuckold" of him too. Sir Jasper is taken aback for a moment, but Horner is saved by the reappearance of the Quack who gives Pinchwife and Sir Jasper his word "as a physician" that Horner is impotent. Margery plays along with this, though she knows that they are all lying, and resigns herself to a future as Pinchwife's wife.

The Country Wife Character List

Harry Horner

A notorious London rake who, in order to gain sexual access to "respectable" women, spreads the rumor that venereal disease has rendered him impotent. In the course of the play he manages liaisons with several of the female characters. Horner is the most insightful of all the "wits" in the play, often drawing out and commenting on the moral failings of others, but in his sexual conduct he is the most depraved.

Jack Pinchwife

A middle-aged London man, newly married to the rustic Margery. A rake before his marriage, he is now the archetypal jealous husband: he lives in fear of being cuckolded, not because he loves his wife but because he believes that he owns her. He is a latent tyrant, potentially violent.

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Margery Pinchwife
The attractive young "country wife" of the title, Margery is newly married to Jack Pinchwife and is visiting London for the first time to see Alethea's wedding. Unaccustomed to city ways, she is largely guileless and not overwhelmingly bright but perhaps not so incapable of intrigue as she first appears. Her unrefined sexual vitality and all-around naturalness contrast with the hyper-civilized corruption of the Londoners around her.

Alethea Pinchwife
The younger sister of Jack Pinchwife, who wants to marry her off for financial reasons. She is engaged to Sparkish, whom she values because he appears incapable of jealousy; in the course of the play, however, she attracts the amorous attentions of Harcourt, whom she begins to value for his intelligence and gallantry. Alethea is the most straightforwardly admirable person in the play: her residence in London and enjoyment of the pleasures of the town have sharpened her wits but not dulled her morals.

Frank Harcourt
A rakish friend of Horner, Harcourt meets Alethea early in the play, flirts with her in front of Sparkish, and soon falls in love with her. His devotion to the meritorious Alethea bespeaks his basic good nature, and in the course of the play he is converted to a vision of marriage based on mutual love and esteem.

Mr. Dorilant
A rakish friend of Horner and Harcourt.

Mr. Sparkish
A shallow and foolish playboy who considers himself, wrongly, a "wit." He is engaged to Alethea, attracted primarily by her money. He appears to Alethea incapable of jealousy, but this is true only insofar as the envy of other men increases the "value" of his prospective wife, whom he thinks he owns.

Lucy
Alethea's clever and sensible maidservant. She is skeptical of her mistress's plans to marry the vapid Sparkish, and she is resourceful in coming up with schemes to encourage a match with Harcourt.

Sir Jasper Fidget
A man of business who derives no end of amusement from the rumor of Horner's impotence. He is happy to entrust his wife, Lady Fidget, to Horner's company, on the theory that the presence of the supposed eunuch will keep her occupied and discourage the advances of other, more potent men.

Lady Fidget
The wife of Sir Jasper Fidget, she is much younger than her husband and a leading figure in "the virtuous gang." Utterly hypocritical, she piques herself on her virtue in public and avails herself of Horner's physical charms in private. Late in the play she articulates a defense of the hypocrisy of high-born ladies.

Dainty Fidget
The unmarried sister of Sir Jasper Fidget. Like Lady Fidget, she is a member of "the virtuous gang" and secretly a conquest of Horner's.

Mistress Squeamish
A young unmarried woman related to the Fidgets. Like Lady Fidget, she is a member of "the virtuous gang" and secretly a conquest of Horner's.

Old Lady Squeamish
The grandmother of Mistress Squeamish; she strives in vain to preserve her granddaughter's purity.

The Quack
The doctor whom Horner enlists to spread the rumor of his impotence.

The Boy
Horner's servant.

Character Analysis

Harry Horner
Harry Horner is a wealthy London socialite who has a reputation as a great "wit" and a notorious womanizer. He spreads a rumor that he has caught a venereal disease and that, after being treated by a French surgeon, he has been left impotent. Horner does this so that men will allow him to spend time with their wives without suspicion that he might seduce them. Horner also, rightly, believes that his plan will encourage women to have affairs with him because his reputation of impotence will safeguard their own "honorable" reputations. Horner is a clever and calculating individual. He is willing to sacrifice his own reputation for the sake of efficiency and sexual gratification. This suggests that Horner sees through Restoration society's obsession with reputation and appearance and does not care how he is seen by his peers. Like many of the other male characters, Horner views women as sexual conquests and does not genuinely enjoy spending time with them; it is simply "sport" to him. Horner is extremely cold, almost sociopathic in his approach to women, and in his determination to outsmart society. He is unaffected by emotional considerations and enjoys hedonism and sensuality purely for its own sake. Although Horner's lies are almost exposed, in the final scene of the play, his ingenuity and forethought (his precaution in recruiting the Quack to back up his story) protects him from discovery. In this sense, the play refuses to punish Horner for his behavior; after all, he is behaving the way that everyone else does, he is simply more efficient and self-aware in his methods. Horner's name is significant, as a "cuckold" (a husband whose wife has been unfaithful) was commonly believed to have horns. Horner's name suggests, therefore, that he gives men horns or is "cuckoldmaker."

Margery Pinchwife
Margery is the young bride of Pinchwife and the titular "country wife." She is seduced by Horner and eventually becomes his mistress when she outsmarts her husband and escapes from his jealous supervision. Margery is naïve and unfamiliar with the way of life in the city. Pinchwife believes that Margery is stupid and easily manipulated and he marries her because he is terrified that, if he marries an intelligent wife, she may make him a "cuckold." Margery, however, is not stupid but is simply young and inexperienced. During her stay in the city, Margery proves herself to be as intelligent, devious and resourceful as Pinchwife believes town wives to be. She proves that she can think quickly and lie to protect herself. Although Pinchwife believes that Margery is innocent and unsexual, Margery is a sensual person who is immediately drawn to the good-looking actors at the theatre. The only real difference between Margery and the town ladies, like

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Lady Fidget and Mrs. Squeamish, is that she does not understand the etiquette or rules of city life. She has no interest in maintaining her reputation, as she does not realize she has one to protect, and she does not assume that extramarital love equates to "ruin," as the town ladies do, because she does not understand the town's hypocritical preoccupation with the appearance of "virtue." Margery grows wily and experienced in the ways of the town throughout the play. She remains an honest character, however, because she does not realize when it is and is not appropriate to lie and only lies when Pinchwife threatens her or when she is persuaded by the other characters.

Pinchwife

Pinchwife is Margery's husband. He is obsessively jealous and is terrified of being made to look foolish and of gaining a reputation as a "cuckold." He has chosen Margery for a wife because he believes that she is innocent and naïve and therefore easy to control. Pinchwife is bullying and hypocritical in his treatment of Margery. He expects total fidelity from her, suspects her every move, even when she is faithful to him, and resorts to imprisoning and abusing her when his jealousy gets out of control. Pinchwife is a figure of fun throughout the play, even though, at times, his treatment of Margery is genuinely sinister. He is so preoccupied with not seeming foolish that he makes himself appear a fool; he marries a country wife so that she cannot outsmart him and then is easily tricked by her. Similarly, he is so determined to keep Margery away from temptation that he over-compensates, behaves irrationally and, ultimately, leads her to Horner who seduces her. In this sense, Pinchwife is a personification and parody of puritanical impulses in society, which seek to censor and eradicate behaviors they think of as sinful and, by doing so, inadvertently encourage people to rebel and take up the very pastimes they wish to prevent. Pinchwife's name is significant as it reflects his behavior; he annoys and bullies Margery and is stingy with her, or "pinches" her, when he keeps her locked up. It also suggests that his wife will be "pinched," or stolen, which is nearly the case in the play.

Sir Jasper Fidget

Sir Jasper Fidget is a wealthy businessman, the husband of Lady Fidget and the brother of Mrs. Dainty Fidget. It is implied that Sir Jasper has made his money through business and is not a member of the nobility. Sir Jasper is a resident of the city, the business center of London, rather than the Town, where members of Charles II's court and the gentry live. His inferior social status is reflected in his obsession with business rather than sensuality; he prefers to work rather than spend time seducing women. As the Restoration was a period which celebrated aristocracy and the idle pursuits of the very rich, men like Sir Jasper were looked down upon and made to be "fools" on the stage, as they did not meet the ideals of the age and were associated with the common and vulgar practices of business and making money. Sir Jasper is a "cuckold" and represents a stock figure on the Restoration stage. He is totally oblivious to his wife's infidelity, even inadvertently aiding her in cheating, and he is a figure of ridicule for the audience, who expect to see him outsmarted. Sir Jasper pushes his wife and sister to spend time with Horner and even, ironically, mocks Horner for his impotence. Sir Jasper never realizes that he is being tricked and feels that, instead, he is getting one over on Horner, as he leaves Horner in charge of his wife and sister, whom he views as an annoyance. Sir Jasper's blindness to Horner's true motives is most blatantly exploited for laughs in the famous "china scene," in which Horner makes love to Lady Fidget, under the pretense of fighting with her over a piece of rare china, while Sir Jasper listens happily and makes jokes in an adjoining room.

Lady Fidget

Lady Fidget is Sir Jasper Fidget's wife and, ironically, a woman known in the town for being extremely virtuous and "honorable." She spends most of her time with her sister in law, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and her friend Mrs. Squeamish, and the trio are known as the "virtuous gang." Their reputation as women who are honorable is extremely ironic as, underneath this public image, Lady Fidget and her friends are highly promiscuous. Although they pretend to be disgusted by "lewd" men, like Horner, they exaggerate their disdain for men and for sex to hide their appetite for these things. Lady Fidget even pretends to dislike the word "naked" in front of her husband, because of its bodily connotations, but in private she is just as much of a "false rogue" as Horner. Lady Fidget brazenly lies to and "cuckolds" Sir Jasper, even going so far as to have sex with Horner while her husband is in the next room during the famous "china scene." While Lady Fidget is decidedly not a virtuous character, she is not punished at the play's conclusion and is, in some regards, a sympathetic figure. She is witty and cunning in her ability to outsmart society and, as these were regarded as admirable traits in Restoration society, she is rewarded rather than ruined for them and gets away with all her escapades. She is the female counterpart of Horner in everything except what society expects from her, because she is a woman and he is a man. While Restoration society encouraged vigor, promiscuity, and sensuality in men, it condemned these traits in women. Lady Fidget complains bitterly about this double standard during her drinking song, which laments the plight of "virtuous" women like herself, whose husbands ignore them and whose lovers pass them over for "common women."

Mrs. Dainty Fidget

Mrs. Dainty Fidget is the sister of Sir Jasper Fidget and the companion of Lady Fidget and Mrs. Squeamish—known together, ironically, as the "virtuous gang." Mrs. Dainty Fidget has a reputation as a "virtuous" woman who scorns "lewd" and promiscuous men and is disgusted by anything sexual. Like her sisters in the "gang," Mrs. Dainty is extremely preoccupied with protecting her reputation and refuses to be seen in the company of men who are not her brother, Sir Jasper (Mrs. Dainty is unmarried and under her brother's care). Mrs. Dainty, like the other "virtuous" ladies, makes an exception for Horner because he is widely known to be impotent. Even though this report is false, and Horner is really her lover, (as he is the lover of all the ladies in the "gang"), Mrs. Dainty feels secure spending time with Horner, as people will not believe that he is capable of seduction and this protects her public image from scandal. Mrs. Dainty Fidget, like the other ladies, believes that it is more pleasurable to have sex with dishonorable men to whom one is not married than to have sex with one's husband. This reflects popular opinion that marriage was a chore and an obligation rather than an act of love, and that pleasure really came from things which were forbidden rather than behaviors that were socially approved. Like the other "virtuous" ladies, Mrs. Dainty Fidget is a "false rogue" who does everything in her power to deceive her brother (and society in general) so that she may fulfil her desires. Her name is ironic, as "dainty" suggests that she is delicate and innocent; while Mrs. Dainty may pretend to be this way in public, she is the opposite in private.

Mrs. Squeamish

Mrs. Squeamish is a fashionable town lady, the companion of Lady Fidget and Mrs. Dainty Fidget and a member of the "virtuous gang." Mrs. Squeamish is unmarried and lives under the care of her grandmother, Old Lady Squeamish. Like the other "virtuous" ladies, Mrs. Squeamish pretends to be extremely pure and "honorable" in public, but is highly promiscuous and decadent in private. Alongside the other two ladies in her "gang," she becomes the mistress of Horner and is constantly trying to escape her grandmother

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so that she may do as she pleases. Mrs. Squeamish is involved in the "china scene," in which Lady Fidget and Horner have sex offstage, while Sir Jasper and Old Lady Squeamish listen at the door, believing that Lady Fidget and Horner are fighting over a piece of rare china. Mrs. Squeamish arrives while Horner and Lady Fidget are offstage, followed by her grandmother who is trying to keep an eye on her. When she hears that Lady Fidget and Horner are alone together, she becomes extremely jealous and tries to interrupt them. Although Mrs. Squeamish does not know for sure that Horner is sleeping with Lady Fidget, she is suspicious, and this suggests that the "virtuous" ladies do not expect loyalty from each other any more than they do from men. Horner plays the women off against each other in this scene, but he and the ladies are proved to be each other's equals at the end of the play when Mrs. Squeamish and her companions reveal that they use their reputations to hide their true pursuits, just as Horner uses his. Like Mrs. Dainty, Mrs. Squeamish's name is symbolic, reflecting her outward persona, as a woman who is "squeamish" about sex, when underneath she is very promiscuous.

Sparkish

Sparkish is a vain, foolish socialite who is obsessed with his reputation and "honor," has an extremely high opinion of himself, and is easily tricked by the clever characters in the play, such as Harcourt and Horner. Sparkish is engaged to Pinchwife's sister, Alithea, but he is only marrying her for her money. Although he is clearly a noble man with a "title," Horner describes him as a "cracked title," which implies that Sparkish is broke. Sparkish admires Alithea not because he cares about her, but because of how it makes him look to have a clever, pretty wife. He brazenly shows her off to Harcourt and does not notice that this makes Alithea uncomfortable. His arrogance here also leads him to lose his engagement to Alithea, as Harcourt and Alithea quickly fall in love and eventually jilt Sparkish. Sparkish, however, is so vain and so convinced that other people are always impressed by him that he barely notices when people insult, criticize, or bully him to his face. Horner, Harcourt and Dorilant have great fun at Sparkish's expense and dislike his company. However, even when they make this obvious, Sparkish thinks that they are joking and refuses to leave them alone. He believes (wrongly) that he is a "true wit" (a comic, genuinely funny man) like Horner and the others, but, in reality, he is a "false wit" or a "spark" (a common stock figure on the Restoration stage, an arrogant buffoon whose opinion of himself and his own intelligence is much higher than it should be). Sparkish is associated with blindness in the play as, even when Harcourt courts Alithea in front of him, Sparkish still fails to see what Harcourt is doing, even when Alithea points it out.

Alithea

Alithea is Pinchwife's sister and is engaged to Sparkish. She falls in love with Harcourt and, though she resists his advances at first (out of loyalty to her fiancé), she is paired with Harcourt by the end of the play. Alithea is a genuinely honest woman who, unlike the other "honorable" ladies in the play, tries her best to be virtuous and loyal to her betrothed. She tries to tell Sparkish that Harcourt is insulting him when Harcourt tries to court her in front of Sparkish, but Sparkish dismisses her concerns. Alithea, unlike many of the people around her, is very canny and sees the truth of things where others are blind. She sees, for example, that Pinchwife will drive Margery to be unfaithful because of his jealousy, and she sees, rightly, that a jealous husband is a terrible and dangerous thing for a wife to have. However, rather than being rewarded for her virtue and honesty, Alithea's "honor" is almost her downfall in the play. She is so loyal to Sparkish, who does not deserve her loyalty, that she almost forfeits her true love, Harcourt—and, because she is honest and not conniving with the others, she is used by them to assist in their schemes.

Margery and Lucy, Alithea's maid, conspire to use Alithea's identity to sneak Margery out to see Horner and, when Alithea tries to prove her innocence, Horner does not think twice about throwing her under the bus to save his mistress's reputation. Alithea's "honor" is only saved by Harcourt's true love and respect for her. This suggests that, in Restoration society, real "honor" will get you nowhere and those who look out for themselves succeed.

Harcourt

Harcourt is the companion of Horner and Dorilant and the lover of Alithea, whom he tries to persuade to leave her fiancé, Sparkish. Harcourt begins the play as one of Horner's "rakish" companions but is converted by his love for Alithea and is truly attached to her by the end of the play. Harcourt and Alithea represent the lovers in the play and are the only respite from the cynical machinations and hypocritical schemes of the other characters. Still, their love is not pure and socially sanctioned, and Harcourt must steal Alithea from under her fiancé's nose before they can be together. Harcourt shows no loyalty to Sparkish, who thinks Harcourt is his friend, and is merciless in his attempts to undermine Sparkish and woo Alithea. At first, Harcourt is so brazen that Alithea is put off by his attempts and tries to warn Sparkish. However, although this behavior seems questionable by modern standards, Harcourt's behavior reflects the literary and theatrical tradition of courtly love, which believes that adulterous love is more pure than marital love and that it is a "gallant's" job to court ladies, even if they are married to his friends. A famous example of this style of love is the adulterous love between Lancelot and Guinevere, who is married to King Arthur, in the Arthur legends. The "court" in Harcourt's name reflects his role and personality in the play.

Dorilant

Dorilant is the companion of Horner and Harcourt and a well-known "rake." Dorilant does not play a large role in the action of the play but is present in the background of many scenes. He makes up the third of Horner's party so that the group of three "rakes" mirrors the group of three "honorable" ladies, Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish. Just as Dorilant and his friends know the "honorable" ladies by their reputations, and know that they pretend to be intolerably virtuous, the ladies know Dorilant by his reputation as a "lewd fellow" and refuse to allow him to accompany them to the theatre with Horner for fear that his presence will threaten their public image. Dorilant ends the play a confirmed bachelor and this suggests that he will continue to live a "rakish" life while Harcourt will soon be married to Alithea and while he believes Horner to be impotent.

Lucy

Alithea's maid. Like Margery, Lucy is from a lower social class and, therefore, is not educated and does not have a reputation to protect the way that upper class ladies do. However, like Margery, Lucy is more intelligent than people realize. She immediately sees through Sparkish, who is engaged to Alithea, and knows that he is not good enough for her and does not appreciate his fiancée. Lucy tries to warn Alithea of this, but she is resigned to the fact that, as a servant, Alithea will take no notice of her. Lucy also conspires with Margery to trick Pinchwife. As a woman of lower social status, Lucy is openly treated with less respect by men than the upper-class ladies in the play. In one scene, she is manhandled by Dorilant and he later calls her a "strapper," a term which suggests a prostitute or a common woman.

Quack

The doctor who helps Horner spread the rumor of his impotence. A "quack" is an old-fashioned term for a doctor who peddles nonsense cures and who is not reliable.

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Therefore, it is fitting that an unreliable doctor spreads this false rumor and confirms it, "as a physician," at the end of the play. The doctor's word in this final scene convinces Pinchwife and Sir Jasper Fidget that Horner is incapable of seducing their wives and spares Horner his punishment from these gentlemen. Although these men are completely taken in by the Quack's word, the audience is aware that the Quack is unreliable and, therefore, his word as a medical man means nothing. Further evidence that the doctor is unreliable appears when, at the beginning of the play, the Quack admits that he has often spread rumors for young men before and knows all the best places to peddle gossip and scandal so that it will spread in London. This implies that the doctor is a fashionable socialite rather than a serious medical man.

The Country Wife Themes

The Untenability of Restoration Marriage Arrangements

Wycherley presents two marriages that are sadly typical of the Restoration period: Jack Pinchwife cultivates his wife's ignorance in order to ensure her fidelity and submissiveness, and Sir Jasper Fidget neglects his young wife and seeks to keep her mind off other men by occupying her with trivial pleasures and "safe" companions. Wycherley thus takes two common assumptions about marriage—that wives should be kept in ignorance and that wives can safely be neglected—and shows them to contain contradictions that can only lead to marital breakdown. Women, no less than men, desire gratifying sexual contact; if long deprived, they will gladly avail themselves of someone like Horner, whose aphorism proves right: "a foolish rival and a jealous husband assist their rival's designs; for they are sure to make their women hate them, which is the first step to their love for another man." As P. F. Vernon points out, Horner is merely a "catalyzing agent," enabling the married couples around him to fall apart on their own terms: Sir Jasper is so eager to unload his wife that he actually compels Horner and Lady Fidget to spend time together; and Pinchwife leads his own wife into adultery, because the precautions he takes against Horner merely give Margery the means to gratify the very sexual appetite that Pinchwife, the broken-down and tyrannical, stints.

Hypocrisy

Wycherley was repelled by hypocrisy, above all by the commonplace variety—the ordinary desire of men and women to be thought more virtuous or gifted than they are. Thus, Horner early on curses "all that force Nature and would be still what she forbids 'em; affectation is her greatest monster," and Dorilant generalizes the critique: "Most men are the contraries to what they would seem." Not only men but women: Lady Fidget and "the virtuous gang" come in for some of the sharpest criticism in the play, as their public personas conflict egregiously with their private activities. Indeed, the entire play is predicated on the pervasiveness of hypocrisy: Horner's ruse, on which most of the action depends, would fail without the eagerness of wives and husbands to maintain an extreme disjunction between the true nature of women and their outward appearance.

Town and Country, or Innocence and Experience

Margery, the country wife of the title, represents a state of rustic innocence that contrasts strongly with the sophistication of the town. She has no natural inclination for deceit, and thus she composes what Horner calls "the first love-letter that ever was without flames, darts, fates, destinies, lying and dissembling in't"; she takes things at face value, and thus she expresses disbelief that anyone who professes to love her would seek to "ruin" her. Some critics argue, however, that in the course of the play Margery picks up the London tricks of duplicity and pretense, as she tricks Pinchwife into delivering to Horner first the

love-letter and then Margery herself. The question of whether these tricks indicate the corruption of Margery is an important one, for if she maintains her ignorance throughout the play, then, as B. A. Kachur puts it, "her remove to Hampshire [at the end] suggests a form of banishment from the real world which cannot accommodate honesty, simplicity, and ingenuousness." If, on the other hand, Margery in Act V is on her way to becoming a Hampshire version of Lady Fidget, then the thesis of the play would seem to be what is perhaps still more dismal, the idea that civilization is bound to corrupt even such a simple child of impulse as young Margery.

True Wit vs. Foppery

As David Cook and John Swannell suggest, one of the major themes of the play is "man's intellectual ascendency over those conditions which tend to hem him in and diminish him." In this context, the vitality of Horner, which he expresses in the form of intellectual as well as sexual dominance, entitles him as a heroic figure who triumphs (albeit in a morally ambivalent fashion) over the deadening thought-patterns of specious "honor." By contrast, Sparkish's feeble pretensions to wit degrade not only the human intellect but the human moral faculties. His brand of cynicism functions not to expose the failings of society but to reinforce them: his attitudes toward marriage, including his desire to feed his vanity by having "rivals in a wife," reveal moral idiocy rather than moral insight.

The Cash Principle

Sir Jasper Fidget is a specimen of a new type, the bourgeois man of business. The Restoration saw the rise in earnest of capitalism, as social fluidity and developing markets allowed many entrepreneurs to achieve wealth in the modern way. Whatever admirable qualities may be attributable to the aspiring man of business, the besetting sins of his type are avarice and materialism. Sir Jasper exhibits this debasement of values and priorities, as he is constantly abandoning his wife to attend to "[his] pleasure, business," placing business contacts and opportunities above the marital bond. The Fidgets, then, typify not only the new economic patterns but also the more specific issue of the commercialization of marriage, the basing of marriage on financial interest rather than love. "Almost certainly contracted as a commercial enterprise," says W. R. Chadwick, their marriage "has foundered on materialism, and Lady Fidget has every right to feel neglected."

The Poverty of Loveless Sex

The basic target of the audience's laughter in The Country Wife is, most simply, the sexual impulse and the absurdities to which it sometimes drives its human subjects. Not that sex is categorically absurd in Wycherley's view: the mutual attraction of Alethea and Harcourt, for instance, is ultimately not at all risible. Rather, Wycherley encourages the audience to laugh at sexual relations in which the participants view each other as objects, as means simply to personal pleasure. As B. A. Kachur says, "loveless, mechanical copulation is, as portrayed by a master like Wycherley, embarrassingly titillating, brutally honest, and inherently disquieting." Horner epitomizes what Wycherley considers the dehumanizing effects of this impoverished view of sex: although he is in one sense the most commanding character in the play, controlling events by means of his ruse, nevertheless his compulsive sexuality renders him, most clearly in the "china scene," a passive and mechanical sexual instrument, passed among various partners and utilized to the point of physical depletion.

Same-Sex Solidarity

From the first scene of the play, in which Horner and his friends sound the hackneyed note of derogating women and praising male friendship, there persists a motif of the conventional notion that the truest companionship obtains among members of the

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same sex (especially the male sex). The three wits, however, never realize that ideal very successfully: Horner keeps an important secret from his two friends, Harcourt's deepest personal connection is with a woman (Alethea), and Dorilant scarcely exists as a distinct personality. Interestingly, what is perhaps the most successful instance in the play of this clichéd sexist bonding occurs not among the male wits but among the "virtuous gang" of ladies, plus Horner, in the "banquet scene" of Act V. Here, the ladies drink, sing songs, and derogate the opposite sex, quite after the traditional pattern of male tavern behavior, but with more reason and more honesty; as a result, their bonding session ends with the sharing of secrets, as they each admit the relation they bear to Horner, and a swift laying-aside of differences in the interest of collaboration in the ruse. Perhaps Wycherley means to suggest that the men's commitment to besting each other in the romantic arena precludes any genuine bonding, while the women's oppression in the conventional sexual scheme gives them incentive to be, as Lady Fidget puts it, "sister sharers" in more ways than one.

2.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Is Wycherley's account of romantic love totally cynical, or does it contain some redemptive elements?**
2. **Analyze the character of Pinchwife. Is Wycherley's portrait of a jealous husband mainly comical, or do certain darker elements seem dominant in his characterization?**
3. **How effective are Alethea and Harcourt as ambassadors of a positive moral vision? Do they embody compellingly a view of the right way to approach romantic love and marriage?**
4. **Characterize the note on which the play concludes. Is it a straightforwardly happy ending, or does it seem ambiguous? What does this question signify with respect to the themes of the play?**
5. **Discuss the role played by Lucy in the action and themes of the play.**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Consider the theme of hypocrisy with respect to the two sexes. Does Wycherley treat men and women about evenly when criticizing the human inclination to hypocrisy, or does one sex receive a harsher censure?**
2. **Assess Alethea's hesitation before leaving Sparkish. In what ways is her reluctance consistent (or inconsistent) with what we know of her personality? Is her reluctance morally commendable, or could it bespeak a moral flaw?**
3. **How does Wycherley present the character of Horner—as basically sympathetic and admirable, as basically depraved and repulsive, or as something in between?**
4. **Does Margery retain her innocence during the play, or is she well on her way to becoming a second Lady Fidget when the curtain drops? What difference does it make to the themes of the play?**
5. **How does self-interest, particularly financial self-interest, play into the weakness of marital bonds?**

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2.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The Prologue is spoken by the actor playing which character?
- a. Horner
- b. Mr. Harcourt
- c. Jack pinchwife
- d. Sir jasper fidget

2. How does the speaker of the Prologue anticipate that the audience will respond to the play?
- a. Apathetically
- b. Deliriously
- c. Critically
- d. Appreciatively

3. Whom has Horner employed to spread the rumor of his impotence?
- a. Jack pinchwife
- b. Sir jasper fidget
- c. Mr. Sparkish
- d. The quack

4. From what country has Horner recently returned?
- a. Italy
- b. France
- c. Germany
- d. Switzerland

5. Who has supposedly deprived Horner of his sexual potency?
- a. A French prostitute
- b. A French surgeon
- c. An English surgeon
- d. An English prostitute

6. Why does Horner think that his ruse will help him with the ladies?
- a. It will cause husbands and parents to let down their guards
- b. Ladies will find him more approachable
- c. He believes in reverse-psychology
- d. Low-testosterone males were fashionable in the restoration

7. Why did the supposed French surgeon supposedly operate on Horner?
- a. A combat wound
- b. Venereal disease
- c. Injuries sustained in a tavern brawl
- d. Rheumatism

8. What is Lady Fidget's initial reaction to the "eunuch" Horner?
- a. Curiosity
- b. Disgust

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c. Attraction
d. Hilarity

9. Why does Sir Jasper want his wife to spend time with the "eunuch" Horner?

a. Horner will provide safe companionship while sir jasper tends to his business
b. Horner has been pestering sir jasper for this opportunity
c. Sir jasper dislikes horner and wants to punish him with lady fidget's company
d. Horner has money, which he might lose to lady fidget at cards

10. Why does Horner consider a husband a "monster"?

a. Because husbands inevitably abandon their friends
b. Because husbands inevitably become abusive
c. Because husbands inevitably become pathologically jealous
d. Because husbands inevitably become cuckolds

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT III

G. B. SHAW

STRUCTURE

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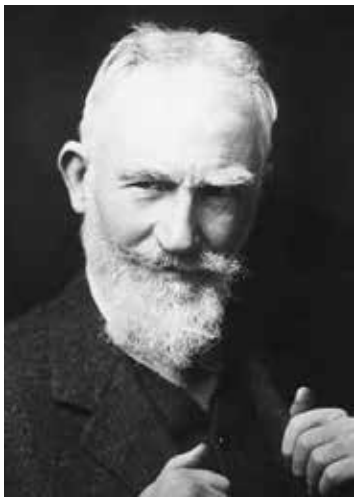
3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After the completion of this unit, student learn about prolific play writer George Bernard shaw and in this unit student will go through his one of the famous Drama "Man and Superman".

3.2 ABOUT AUTHOR



George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was a prolific writer of plays but also of essays justifying his plays: the two (double-columned) volumes of his Plays and Prefaces both stretch to over 1,000 pages. In this post, we're going to attempt to distill his busy life into a very short biography – and, we hope, an interesting one – covering some of the most fascinating aspects of the man known variously as Bernard Shaw, George Bernard Shaw, or even just plain 'GBS'.

George Bernard Shaw was born in 1856 to an alcoholic father and a mother, Lucinda, who was a singer and music teacher who doted on her youngest child. She would later support Shaw financially as he struggled to make a living as a writer. He left school early, never went to university (though he later helped to found one: the London School of Economics), and was largely self-taught. The famous quip attributed to him (probably wrongly – it was Grant Allen who first said it), 'My education was only interrupted by my schooling', sums up his attitudes to formal education. One of the numerous schools he attended he dubbed a 'boys' prison'. For Shaw, education was not confined to school walls or the university campus.

Shaw attracted a fair number of female admirers, and had (largely Platonic) relationships with several women. He married Charlotte Payne-Townshend in 1898, though whether the marriage was ever consummated remains a moot point among his biographers. In 1884, George Bernard Shaw joined the left-leaning Fabian Society, whose other high-profile members would include H. G. Wells and Emmeline Pankhurst. Shaw became involved in the political causes of the day: when news reached him that suffragettes on hunger strike were being force-fed in prison, Shaw wrote to the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, inviting him to dine with them, provided that Gladstone 'ate' his food and wine through a nasal tube. According to Karen Farrington in her fascinating collection of short biographies, Great Lives: As heard on Radio 4, Shaw once gave a 90-minute speech at Speaker's Corner in London, in the pouring rain. His audience consisted of just six people, all policemen.

After several unsuccessful attempts at writing novels, George Bernard Shaw decided to write for the stage, inspired by Henrik Ibsen (of whose work Shaw was one of the earliest English-speaking champions). He would go on to write dozens of plays, the most popular of which remain widely known: Major Barbara, Man and Superman, Back to Methuselah, Saint Joan, Heartbreak House, Androcles and the Lion, and, most famously of all, Pygmalion, which also inspired the musical My Fair Lady. Shaw used his plays to debate social issues and to encourage people to want to change the world around them. Shaw was an outspoken critic of Shakespeare, coining the word 'bardolatry' to describe hero-worship of the Bard, which he detested. His last play, Shakes versus Shav, completed a year before his death, is a puppet play in which the two playwrights meet and argue over who is better. No prizes for guessing who wins.

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His political views often made the name George Bernard Shaw a dirty word in certain circles: his reputation suffered a hit in 1914 when Shaw opposed Britain's involvement in the First World War, and again in 1931 when Shaw praised Joseph Stalin, even travelling to the Soviet Union to meet him. Nevertheless, Shaw was acknowledged as a towering figure in British theatre, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. He died in 1950, following complications attending a fall in his garden while pruning trees. He was 93. He left money in his will for the establishment of a new phonetic alphabet, designed to iron out the inconsistencies in English pronunciation.

Winston Churchill called Shaw the greatest living master of letters in the English language. His witticisms and bon mots are celebrated worldwide. But, looking back on a long and productive life, Shaw himself said that the achievement he was most proud of was having overseen the installation of new sewage pipes, and the introduction of a vaccination programme to eradicate smallpox, in St Pancras, the area of London in which he had been made a municipal councillor in 1897.

3.3 MAN AND SUPERMAN

Man and Superman Summary

This sprawling, eventful play begins with the death of a certain Mr. Whitefield in early twentieth-century England. We never meet or see Whitefield himself at all—instead, the play's events track the consequences of his death. The first of these consequences comes from a dispute over the guardianship of Whitefield's daughter, Ann. Ann is a clever, relentless, and wildly manipulative young woman, and her father's will stipulates that she be left in the care of not one but two men. One of these men is Roebuck Ramsden, a cautious, respectable family friend who has long acted as a kind of grandfather figure for Ann. The other man, Jack Tanner, is a socialist firebrand and the author of a controversial guide to revolutionary politics. Ann is closer to Tanner's age, and the two are old friends who have had a falling-out. However, when they are left alone, the two flirt wildly. This is particularly shocking because Tanner's close friend Octavius is in love with Ann, and expects to marry her. Meanwhile, Tanner and Ramsden can't stand each other—Tanner thinks Ramsden is a hypocrite, and Ramsden thinks Tanner is obnoxious. Ann, instead of choosing one of these men to be her guardian, insists that they work together to care for her, as her father wished. Ann's mother Mrs. Whitefield is present as well, but she is a somewhat weak-willed person who tends to cave to her daughter's intense behaviors.

To this volatile mix, another character is added: Octavius's sister Violet. While Octavius is a romantic aspiring poet, we soon learn that his sister is a blunt, practical young woman. She arrives at Ramsden's house, where the others are gathered, with the news that she is pregnant. In these conservative times, the news is considered shocking, especially since the others believe that she's pregnant out of wedlock. However, Violet reports, she's actually secretly married. She refuses to tell the others who her husband is, and she

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refuses to leave the country in order to hide her pregnancy. The others are left in the dark, but the audience soon learns that Violet is married to a wealthy American acquaintance named Hector Malone. Both Malone and Violet disappear for much of the second half of the play, returning at the end.

After this initial period of explosive drama, Tanner leaves England with his chauffeur, Henry Straker. Among other things, Tanner, who believes that romance and women will drain his energy and independence, wants to escape Ann's romantic pursuits. In fact, Straker himself, who seems to view the dramas of these wealthy employers with distant skepticism, firmly believes that Ann is after Tanner rather than Octavius and has been doing his best to convince Tanner of as much. Ann herself spins an elaborate series of lies in an attempt to get Tanner to invite her on his trip, but ultimately doesn't succeed, and the two are separated while Tanner goes to Spain.

In Spain, Tanner and Straker are abducted by a somewhat ridiculous crew of would-be revolutionaries led by a charismatic man named Mendoza. Tanner quickly befriends his kidnappers, although, devoted as he is to progressive ideals, Tanner sees that Mendoza has no real interest in socialist politics. While spending the night in Mendoza's camp, Tanner has a vivid dream in which the mundane dramas of life in modern Britain time-travel and become part of a Don Juan narrative. In this particular scene, Tanner himself becomes Don Juan, and finds himself in hell. There he speaks with Ann, who has become an old woman, Ana—the Dona Ana de Ulloa of the original Don Juan story. Since she lives in a more modern and secular era, Ann is a strong-willed woman who goes after men based on her own desires. In the dream, though, she becomes a devout Catholic and something of a rule-follower, and is horrified to find herself in hell. Ramsden, meanwhile, is represented by a statue, who for the most part professes the same stale and judgmental worldviews as the original Ramsden. Finally, Mendoza appears in the form of the devil himself. The devil is nonthreatening but somewhat shallow and uninspiring, and wants to keep Tanner/Don Juan in hell, a comfortable but boring place devoid of beauty. Don Juan, though, wants to see heaven, and departs. Tanner/Don Juan wishes to become "superman," the intellectually and artistically ideal human, and can only do so by leaving behind comfort and pursuing a more challenging and difficult path. The Devil and the Statue both find this goal ridiculous: they do not subscribe to the Nietzschean idea of the constantly-improving man or the essential life-force that allows man to continually improve. When Tanner wakes, the others have come to rescue him: Ann, Ramsden, Octavius, Violet, and Malone. Ann is particularly eager to talk to him and help him escape his captors. However, Tanner makes sure that Mendoza and his men aren't arrested or punished, identifying them as friends and escorts.

In the final act, the characters have retreated to a Spanish villa. At this point, Malone's father—an Irish-American businessman also named Hector Malone—arrives in England. He has found out about Hector Jr.'s romance with Violet because he intercepted a letter between the two. Malone tries to convince Violet that she should not marry his son, because he plans on marrying him off to a high-born English heiress. Many of his motives come from a desire for revenge, since the Irish potato famine devastated his family and country during his childhood. Violet remains calm and cool throughout the exchange, and manages to convince Malone that she's personally worthy of marrying his son, even if he still would prefer an aristocrat. Their conversation is cut off by the arrival of the younger Hector Malone himself. He announces that he is in fact already married to Violet, finally solving that particular mystery for the other characters—Ann, Octavius, Tanner, and Ramsden are in fact looking on. And, Malone Jr. says, he has no need of his father's approval or money. Instead, he plans on working to support himself. The idealists Octavius and

Tanner even offer Hector some money while he tries to become financially independent. Hector refuses, basking in his independence, but Violet has less faith in her husband. After the others have departed for various other errands, the older Mr. Malone gives Violet a check, knowing that his son will have trouble making money. In fact, Malone notes with satisfaction, Violet will be a better wife for his son than any aristocrat's daughter.

This leaves the central love triangle unsolved, however, close to the end of the play. Octavius confesses his love to Ann, but she turns him down, saying that her mother wants her to marry Tanner, and that her father instructed her to do so in his will. Octavius, still convinced that Ann loves him, believes that this is an example of her self-sacrificing nature. However, as she departs, Mrs. Whitefield arrives and finds a crying Octavius. She tells Octavius he's been duped, since she never told Ann to marry Tanner. However, she tells Octavius, that might be for the best, since Ann will crush his delicate spirit. Tanner, in the meantime, claims that he has no desire or plan to marry Ann, or to marry at all. He finds Ann to be a bully, and bluntly says so. Octavius is bewildered, meanwhile, asking Ann whether she'd marry a man who doesn't desire her at all, but she explains that, from her point of view, it's a better match. Jack, she says, doesn't have any unrealistic expectations for her to live up to. Octavius, meanwhile, is such a romantic that he'd be happier heartbroken and single than faced with the day-to-day realities of marriage.

Tanner begins to fret that social pressure will force him to agree to marry Ann against his principles. It seems, though, that he also desperately wants to marry Ann. When he objects to her pursuit, she uses his own philosophy to convince him, telling him that the life-force has driven them together. According to Tanner's own theory, the life-force causes women to pursue men for their own needs, and she tells him he's no exception. As they talk, Tanner confesses his love for Ann, and holds her so tightly that she faints. The other characters rush back to center stage to help revive her. When she comes to, she and Tanner announce their plans to marry—although Tanner insists that he is not happy about the marriage, and will keep the ceremony as simple as possible. Ann evidently finds this announcement charming, and Tanner's words are met with light-hearted celebration and laughter as the play concludes.

Man and Superman Character List

Roebuck Ramsden

Ramsden is a middle-aged gentleman who considers himself an intellectual pioneer and a progressive thinker, though in truth, he has a conservative approach to politics and social life. Indeed, he clings to once-new ideas advanced by Victorians such as Charles Darwin, believing that this makes him an intellectually open person even while he closes himself off to newer theories and concepts. George Bernard Shaw carefully evokes Ramsden's clothing, home, and family in order to show how deeply conformist he actually is, and Shaw even notes in stage directions that Ramsden shows a certain "expectation of deference." An old friend of Ann's father, Ramsden is one of the two men assigned to care for her and her sister. He means well and cares deeply about Ann, but his ideological differences from the nontraditional Jack Tanner become a distraction for him. Vain and oblivious though he can be, Ramsden is fairly harmless and serves mostly as a foil to Jack Tanner.

Octavius Robinson

Octavius is a young, orphaned bachelor in the social circle of the Ramsdens, the Whitefields, and Jack Tanner. Though he's close with Jack, he shares few of his friend's fiery attitudes. Instead, he's an artistic soul with the goal of becoming a poet. He's also a hopeless romantic, and has been in love with Ann Whitefield for years. Because of his trusting attitude, other

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characters, especially Jack and Ann, find him both lovable and easy to deceive. Octavius is also Violet Robinson's brother, though in many ways, he displays more stereotypically feminine traits while hers are more stereotypically masculine. Therefore, though he feels protective of her, Violet is unwilling to be the object of pity. Octavius, on the other hand, somewhat enjoys the emotional intensity of self-pity, causing Ann to remark that he will be happiest as a lifelong bachelor.

Ann Whitefield

Ann is the older daughter of Mr. Whitefield, whose death is the catalyst for most of the play's action. She is based on the character of Dona Ana de Ulloa in the original Don Juan story, and is represented by an old woman, Ana, during Tanner's Don Juan dream sequence. However, the ways in which Ann contrasts with the innocent piety of Ana serve as a commentary on modern womanhood. Ann is neither innocent nor churchgoing. Rather, she's pragmatic to a fault, and has no qualms about manipulating others in order to get her way. Therefore, she's able to convince Tanner to marry her, and able to convince Octavius that he'll be better off without her. She often claims that her own desires are actually commands from her parents, allowing her to preserve her reputation as an innocent, obedient young woman while actually getting the things she wants. In contrast with her counterpart, Ana, Ann has the contemporary woman's ability to pursue her own goals and even to exert control over others. However, the virtuous femininity of characters like Ana casts a shadow on Ann's own society, and, knowing this, she does her best to seem as innocent as possible in order to gain sympathy from men.

John/Jack Tanner

Jack Tanner, a left-wing thinker and author of the book The Revolutionist's Handbook, is one of the men left in charge of Ann Whitefield after her father's death. He naturally draws attention with his charisma and provocative statements. Tanner corresponds with the figure of Don Juan himself, and has a long dream in which he actually becomes Don Juan. The ideas espoused by Don Juan in the dream and by Tanner in waking life are similar: both reject conformist thinking and the pursuit of comfort, choosing instead to seek out "life-force" and to pursue self-improvement with the goal of becoming an enlightened "Superman." Though Shaw generally positions Tanner as the moral center of the play, his intensity and passion can be almost comic at times, or can appear counterproductive. For instance, he assures Violet that she needn't be ashamed of her pregnancy, but clarifies that this belief stems, not from sympathy with Violet, but from a belief that women's sole purpose is reproduction. The play's strangest and most complex character, Tanner eventually falls in love with Ann in spite of his initial determination never to marry, having become convinced that marrying Ann is the inevitable result of the life-force.

Violet Robinson

Violet is the sister of Octavius. She becomes pregnant at the beginning of the play, and is secretly married to Hector Malone, Jr. Like Ann, she is able to get almost everything she wants, but her chosen tool is not manipulation; instead, she's extremely direct, and doesn't hesitate to tell others when she disagrees with them. At the start of the play, when Roebuck Ramsden and other traditionally-minded characters condemn her pregnancy, Violet tells them that they've insulted her and then stubbornly refuses to reveal her husband's identity. Later, when her husband's father tells her that she isn't wealthy enough to marry his son, she coolly points out his prejudiced attitude. People tend to listen to Violet and to respect her, even if they don't like her. In this way, she contrasts with her brother, who is beloved, but not widely treated with respect.

Henry Straker

A working-class driver from London, Henry Straker speaks with a distinct Cockney accent, which is the root of his nickname—the Cockney-esque "'Enry." He's a straightforward and fairly literal person whose job and personality help highlight, through contrast, some of the more high-flown or hypocritical notions held by his employers. After all, Straker is not only a worker, but a technological expert who prizes efficiency and speed over painstaking work, thus undermining some of the more romanticized visions of the worker that Jack and Octavius hold. In spite of their differences, Henry and the play's upper-class characters get along well: they rely on him to a great deal, and he regards them with skeptical but respectful distance. In a strange twist, Henry also finds out that Mendoza is in love with his sister Louisa, giving him a more personal stake in some of the play's events.

Mendoza

This socialist/anarchist revolutionary has an outsize personality—he's witty, intelligent, articulate, and a hopeless romantic with an enormous crush on Henry Straker's sister Louisa. While some of the play's politically-minded characters, such as Jack Tanner, have a more academic approach, Mendoza likes to get right to the source of inequality by kidnapping and robbing the rich in order to redistribute their money. He manages to persuade a loose band of others to help him with this, including, eventually, Hector Malone Sr., who invests in Mendoza's efforts. Mendoza is also Jewish and announces this fact, showing that he is not only an outsider, but a proud one.

Hector Malone Jr.

The son of Hector Malone Sr, he is married to Violet. Unlike his wife, Hector is romantic rather than practical. He values notions of honor so deeply that he becomes comical. For instance, he insists, unrealistically, that he will become financially independent on his own for the sake of marrying Violet, and has to be circumvented by his wife and father. Generally, though Malone means well enough, Shaw does not take him particularly seriously. Since he is only native-born American in the play, Malone's vices to a degree implicate all of his countrymen and his culture more broadly.

Hector Malone Sr.

Hector Malone Sr., Violet's father-in-law (though he himself is unaware of this status for much of the play) is an American billionaire. Born in Ireland and displaced by the potato famine as a child, Malone very much wants to prove himself to the world at large and to the English upper classes in particular. As a result, he is determined to have his son marry an aristocrat, although he ends up feeling satisfied with Violet because of her tough and intelligent personality. This rigid materialism makes Malone something of an avatar of the ruling class. Though he has far more wealth than he needs, he pursues even more wealth and status out of a misguided desire for revenge rather than out of actual hope for his son's well-being.

Mrs. Whitefield

The widow of Mr. Whitefield and Ann's mother, Mrs. Whitefield is notable mainly for her inability or unwillingness to control her daughter. She is easily bullied by Ann, even though she occasionally voices disagreement by criticizing her daughter's choices. Shaw makes clear even in his stage directions that Mrs. Whitefield should be nonthreatening and powerless. She is childlike and small, with a high voice. Therefore, though Ann is not technically orphaned, her parents make few influential decisions, giving her an extraordinary amount of freedom.

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Susan Ramsden

Susan, also called Miss Ramsden, is Roebuck's unmarried sister. She is conventional and morally rigid, and therefore opposed to helping Violet during her unplanned pregnancy.

Character Analysis

George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw wrote the play Man and Superman in 1903. His ideas on social and political issues are reflected in this play. In Man and Superman Shaw defines the roles of men and women in society and what he believes should be the ideal goals of individuals and governments. He presents the idea that man is the spiritual creator and woman is the creator of the human being. Shaw writes that The Life Force demands of both genders that the human species continue. Shaw believed that human evolution through procreation was the means of advancing the self-consciousness and the self-awareness of the human being.

John Tanner

John Tanner is the protagonist of Man and Superman. He is the character who is striving to become superman. He has written "The Revolutionist's and Pocket Companion by John Tanner, M.I.R.C., Member of the Idle Rich Class." John Tanner rejects conventional morality and strives to create his moral code. Ann Whitefield relentlessly pursues him to be her husband. John Tanner resists giving up his independence and self-determination. In a dream he sees that Ann Whitefield marries Octavius Robinson and he is relieved because he does not want to marry her. He says, "I am fighting for my freedom, for my honor, for myself." John Tanner unhappily gives in and marries Ann Whitefield.

Ann Whitefield

Ann Whitefield is a devious, deceitful, and hypocritical young woman who relentlessly pursues John Tanner to be her husband. She allows Octavius Robinson to pursue her without regard for his feelings. She knows she will never marry Octavius Robinson because she has set her sights on John Tanner. She uses Octavius Robinson to make John Tanner jealous. She "inspires confidence as a person who will do nothing she does not mean to do," but she also inspires fear because it is clear she will stop at nothing to accomplish her goal. Ann Whitefield subtly and insidiously ensnares John Tanner in marriage.

Octavius Robinson

Octavius Robinson is the sincere and eager suitor of Ann Wakefield. He faces consistent rejection from her but does not give up his relentless pursuit. He is naive and easily taken advantage of. He is the opposite of John Tanner in that he is a man who does not aspire to be superman. He accepts the moral code of the day and follows its rules. In the end he graciously accepts that John Tanner and Ann Whitefield will marry because he believes it will make her happy.

Man and Superman Themes

Victorian Hypocrisy

Beneath all its lofty philosophical statements and flights of Nietzschean theoretics, Man and Superman remains firmly cast within a recognizable mold of witty romantic comedy. By casting his more radical ideas within this standard mode, Shaw takes aim at what he saw as his society's rote acceptance of Victorian ideals, built upon a foundation of hypocrisy. Violet, who is pregnant (seemingly out of wedlock) seems to serve quite nicely as the stereotypical woman whose stock has fallen in the light of a perceived failure of character on her part to conform to expected modes of social convention. Such a state

provides Tanner with the perfect opportunity to play out his part as the progressive figure who sees what society does not: that Violet is the victim of a flaw in society's character. In the hands of a lesser dramatist, this might well have been enough to set the two upon a journey eventually ending with their marriage and Violet's regaining of her social status based on the tacit consent of agreeing to conform in the future. Instead, quite early on, Violet shocks Tanner and everyone else with unexpected moral indignation at his liberal—perhaps even radical—rejection of Victorian conservatism. Ultimately, Violet becomes the agent by which Man and Superman reveals the inherently sexist hypocrisy displayed toward women from those on both sides of the political spectrum.

Nietzschean Evolutionary Dialectics

George Bernard Shaw cleverly repurposes the conventions of Victorian romantic comedy in order to further his play's examination of Nietzschean evolutionary dynamics. According to Nietzsche, mankind's intellectual and moral growth will eventually lead to the next phase of evolutionary development: the übermensch, or overman—here translated as "superman." In Shaw's interpretation, this evolutionary advancement in humans is dependent upon what he labels the Life Force, which is the urgent and unpredictable call for the preservation of the species through the regenerative act of procreation. The feminine response to the Life Force is to seek out the best potential mate through the natural gift of intuition. The male's gift of greater strength allows for the more physically fit to benefit from experience and grow intellectually. Only when these ideally poised men and women are paired with one another can the Nietzschean construct begin actually playing out. Jack Tanner is a firm believer in the life force, which causes him to celebrate Violet's pregnancy and to feel a great deal of internal conflict about his own attraction to Ann.

Subverting Don Juan's Moral Failure

Shaw was motivated to write Man and Superman in response to a challenge from a critic to retell the legendary story of the irredeemable Lothario, whose destiny takes him all the way to hell itself. Tanner's dream sequence is the part of this play most directly related to this original "Don Juan" story, but even aside from that cluster of clear references, however, this play is deeply concerned with overturning some of the conclusions of the original legend. In this particular story, the Don Juan figure— Tanner—is not a relentless pursuer of women, and is instead relentlessly pursued by Ann. In this sense, Shaw makes a comment about modern gender dynamics, noting that the outwardly demure Victorian woman is in fact powerful and even dangerous to men. Ultimately, Shaw re-evaluates the Don Juan story in light of Nietzsche's philosophy, coming to the conclusion that the pursuer's actions are not necessarily evidence of moral weakness but are in fact a symptom of the vital life force driving human evolution.

Gender and Misogyny

According to Jack Tanner's Nietzsche-influenced views, Violet Robinson's pregnancy is in fact cause for celebration, since she is fulfilling her true purpose as a woman by reproducing. While Shaw expresses sympathy with Tanner's views as a whole, he makes sure that the grounded Violet condemns this point of view, making clear that her purpose as a woman is not entirely reproductive. On the other hand, Shaw mocks some of the more conservative ideas about womanhood held by characters like Roebuck Ramsden, who firmly believes that pregnancy out of wedlock is worse than death. Finally, Shaw displays a healthy amount of skepticism when it comes to Ann, who uses her mastery of Victorian feminine manners to manipulate and torment others. Ultimately, this play promotes a rejection of romanticized or exaggerated ideals of femininity. Whether those

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ideals of femininity purport that women should be pure and innocent, or that they should be mystically tied to earthly reproductive processes, they are, according to Shaw, unsustainable and self-serving, not to mention frustrating for both men and women.

The Utility of Shame

One of Jack Tanner's earliest and most memorable diatribes has to do with the role of shame among the British middle class. According to this view, which the play as a whole promotes, the ideal of respectability at its core has very little to do with positive contributions to society and is mostly based on the ability to feel and display shame at the proper time. Tanner is particularly upset by the prevalence of shame when it comes to women's sexuality, arguing that the social pressure to feel shame about pregnancy has caused Violet's own family and friends to reject her and even to ignore her accomplishments. However, Shaw does make a case for the usefulness of shame in some cases, to the degree that "shame" is sometimes synonymous with self-awareness. Both Ann and Hector Malone, Jr., are completely without shame, unable to understand the way that they each, respectively, cause pain to others and create practical problems for themselves. What Shaw really seems to oppose is not the feeling of shame, which can lead to more moral behavior, but the ostentatious display of it, which is both hypocritical and unhelpful.

Class and Work

While most of this play's primary characters are wealthy, they have a range of different relationships to their wealth. These relationships can be broken into two general classes, characterized best by Ramsden and Tanner. Ramsden is a conservative capitalist who generally believes in sticking to the status quo, while Tanner is a revolutionary socialist. It's Tanner's more progressive worldview that wins out in the moral universe of "Man and Superman," although Shaw is sure to include some warnings for idealistic would-be revolutionaries. These warnings usually come to us in the form of Henry Straker, the play's primary working-class character, who finds socialists' obsession with the value of labor to be bizarre and who drily points out that it is rich men rather than poor ones who identify as socialists. The socialists and anarchists in Mendoza's crew of brigands are fodder for mockery too, what with their ill-articulated ideas and exaggerated notions of heroic sacrifice. Still, for all this play's gentle mockery of socialism, it comes down harder on the capitalist class. This includes not just the blustering Ramsden but the vengeful, short-sighted Hector Malone, Sr., who believes that never-ending upward mobility will repair the damage done to the Irish people by colonialism.

British Identity

Britishness in "Man and Superman" gets put on display primarily through contrasts with other nationalities and national identities—mainly Spanish and American. Shaw frames Spanish and American identity as grand, showy, and loud, in contrast to the almost laughably timid and indirect manners associated with Britishness. For instance, Shaw's American characters, the Malones, are obsessed with earning money and leaving the past behind. Thus, the elder Malone uses capitalism and business to separate himself from his humble Irish roots, while the younger one does his best to work in order to make his way independently of his father. These American characters are shameless and fiery, willing to fight openly in front of strangers. On the other hand, the Spanish characters, such as Mendoza and his men, are almost premodern, unconcerned with practical matters and driven by emotion. Shaw paints the Spanish landscape carefully, noting that the hills in Spain are far more impressive and imposing than their English equivalents. Compared to these two examples, British people and British nationhood appear quiet and subdued,

driven largely by shame and the desire to avoid open conflict or acknowledgment of differences. Shaw tends to regard this tendency with affection, but, interestingly, shows irritation with the way in which the British middle class has internalized this vision of English respectability, using it to justify a culture of avoidance and shame under the banner of "respectability" and British exceptionalism.

The Complexity of Happiness

At the play's end, Tanner announces to the assembled characters that his marriage to Ann will not be a happy one, and in fact that the two have sacrificed all hopes of future happiness. This announcement comes loaded with a strange irony, since everyone present, including Tanner, seems fairly light-hearted in the face of an eternal farewell to happiness. As it turns out, this is because, within the framework of man's evolutionary development into a Superman, happiness is at best a minor virtue and at worst an evil. This is why Tanner is forced to leave the comforts of hell in order to pursue truth in heaven within his dream: happiness leads to complacency and a general abandonment of the call of the life-force, ultimately leading to an abandonment of one's evolutionary potential. Therefore, the minor pleasures of happiness should in fact be sacrificed in order to pursue the more rewarding and important work of moral development and following the life-force.

3.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **What question from Walkley prompted Shaw to write the play?**
2. **What warning does Shaw issue to Walkley?**
3. **What is the author's opinion on previous attempts to write about relationships?**
4. **How does Shaw describe the essence of Don Juan?**
5. **What inspired Shaw's version of Don Juan?**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **What is the meaning of Shaw's "Life Force"? How does it affect the characters of the play?**
2. **Comment on the distinctive tone and point of view of the stage directions in Man and Superman. Discuss the effect of these directions on the play as a whole.**
3. **How do the characters in Man and Superman experience non-traditional manifestations of romantic love?**
4. **Describe this play's use of dramatic irony. Where does it appear and how does it function?**
5. **Discuss the characters of Mrs. Whitefield and Hector Malone, Sr. How do these parental figures attempt to control and influence their children, and why do they fail?**

3.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **The dedication begins with a letter written by which author?**
   a. Mark Twain
   b. James Joyce

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c. Franz Kafka
d. George Bernard Shaw

2. To whom was the letter addressed?

a. Brian White
b. Arthur Conan Doyle
c. Conan O'Brien
d. Arthur Bingham Walkley

3. The letter asked a question about what famous character?

a. Don Juan
b. Scarlet Pimpernel
c. Don Quixote
d. Hunchback of Notre Dame

4. Which topic does Shaw claim to have failed when writing a play?

a. Himself
b. Superheroes
c. God
d. Relationships

5. Which composer inspired Shaw?

a. Schubert
b. Chopin
c. Bach
d. Mozart

6. Shaw does not believe one of the following is a great writer:

a. Keats
b. Shakespeare
c. Byron
d. Joyce

7. Which writer does Shaw refer to as being "a force?"

a. Shelly
b. Karloff
c. Byron
d. Mamet

8. Shaw says that women no longer ask for:

a. Trifles
b. Forgiveness
c. Pity
d. Permission

9. Who is uniquely absent from the complicated actions of ordinary men and women?

a. Man
b. God

c. Lucifer
d. Artist

10. Most writers portray men as:

a. Repressed
b. Fearful
c. The sexual initiator
d. Godlike

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UNIT IV

T. S. ELIOT

STRUCTURE

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to know about famous playwriter Thomas Stearns Eliot and his play "Murder in the Cathedral".

4.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, of an old New England family. He was educated at Harvard and did graduate work in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Merton College, Oxford. He settled in England, where he was for a time a schoolmaster and a bank clerk, and eventually literary editor for the publishing house Faber & Faber, of which he later became a director. He founded and, during the seventeen years of its publication (1922-1939), edited the exclusive and influential literary journal Criterion. In 1927, Eliot became a British citizen and about the same time entered the Anglican Church.

Eliot has been one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry. Never compromising either with the public or indeed with language itself, he has followed his belief that poetry should aim at a representation of the complexities of modern civilization in language and that such representation necessarily leads to difficult poetry. Despite this difficulty his influence on modern poetic diction has been immense. Eliot's poetry from Prufrock (1917) to the Four Quartets (1943) reflects the development of a Christian writer: the early work, especially The Waste Land (1922), is essentially negative, the expression of that horror from which the search for a higher world arises. In Ash Wednesday (1930) and the Four Quartets this higher world becomes more visible; nonetheless Eliot has always taken care not to become a «religious poet». and often belittled the power of poetry as a religious force. However, his dramas Murder in the Cathedral (1935) and The Family Reunion (1939) are more openly Christian apologies. In his essays, especially the later ones, Eliot advocates a traditionalism in religion, society, and literature that seems at odds with his pioneer activity as a poet. But although the Eliot of Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948) is an older man than the poet of The Waste Land, it should not be forgotten that for Eliot tradition is a living organism comprising past and present in constant mutual interaction. Eliot's plays Murder in the Cathedral (1935), The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1949), The Confidential Clerk (1954), and The Elder Statesman (1959) were published in one volume in 1962; Collected Poems 1909-62 appeared in 1963.

4.3 MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

Murder in the Cathedral Summary

Eliot wrote his play for an audience expected to know the historical story of Thomas Becket and King Henry II. For that reason, a brief review of that story, contained in the "About Thomas Becket and King Henry II" section of the Note, will greatly aid comprehension of this summary.

Murder in the Cathedral opens in the Archbishop's Hall on December 2nd, 1170. A Chorus, comprising women of Canterbury, has gathered at the cathedral with some premonition of a terrible event to come. In a long speech, they reflect on how their lives are defined

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by suffering and reflect on their archbishop, Thomas Becket. He has been in exile from England for seven years, after a terrible clash with King Henry II. The women worry that his return could make their lives more difficult by angering the king.

Three priests enter the hall and also lament Thomas's absence and debate the ramifications of his potential return. A Herald arrives, bringing news that Thomas has indeed returned to England and will soon arrive in Canterbury. The Herald quashes their hopes that Thomas's return indicates reconciliation with Henry and confesses his own concern that violence is soon to follow the archbishop's return.

Once the heralds leave, the priests reflect on Thomas's time as Chancellor of England, when he served as secular administrator under Henry. The Chorus, listening to the priests discuss the matter, confess their disappointment at his return, which they believe will bring them more suffering. They admit their lives are hard but predictable, and they would rather "perish in quiet" than live through the turmoil of new political and spiritual upheaval (180).

The Second Priest insults them and insists they fake happiness to welcome Thomas. However, Thomas enters during this exchange and stresses that the priest is mistaken to chide them, since they have some sense of the difficulty that awaits them. He stresses that all should submit to patience, since none can truly know God's plans or intentions.

A series of tempters enters, one by one, each attempting to compromise Thomas's integrity. The First Tempter reminds Thomas of the libertine ways of his youth and tempts him to relinquish his responsibilities in favor of a more carefree life. The Second Tempter suggests Thomas reclaim the title of Chancellor, since he could do more good for the poor through a powerful political post than he could as a religious figure. The Third Tempter posits a progressive form of government, in which a ruler and barons work together as a "coalition." In effect, he offers Thomas a chance to rule and break new ground in government. Thomas easily rejects all three tempters; after all, they are forms of temptation that he has already rejected in his life.

A Fourth Tempter enters and suggests the idea of martyrdom, which he notes would give Thomas the greatest dominion over his enemies. He would be remembered throughout the ages if he allowed himself to die for the church, while his enemies would be judged and then forgotten by time. Thomas is shaken by this temptation, since it is something he has often entertained in his private moments. He recognizes that to die for pride, which is "the wrong reason," would compromise the integrity of a martyrdom, so he must overcome that impulse if his death is to have meaning.

While he considers the dilemma, all of the characters thus far mentioned (except the Herald) give a long address considering the uncertainty of life. When they finish, Thomas announces that his "way [is] clear" – he will not seek martyrdom from fame, but instead will submit to God's will. He has accepted his fate. Part I ends here.

Between Part I and Part II, Thomas Becket preaches a sermon in an Interlude, in which he restates the lesson he learned at the end of Part I. The Interlude is set in the cathedral on Christmas morning, 1170. In the sermon, Thomas considers the mystery of Christianity,

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which both mourns and celebrates the fact of Christ's death – Christians mourn the world that made it necessary, while celebrating the sacrifice that enables others to transcend that world. He suggests that the appreciation of martyrs is a smaller version of that mystery, and defines "the true martyr [as] he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in his submission to God" (199). He closes his sermon by admitting he might not preach to this congregation again.

The first scene of Part II is set in the Archbishop's Hall on December 29th, 1170. The terrified Chorus begins with an ominous address, after which four boorish knights enter. They insist they are there on Henry's business from France and demand an audience with Thomas despite attempts by the priests to distract them.

Thomas arrives and is immediately insulted and chided by the knights for what they perceive as disloyalty toward Henry and misuse of the archbishop's position to incite opposition to England. Thomas denies their interpretation of events but also reveals a serenity and readiness to die when necessary. The knights attempt to attack him but are interrupted by the priests. A more specific political argument follows, during which Thomas continues to deny their claims and insults them as overly concerned with petty, political matters. Angry, the knights threaten the priests with death if they let Becket escape, and then the knights leave.

The Chorus gives a brutal, evocative speech, and Thomas comforts them. He acknowledges that by bearing necessary witness to the ritual of his death, their lives will grow more difficult. But he maintains that they can find comfort in recollection on having been here this fateful day.

As the knights approach again, the priests beg Thomas to flee, but he refuses. The knights force him from the hall and into the cathedral, against his protestations. As the scene changes, the women of the Chorus steel themselves for the death soon to follow.

The priests bar the doors, which the knights then begin to besiege. The priests' arguments do not convince Thomas, who accuses them of thinking too much of cause-and-effect, rather than accepting God's plan. Finally, the priests open the door and the knights drunkenly enter. They demand Thomas lift all the excommunications he has put upon English rulers. He refuses, and they murder him. While Thomas is being murdered, the Chorus gives a long, desperate address lamenting the life they will now have to lead in the shadow of Thomas's martyrdom.

After the murder is done, the four knights address the audience directly. They wish to explain themselves and defend their actions. The First Knight admits he has no facility for argument, and so acts as an MC to introduce the other knights. The Second Knight says he understands how the audience and history will hate them, but begs the audience to realize the knights were "disinterested" in the murder; they were merely following orders that were necessary for the good of England (216). The Third Knight presents a long, complex argument suggesting that Becket was guilty of betraying the English people and hence was killed justly. The Fourth Knight suggests that Becket willed his own death by pursing martyrdom for the sake of pride, and hence is guilty of suicide, making the knights not guilty of murder.

Once the knights leave, the priests lament Thomas's death and worry about what the world will become. The Chorus gives the final speech, revealing that they have accepted their duty as Christians. They acknowledge that living up to the sacrifice Thomas made is difficult, but that they will be spiritually richer for undertaking this challenge, and they beg mercy and forgiveness from Thomas and God.

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Murder in the Cathedral Character List

Thomas

Thomas Becket is the Archbishop of Canterbury and former Chancellor of England. Historically, he stood up against Henry II's demands that the Church subsume its authority to Henry's secular power, and ultimately died for the cause. In the play, he is represented as an overly proud and sanctimonious man who nevertheless transcends his weakness to accept martyrdom as God's will.

Chorus

The chorus of Murder in the Cathedral comprises the women of Canterbury. Poor, common, and plain, these women have lived a difficult but manageable life since Thomas was sent into exile seven years before the play begins. Though they are Catholic and respect the archbishop, they are also worried that his return will bring them a new level of spiritual burden. The play examines the way they come to accept their spiritual responsibilities through the example of Thomas's martyrdom.

Herald

A messenger who brings word that Thomas Becket has returned to England and will soon arrive in Canterbury. He has a premonition that Thomas's return presages violence.

First Priest

A nameless priest of Canterbury, characterized by his excessive mournfulness and worry. He continually sees the situation of Becket's return as one that can bring trouble for his people and their country.

Second Priest

A nameless priest of Canterbury, characterized by his pragmatism. He examines Becket's return based on its political ramifications and notes how Becket's clash with Henry reflects issues of land ownership and power, rather than spiritual dominion.

Third Priest

A nameless priest of Canterbury, characterized by his patience. Whereas the other priests worry about how Becket's return will change their lives, the Third Priest suggests that, as no human can understand the way the universe works, so should they remain patient and allow God to work his will upon the world.

First Tempter

The first man to tempt Thomas identifies himself as Old Tom. He is a friend from Becket's early, carefree days, and he tempts Thomas with the possibility of relinquishing his responsibilities in favor of a more libertine lifestyle.

Second Tempter

The second man to tempt Thomas identifies himself as a political ally from Thomas's days as Chancellor. He tempts Thomas to resume his role as Chancellor, arguing that Thomas could do more good for the poor through secular power than he ever could as a priest.

Third Tempter

Thomas does not know the third tempter, who identifies himself as a simple baron. He tempts Thomas with the possibility of ruling the country via a coalition that would split control between the nominal ruler and the barons.

Fourth Tempter

The Fourth Tempter is unexpected. Using subtle arguments, he tempts Thomas with the possibility of courting martyrdom for the sake of his reputation and glory. His temptation is powerful because it touches on something Thomas has wished in his private moments. By denying this temptation, Thomas prepares himself to accept martyrdom for the right reason.

First Knight

Though none of the four knights is particularly individualized before Becket's murder, the First Knight gives his name as Reginald Fitz Urse afterward when he addresses the audience. He claims he is a not a man of eloquence, and so mostly serves as a narrator during the knights' speeches.

Second Knight

Though none of the four knights is particularly individualized before Becket's murder, the Second Knight is introduced as William de Traci afterward. He presents an emotional argument, asking for pity on the grounds that, though the knights committed the murder, they were "disinterested" and merely did what was necessary for the English people as ordered by their king.

Third Knight

Though none of the four knights is particularly individualized before Becket's murder, the Third Knight is introduced as Hugh de Morville afterward. He presents a long, detailed argument that Becket was guilty of great offenses against the English people, and hence was it legal to murder him.

Fourth Knight

Though none of the four knights is particularly individualized before Becket's murder, the Fourth Knight is introduced as Richard Brito afterward. He presents the most subtle argument, claiming that Becket essentially committed suicide by facilitating his murder, and hence the knights are innocent of the crime.

Henry

King Henry II, though not a speaking character in the play, is a large influence on the action. Historically, he was an impetuous king who wanted to subsume the various factions of English power under the crown; the most contentious of these was the church, led in England by Thomas Becket. The knights arrive in his name, and he is cited frequently by those in the play who try to understand Becket's past and character.

Pope

Though not a speaking character in the play, Pope Alexander figures prominently. Historically, he was protecting Thomas Becket at the time of this play's action, allowing the archbishop to announce excommunications upon the English church. His protection is one of the many barriers between Thomas and Henry, and it gives Thomas a defense against the knights.

Character Analysis

Thomas Becket

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket was exiled from England by King Henry II due to political conflicts which occurred between them seven years before the beginning of the play. Having spent those years in France, Becket has decided to return to England and take up his old position in the Church. Symbolically hinted at by the fact that he's

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the only character given a proper name in the play (even Henry II is just referred to as "the king"), Becket is the central pivot point of Murder in the Cathedral, meaning that every other character can be defined in terms of how they relate to Becket's character and outlook. Becket's staunch devotion to God and fate over anything that occurs in the everyday world of human social and political affairs makes him into something of a black hole around which the otherwise ordinary humans surrounding him revolve. The priests, while religious, have an idea of fate that conflicts with Becket's decision to become a martyr, though they eventually adopt his outlook. The Chorus, however, totally refrains from having a properly religious acceptance of fate and of Becket's martyrdom, for they fear that their lives will fall into spiritual shambles if Becket dies. The tempters—with their various temptations and arguments—are all defined by how they think Becket should balance and navigate between his religious and political powers. Mirroring the second tempter's position, the king is totally opposed to Becket's devotion to God, as Henry II only cares about his own, political power—over and above that of God. The knights follow in the king's footsteps, murdering Becket because they think his devotion to God is too radical and politically rebellious. Following through with his martyrdom, Becket shuns the world of partial, human values and desires, sending a tectonic shock into the lives around him.

The Chorus

Made up of common women of Canterbury, the Chorus represents the ordinary, "small folk" of the town who look entirely to the Church for spiritual guidance in their lives. They begin the play by expressing regret over Becket's return, believing that it will lead to his death—which would bring them great spiritual despair. They claim to have been "living and partly living" during his seven-year absence, and that they would be more content to go on living in such a tolerably ordinary, everyday state of dissatisfaction than risk facing the overwhelming spiritual ruin which they think Becket's death would bring about. The Chorus therefore begins the play in direct opposition to the priests' excitement about Becket's return: they do not want him to come back. Ultimately, the Chorus's fear is realized—Becket is indeed murdered. While they come to understand his death as fated by God, the Chorus nonetheless sees it as a personal tragedy—they do not see it from a spiritual, impersonal distance like the priests eventually do. Maddened by the death of their spiritual leader, the Chorus ends the play desperately crying out that the environment around them be cleaned of the dark energies which have intruded into their lives.

The Priests

The priests—three in number—represent the clergy of the Church of Canterbury who are under the religious authority of Archbishop Thomas Becket. They begin the play, opposite the Chorus, in high anticipation of Becket's return, and are fully ready to welcome him back to England. They are confident that his presence will be good for the church-going public and the country as a whole. Yet this does not mean that they do not have their fair share of disagreement with the Archbishop. They are wary about his commitment to martyrdom, fearing that his death will spell spiritual ruin for themselves and the congregation. While not as dramatic as the Chorus, they nonetheless worry about losing their religious leader, since the Archbishop is the highest office of the Canterbury Cathedral and responsible for directing the lower clergy. After Becket dies—an event which the priests forcefully try to prevent—however, they come to see his martyrdom as destined by God, and comprehend it as something that should, in fact, have happened, even if they cannot explain "why" in terms which satisfy human thought.

First Tempter

A former friend of both Becket and the king, the first "tempter" encourages Becket to remember the "good old days" before his exile, when there was no political strife yet with Henry II. Essentially, the first tempter wants Becket to fix his broken relationship with King Henry II and renew their former friendship. Becket doesn't buy it, saying that what's past is in the past, and the future cannot be guaranteed—implying that he feels unable to unhesitatingly commit to restoring his past friendships, even though he remembers them with fondness. Disappointed with Becket, the first tempter departs saying that he will leave Becket to the "pleasures of [his] higher vices," slightly condescending to Becket's devotion to a higher, spiritual order. The tempter adds that, if Becket decides to change his mind, he'll be waiting to resume their friendship—that he'll remember Becket "at kissing-time below the stairs."

Second Tempter

The second tempter wants Becket to take up the role of Chancellor again (Becket left that position before his exile) and abandon his fanatical investment in religion and the Church. He says that those who solely give love to God, and God alone—like Becket—experience only sadness. This tempter therefore represents the exact opposite of the fourth tempter, who encourages Becket to shun the political world (of which the Chancellor is a part) and invest himself fully in his spiritual path, in martyrdom. Becket rejects the second tempter's proposal, and calls the Chancellorship a "punier power" compared to his spiritual command as Archbishop.

Third Tempter

The third tempter wants Becket to use his power as Archbishop to help him form a coalition of barons and country-lords that will fight to overthrow the "tyrannous jurisdiction" of King Henry II. This tempter sides with Becket's dissent from the crown, and claims that there's no hope for Becket to reconcile with the king. Further, Becket's authority as the Archbishop—if he'd side with the third tempter—would be a great help to this tempter's political cause. Like all the other tempters, the third one's proposal is rejected by Becket; he leaves saying that, in the future, he hopes the king will show Becket the respect the Archbishop deserves.

Fourth Tempter

The fourth tempter encourages Becket to pursue martyrdom, arguing that he should shun the worldly, political order of the king and focus on achieving sainthood. Though Becket doesn't reject the idea of martyrdom, he finds fault with this tempter's reasons for proposing it. The fourth tempter thinks Becket should become a martyr because of the glory and renown associated with the sainthood he'd achieve; he appeals to Becket's emotions and desires, but not to any higher spiritual principle, such as fate or God's plan. While this tempter is the closest to getting at the core of Becket's outlook on the relationship between politics and religion, and manipulating that outlook, he nonetheless disgusts Becket with his forwardness and appeals to secular notions of glory and fame. Perhaps this tempter reveals to Becket the dangers of his own selfishness and human longing for fame; it's as if the fourth tempter gets too close for comfort by revealing Becket's real, personal motivations for martyrdom. In a way, then, this tempter is responsible for initiating Becket's spiritual evolution towards becoming an instrument of God's will—of fate—and not a puppet of his own human greed.

First Knight (Reginald Fitz Urse)

Reginald Fitz Urse, designated as the first knight and described by the third knight as

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the leader of the group of four, introduces the other three knights when they turn to the audience to defend their decision to murder Becket. Urse does not himself offer an argument in defense of Becket's execution, claiming that he's unqualified as an orator, since he's a "man of action," not of words. Urse appeals to the fact that the audience is composed of Englanders, saying that Englishmen "believe in fair play: and when you see one man being set upon by four, then your sympathies are all with the under dog." He also associates critical thinking and rationality with the audience, claiming that, as Englishmen, they will need to hear both sides of the case (they've already witnessed Becket's reasons for martyrdom, so now they must hear the knights' justification for murder) in order to arrive at a judgment of who's morally in the right.

Second Knight (William de Traci)

William de Traci, designated as the second knight, is the first of the four knights to offer an "argument" in defense of their murder of Becket. Perhaps more accurately, de Traci offers an argument in defense of the knights' own moral integrity in order to prevent them from being perceived as villains by the audience. De Traci says that the knights had nothing to gain from Becket's murder—they're "not getting a penny out of this," and the act will bring them no benefits: they'll likely be forced to spend the remainder of their lives outside of England, exiled. De Traci ends his speech by underscoring the knights' totally disinterested involvement in the murder. They did not want to kill Becket—they just wanted him to comply with the orders of the king.

Third Knight (Hugh de Morville)

Hugh de Morville, designated as the third knight, begins his speech by echoing Reginald Fitz Urse's comments about the tendencies of English people to be fair and logical in their thinking, refraining from making judgments sourced solely in their emotions. He argues that Becket basically conned the king by advocating for all the king's policies and agreeing to take on the office of Chancellor in addition to the role of Archbishop, but then—suddenly, upon being appointed to it—resigning from the Chancellorship. Morville therefore offers not just an argument in defense of his own dignity and morality—like de Traci—but a well-argued, reasoned indictment of Becket's political actions. He gives the most convincing argument from the perspective of the political dimension of the play (versus the spiritual) that Becket was, indeed, a traitor to the king.

Fourth Knight (Richard Brito)

Richard Brito, designated as the fourth knight, begins his speech by saying that he has nothing to add to the previous speakers' "particular lines of argument." He instead reframes the way Becket's murder has been framed before him (as an execution by the knights) by asking who, indeed, should be held responsible for killing the Archbishop. By asking this question, Brito aims to get the audience to see that Becket was himself fully responsible for his death. Brito describes Becket as suicidal and insane, reminding the audience that Becket himself insisted, against the priests, that the doors to the Church be opened and his executors, the knights, be allowed to enter. Though Brito paints Becket in such a negative light, he ends his speech saying that thinking of Becket's death as the result of his "Unsound Mind" is the "only charitable verdict" which the audience could give to a man who, according to Brito, had done a great deal of good for Canterbury in the past—before his spiritual rebellion against the king.

King Henry II

Though King Henry II never makes a physical appearance in the play, his presence certainly asserts itself in the characters who do. Challenged by Becket's spiritual extremism, Henry

II's political power represents the secular, even anti-religious dimension in the play. For Henry II, Becket and the Pope's condemnation of his rule is merely a rebellious attempt to discount and restrict his power—he does not understand or accept that Becket's disagreements with his political policies could be sourced in a power higher and more powerful than his own office. Henry II does not comprehend the Church's criticisms of his power as potential insights into how he can achieve a closer relationship to God, or how he could reframe his political role to better reflect God's will and power. Ultimately unwilling to concede to the demands of the Church, Henry II (likely, though it's never explicitly said or confirmed in the play) sends the four knights to coerce Becket into political compliance with his rule. But, shunning the crown in favor of a higher power, Becket doesn't comply. It's ultimately uncertain whether T.S. Eliot intends Becket's murder to be read as a direct order of the king, or a decision made by the knights themselves.

Murder in the Cathedral Themes

Martyrdom

One of the most explicit philosophies Eliot explores is what constitutes a true Christian martyr. As Thomas explains in his Interlude sermon, a martyr is not merely one who dies for God, but rather one who allows himself to be "the instrument of God" (199). He argues that a martyr is not made by accident, but rather by God's will. Thomas's journey in Part I is marked by his acceptance that he wants to seek martyrdom for the sake of his pride and worldly glory, and his subsequent willingness to rid himself of those desires and to die solely for God's cause. Further, the play explores martyrdom in terms of how it impacts the true believers who come afterward. The chorus must come to terms with the fact that a martyr's death saddles them with a burden to validate the sacrifice through their own lives. In many ways, a true martyr must die as Christ did – because God wills it – and those Christians who follow are expected to subsume their own lives in service of God for that reason.

Time

The question of time runs throughout the entire play and informs the theology behind Thomas's recognition of his role as a martyr. Time is presented as an earthly, human concern in the play. Time leads humans to think of events in terms of cause and effect, and to therefore make decisions on the basis of efficiency and outcome. However, to consider anything from this perspective allows a person to justify his actions, so that the distinction between good and evil is blurred. Thomas considers that his decision – to willingly submit himself to be an instrument of God's will – is a decision made outside of time. It is not made for its effect, and in fact cannot be understood by any human, since no human can understand God. Thomas suggests that from God's perspective, the limitations of time do not apply. The play proposes that humans are tormented by the difficulties and complications that time puts upon us, whereas ridding ourselves of our personalities in order to be God's instruments allows us to transcend those limitations.

"The wheel"

"The wheel" was a common image in medieval theology and helps us to understand the ideas at work in [Murder in the Cathedral]. Associated primarily with the medieval thinker Boethius, the wheel image posits that God sits at the center of a large wheel, and hence understands the system behind its rotations. Humans, who live at various places along the edge of the wheel, are confounded by those rotations and cannot glimpse the order behind them. Thus, serenity comes in accepting that we can never understand the workings of the universe and should instead endeavor to transcend our humanity so as to deserve God's protection after death.

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Thomas enters the play prepared to seek martyrdom for earthly reasons, but learns that he must simply submit himself to God's control. In effect, he has to rid himself of his earthly ambitions because they are necessarily flawed. Those ambitions cannot possibly take the universe into account. One of the lessons Thomas learns – and which he teaches the Chorus through his example – is that our lives of suffering and difficulty are illusions that we overvalue. We can never understand them, and so we should not dwell on them. Instead, we should focus on pleasing God, in faith that he knows why and how the wheel turns, and will reward us for our faith in a way we could never reward ourselves because of our limited perspectives.

Politics

Eliot aimed to craft a play built around ritual rather than around human psychology, and yet the story of Thomas Becket is too heavily political to support a solely theological framework. Politics are present throughout the play, from the exposition given by the priests before Becket arrives to the arguments the knights make to Thomas and directly to the audience. To some extent, these political elements are there to round out the story, to give an informed audience its expected details. However, the political arguments also represent the aspect of Thomas's personality that he must overcome in order to be worthy of true martyrdom. By acknowledging Thomas's political nature and past, Eliot endows him with a palpable quality that the audience will see him overcome. He wishes to be God's instrument, and so refuses to concern himself with political questions. Interestingly, Thomas cannot help himself from engaging in some political banter with the knights in Part II, which suggests that no person can ever fully rid himself of his personality; he can only endeavor to do so up to the limits of his humanity.

In terms of the chorus, the complicated politics stand in stark contrast to the reality of their everyday lives. They are interested in political issues only insofar as they complicate the suffering of their daily toil. By emphasizing the chorus so strongly in the midst of such a political story, Eliot implicitly suggests that the nuances of politics are less valuable and spiritual than the community of Christians who attempt to please God through their simple, everyday lives.

Suffering

"Suffering" in the play has two meanings. In its most common usage, suffering means "to undergo pain or distress." The horrific imagery of the chorus's speeches, as well as the detail they give about their daily toil, stresses how much suffering they undergo. Because of this suffering, they wish mostly be left alone. Eliot's ultimate message, of course, is that for true spiritual fulfillment, we must not simply retreat into our earthly suffering, but rather overcome it and devote ourselves to serving as God's instruments. However, the extent to which he presents extreme suffering as a fact of life certainly informs the play's messages.

"Suffering" is also manifest through the dichotomy Thomas presents between "action" and "suffering." In this context, suffering is best defined in terms of patience and waiting. From this definition, the theme is less about overcoming physical distress and more about remaining patient in the face of worldly events that we cannot understand. Thomas suggests that some people act to change their fates, while some simply wait to see what happens. His perfect middle road is an active patience, an active choice to be submissive before God's will.

Opposites

In a variety of ways, Eliot explores the theme of opposites: elements that contain a

contradiction within them. The most explicit manifestation of the theme is the mystery of Christ's death, which is paralleled in the death of martyrs. As Thomas explains in his Interlude sermon, Christians both celebrate and mourn these deaths. They mourn the wicked world that makes those deaths necessary, while celebrating the bravery and glory of the individuals who make the sacrifice. Likewise, there is a contradiction in what the chorus is encouraged to accept in the play. They are promised a greater, more fulfilling existence if they accept their burden in validating the sacrifices of martyrs, but this burden also makes their lives more difficult. They cannot simply retire into their suffering, but must more directly confront the limitations and difficulties of the physical world. Finally, Eliot explores opposites through the chorus's speeches, especially in Part II, in which they continually posit elements that are both positive and negative at once.

Responsibility

There are two emotional journeys in the play: that of Thomas and that of the chorus. Both of these journey's entail accepting responsibility for spiritual transcendence. Thomas must accept that his responsibility is greater than that which he owes to himself. He enters the play prepared for martyrdom, but for the wrong reason: to bolster his own pride and reputation. His journey in Part I entails his realization that he must die as God's instrument, so as not to waste the death. His responsibility to his church means he must rid himself of personality and be submissive to God.

However, the chorus has a much more complex obligation. As they note many times, they are powerless to impact their world. Instead, they merely hope for minimal interference into their already-difficult lives of toil and struggle. What they prefer at the beginning of the play is an existence of "living and partly living," a miserable but predictable life in which they are not forced to take responsibility for anything other than their immediate survival. They even hope Thomas will not return, since that will potentially make their lives more difficult by forcing them to become more involved. They prefer to be complacent. Thomas poses a situation where they have a share of the "eternal burden," where a martyrdom is meaningless without an audience or congregation to sanctify it and validate it through their lives. The chorus is frightened of the potential for being engaged and responsible, since a life of passion requires them to more directly confront the iniquity of the world. Their journey in the play is learning that their spiritual fulfilment will be greater even if their physical challenges intensify, and so they accept their responsibility and ask God and Thomas to help them.

4.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Explain how the play expresses and explores the conflict between "action" and "suffering."**
2. **What is the effect of double-casting the Tempters and the Knights?**
3. **Explain the journey of the Chorus throughout the play.**
4. **In what ways is the play pessimistic? In what ways is it optimistic?**
5. **In what ways is the play indebted to its history? In what ways is it unconcerned with its history?**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Explain Eliot's use of Greek tragedy in shaping his play. How does an understanding of tragedy help to inform the play's message?**

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2. **Explain Eliot's use of the liturgy in shaping his play. How does the play parallel the experience of a mass?**
3. **Explain how the murder functions as a ritual in the play. How does it integrate community?**
4. **Analyze the priests in the play. What do they add to the story and meaning?**
5. **Can one call Eliot's depiction of Thomas hagiography?**

4.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **In what year does Murder in the Cathedral take place?**
   a. 1170.
   b. 1077.
   c. 1710.
   d. 1070.

2. **In Part One, where does the action of the play take place?**
   a. The Cathedral.
   b. The Archbishop's Hall.
   c. The King's palace.
   d. Outside the gates of the Cathedral.

3. **In what city of England does the story take place?**
   a. Canterbury.
   b. York.
   c. London.
   d. Cambridge.

4. **What character(s) opens the play with the first monologue?**
   a. The Priests.
   b. The Messenger.
   c. The Chorus.
   d. Thomas Becket.

5. **According to the information in the opening monologue, how many years have passed since the Archbishop has left the city?**
   a. Twelve.
   b. Twenty.
   c. Seven.
   d. Five.

6. **What does the Chorus claim is their purpose in the action of the play?**
   a. To witness the events and take no action.
   b. To serve the Priests of the Cathedral.
   c. To prevent a murder.
   d. To warn Thomas Becket.

7. **What group of people does the Chorus consist of?**
   a. The Poor of Canterbury.
   b. The Ghosts of Canterbury.

c. The Hand of God.
d. The Women of Canturbury.

8. When was Eliot born?

a. 1880.
b. 1888.
c. 1875.
d. 1898.

9. On which historical character is The Murder in the Cathedral based?

a. Henry II.
b. Thomas Beckett.
c. Pope Alexander.
d. Charles I.

10. How many acts are in Murder in the Cathedral?

a. One.
b. Two.
c. Three.
d. Four.

♦♦♦♦♦

UNIT V

J. OSBORNE

STRUCTURE

NOTES

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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

- Know about the author J. Osborne the British playwriter.
- Know about his writing "look back in anger".

5.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

British playwright, born in London, the son of a commercial artist; he was educated at Belmont School, Devon. The first volume of his autobiography, A Better Class of Person (1981), describes his unhappy childhood and his years as an actor in provincial repertory, during which he wrote Epitaph for George Dillon in collaboration with Anthony Creighton. This study of alienation and ennui was not, however, performed until 1958, by which time its author's name had been made by a vastly more eloquent and influential play, Look Back in Anger (1956). The late 1950s and early 1960s proved to be Osborne's most fruitful period, producing as they did The Entertainer (1957), which brought Laurence Olivier from the classical to the contemporary stage as Archie Rice, a shoddy survivor of the great days of music hall; Luther (1961), based on the life of (as Osborne saw him) a troubled yet inspiriting rebel in conflict with his father, his God, his own inadequacies, and a decadent Church and world; Inadmissible Evidence (1964); and A Patriot for Me (1965), about the rise and fall of an officer with the misfortune to be both bourgeois and homosexual in the Austro-Hungarian military élite. All Osborne's work was highly critical of those aspects of contemporary society he thought damaging to the emotionally alive individual. Often, he selected a single character to give what he called 'lessons in feeling' in opposition to or in conflict with apathy, triviality, stupidity, cupidity, or other manifestations of an uncaring world. Osborne's later work, starting with Time Present (1968) and The Hotel in Amsterdam (1968), was, however, more sweeping in its vituperation and perhaps less discriminating in its choice of targets. In West of Suez (1971), A Sense of Detachment (1972), and Watch It Come Down (1976), it also became increasingly nostalgic for civilized decencies he believed had been lost in 'the whole, hideous, headlong rush into the 20th century'. Though the divide between the two was never as absolute as it might at first seem, the archetypal Angry Young Man became a somewhat more conservative older one: a change explicit in Osborne's Deja Vu (1992), which showed Jimmy Porter, the protagonist of Look Back in Anger, in rancorous late middle age, denouncing contemporary liberalism as forthrightly as he had earlier attacked the old-fashioned, reactionary, and out-of-date.

5.3 LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Look Back in Anger Summary

Look Back in Anger begins in the attic flat apartment of Jimmy Porter and Alison Porter. The setting is mid-1950's small town England. Jimmy and Alison share their apartment with Cliff Lewis, a young working-class man who is best friends with Jimmy. Cliff and Jimmy both come from a working-class background, though Jimmy has had more education than Cliff. They are in business together running a sweet-stall. Alison comes from a more prominent family and it is clear from the beginning that Jimmy resents this fact.

J. OSBORNE

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The first act opens on a Sunday in April. Jimmy and Cliff are reading the Sunday papers while Alison is ironing in a corner of the room. Jimmy is a hot-tempered young man and he begins to try and provoke both Cliff and Alison. He is antagonistic towards Cliff's working-class background and makes fun of him for his low intelligence. Cliff is good natured and takes the antagonism. Jimmy attempts to provoke his wife, Alison, by making fun of her family and her well-heeled life before she married him. Jimmy also seems to display a nostalgia for England's powerful past. He notes that the world has entered a "dreary" American age, a fact he begrudgingly accepts. Alison tires of Jimmy's rants and begs for peace. This makes Jimmy more fevered in his insults. Cliff attempts to keep peace between the two and this leads to a playful scuffle between the two. Their wrestling ends up running into Alison, causing her to fall down. Jimmy is sorry for the incident, but Alison makes him leave the room.

After Jimmy leaves, Alison confides to Cliff that she is pregnant with Jimmy's child, though she has not yet told Jimmy. Cliff advises her to tell him, but when Cliff goes out and Jimmy re-enters the room, the two instead fall into an intimate game. Jimmy impersonates a stuffed bear and Alison impersonates a toy squirrel. Cliff returns to tell Alison that her old friend, Helena Charles, has called her on the phone. Alison leaves to take the call and returns with the news that Helena is coming to stay for a visit. Jimmy does not like Helena and goes into a rage in which he wishes that Alison would suffer in order to know what it means to be a real person. He curses her and wishes that she could have a child only to watch it die.

Two weeks later, Helena has arrived and Alison discusses her relationship with Jimmy. She tells of how they met and how, in their younger days, they used to crash parties with their friend Hugh Tanner. Jimmy maintains an affection for Hugh's mother, though his relationship with Hugh was strained when Hugh left to travel the world and Jimmy stayed to be with Alison. Jimmy seems to regret that he could not leave, but he is also angry at Hugh for abandoning his mother. Helena inquires about Alison's affectionate relationship with Cliff and Alison tells her that they are strictly friends.

Cliff and Jimmy return to the flat and Helena tells them that she and Alison are leaving for church. Jimmy goes into an anti-religious rant and ends up insulting Alison's family once again. Helena becomes angry and Jimmy dares her to slap him on the face, warning her that he will slap her back. He tells her of how he watched his father die as a young man. His father had been injured fighting in the Spanish Civil War and had returned to England only to die shortly after. Alison and Helena begin to leave for church and Jimmy feels betrayed by his wife.

A phone call comes in for Jimmy and he leaves the room. Helena tells Alison that she has called Alison's father to come get her and take her away from this abusive home. Alison relents and says that she will go when her father picks her up the next day. When Jimmy returns, he tells Alison that Mrs. Tanner, Hugh's mother, has become sick and is going to die. Jimmy decides to visit her and he demands that Alison make a choice of whether to go with Helena or with him. Alison picks up her things and leaves for church and Jimmy collapses on the bed, heartbroken by his wife's decision.

The next evening Alison is packing and talking with her father, Colonel Redfern. The Colonel is a soft-spoken man who realizes that he does not quite understand the love that exists between Jimmy and Alison. He admits that the actions of him and his wife are partly to blame for their split. The Colonel was an officer in the British military and served in India and he is nostalgic for his time there. He considers his service to be some of the best years of his life. Alison observes that her father is hurt because the present is not the past

and that Jimmy is hurt because he feels the present is only the past. Alison begins to pack her toy squirrel, but then she decides not to do so.

Helena and Cliff soon enter the scene. Alison leaves a letter for Jimmy explaining why she has left and she gives it to Cliff. After Alison leaves, Cliff becomes angry and gives the letter to Helena, blaming her for the situation. Jimmy returns, bewildered that he was almost hit by Colonel Redfern's car and that Cliff pretended not to see him when he was walking by on the street. He reads Alison's letter and becomes very angry. Helena tells him that Alison is pregnant, but Jimmy tells her that he does not care. He insults Helena and she slaps him, then passionately kisses him.

Several months pass and the third act opens with Jimmy and Cliff once again reading the Sunday papers while Helena stands in the corner ironing. Jimmy and Cliff still engage in their angry banter and Helena's religious tendencies have taken the brunt of Jimmy's punishment. Jimmy and Cliff perform scenes from musicals and comedy shows but when Helena leaves, Cliff notes that things do not feel the same with her here. Cliff then tells Jimmy that he wants to move out of the apartment. Jimmy takes the news calmly and tells him that he has been a loyal friend and is worth more than any woman. When Helena returns, the three plan to go out. Alison suddenly enters.

Alison and Helena talk while Jimmy leaves the room. He begins to loudly play his trumpet. Alison has lost her baby and looks sick. Helena tells Alison that she should be angry with her for what she has done, but Alison is only grieved by the loss of her baby. Helena is driven to distraction by Jimmy's trumpet playing and demands that he come into the room. When he comes back in, he laments the fact that Alison has lost the baby but shrugs it off. Helena then tells Jimmy and Alison that her sense of morality -- right and wrong -- has not diminished and that she knows she must leave. Alison attempts to persuade her to stay, telling her that Jimmy will be alone if she leaves.

When Helena leaves, Jimmy attempts to once again become angry but Alison tells him that she has now gone through the emotional and physical suffering that he has always wanted her to feel. He realizes that she has suffered greatly, has become like him, and becomes softer and more tender towards her. The play ends with Jimmy and Alison embracing, once again playing their game of bear and squirrel.

Look Back in Anger Character List

Jimmy Porter

Jimmy Porter is the play's main character. He is the "Angry Young Man" who expresses his frustration for the lack of feelings in his placid domestic life. Jimmy can be understood as both a hero for his unfiltered expressions of emotion and frustration in a culture that propagated unemotional resignation. He can also be considered a villain for the ways in which his anger proves to be destructive to those in his life.

Cliff Lewis

Cliff is a friend to both Jimmy and Alison. Cliff lives with them in their attic apartment. He is a working-class Welsh man and Jimmy makes sure to often point out that he is "common" and uneducated. Cliff believes this is the reason that Jimmy keeps him as a friend. He is quite fond of Alison and they have a strange physically affectionate relationship throughout the play.

Alison Porter

Alison Porter is Jimmy's wife. She comes from Britain's upper class, but married into Jimmy's working-class lifestyle. The audience learns in the first act that she is pregnant

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with Jimmy's child. Jimmy's destructive anger causes her great strain and she eventually leaves him. Her child miscarries and she comes back to Jimmy to show him that she has undergone great suffering.

Helena Charles

Helena Charles is Alison's best friend. She lives with them in their apartment while visiting for work. Helena is from an upper-class family. She is responsible for getting Alison to leave Jimmy. She and Jimmy then begin an affair. Her sense of morality leads her to leave. She can be considered the play's moral compass.

Colonel Redfern

Colonel Redfern is Alison's father. He represents Britain's great Edwardian past. He was a military leader in India for many years before returning with his family to England. He is critical of Jimmy and Alison's relationship, but accepts that he is to blame for many of their problems because of his meddling in their affairs.

Character Analysis

Jimmy Porter

Jimmy is the "angry young man" of the play, usually found spouting tirades against the complacency of the British upper classes, and especially against his wife Alison and then his lover Helena. Born working class but highly educated, like his friend and roommate Cliff, but has an ambivalent relationship with his educated status, seeing himself mostly as a working-class man and yet frustrated that his education can do nothing to affect his class status. "He is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty." Jimmy "alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike," and his "blistering honesty, or apparent honesty…makes few friends." Jimmy is a frustrated character, railing against his feelings of alienation and uselessness in post-war England.

Alison Porter

A woman from an upper-class background, and Jimmy's wife. She is drawn to Jimmy's energy, but also exhausted by their constant fighting. Jimmy accuses her of being too complacent and lacking "enthusiasm," and her own father, Colonel Redfern, agrees that she has a tendency towards too much neutrality. She feels stuck between her upper-class upbringing and the working-class world of her husband. Alison eventually leaves Jimmy, but returns to him later in the play after she loses their child to a miscarriage. This suffering changes her, and causes her to commit more fully to the intense emotion inherent in Jimmy's world.

Cliff Lewis

A kind man of working-class background, and a good friend and roommate to both Jimmy and Alison. He lives with the couple, and helps to keep them together. Cliff is "easy and relaxed, almost to lethargy, with the rather sad, natural intelligence of the self-taught." He and Alison have an affectionate relationship that borders on a sexual one, but both of them are content with comfortable fondness rather than burning passion. Cliff eventually decides to leave to pursue his own life, rather than staying in Jimmy's apartment.

Helena Charles

Alison's upper-class friend, who comes to stay with the couple while acting in a play, and ends up having an affair with Jimmy after Alison leaves him. She is described as having a "sense of matriarchal authority" that "makes most men who meet her anxious." Helena has a strong code of middle-class morals that eventually force her to leave Jimmy.

Colonel Redfern

Alison's father, a former colonel in the British army stationed in the English colony of India (back before 1947, when India still was a colony of England). He is "gentle" and "kindly," but also "brought up to command respect." After leaving his post in India, "he is often slightly withdrawn and uneasy" because he lives "in a world where his authority has lately become less and less unquestionable." Jimmy says that the Colonel is stuck in a past version of England, and the Colonel himself agrees with this. When the Colonel comes to help Alison pack to leave Jimmy, he shows himself to be self-aware and incisive, commenting that both he and Alison like to stay neutral and avoid showing emotion, to their detriment.

Hugh Tanner

Jimmy's friend, who took Alison and Jimmy into his apartment in the first months of their marriage. He was Jimmy's partner when they went on "raids" against Alison's upper-class friends at fancy parties, and Jimmy saw him as a co-conspirator in the class struggle. Then Hugh decided to leave for China to write a novel, and Jimmy felt betrayed. This reveals Jimmy's deep traditional values (he was angry that Hugh abandoned his mother, Mrs. Tanner) and his sense of patriotism.

Mrs. Tanner

The mother of Hugh Tanner, called "Hugh's mum" by Jimmy, she helped set Jimmy up with his sweet stall. Jimmy loves her, and Alison thinks this is just because she is lower class and "ignorant." In the middle of the play, Jimmy learns that Hugh's mum has had a stroke, and Jimmy goes to visit her in the hospital. In one of his few expressions of true vulnerability, he asks Alison to come with him. She refuses, and leaves him shortly thereafter. Jimmy is offended that Alison seems to see Hugh's mum only in terms of her class, and not as a person. He thinks that society in general ignores the humanity of working-class people, and that Alison's and other's treatment of Hugh's mum is a prime example.

Look Back in Anger Themes

The Angry Young Man

Osborne's play was the first to explore the theme of the "Angry Young Man." This term describes a generation of post-World War II artists and working-class men who generally ascribed to leftist, sometimes anarchist, politics and social views. According to cultural critics, these young men were not a part of any organized movement but were, instead, individuals angry at a post-Victorian Britain that refused to acknowledge their social and class alienation.

Jimmy Porter is often considered to be literature's seminal example of the angry young man. Jimmy is angry at the social and political structures that he believes has kept him from achieving his dreams and aspirations. He directs this anger towards his friends and, most notably, his wife Alison.

The Kitchen Sink Drama

Kitchen Sink drama is a term used to denote plays that rely on realism to explore domestic social relations. Realism, in British theater, was first experimented with in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by such playwrights as George Bernard Shaw. This genre attempted to capture the lives of the British upper class in a way that realistically reflected the ordinary drama of ruling class British society.

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According to many critics, by the mid-twentieth century the genre of realism had become tired and unimaginative. Osborne's play returned imagination to the Realist genre by capturing the anger and immediacy of post-war youth culture and the alienation that resulted in the British working classes. Look Back in Anger was able to comment on a range of domestic social dilemmas in this time period. Most importantly, it was able to capture, through the character of Jimmy Porter, the anger of this generation that festered just below the surface of elite British culture.

Loss of Childhood

A theme that impacts the characters of Jimmy and Alison Porter is the idea of a lost childhood. Osborne uses specific examples -- the death of Jimmy's father when Jimmy was only ten, and how he was forced to watch the physical and mental demise of the man -- to demonstrate the way in which Jimmy is forced to deal with suffering from an early age. Alison's loss of childhood is best seen in the way that she was forced to grow up too fast by marrying Jimmy. Her youth is wasted in the anger and abuse that her husband levels upon her.

Osborne suggests that a generation of British youth has experienced this same loss of childhood innocence. Osborne uses the examples of World War, the development of the atomic bomb, and the decline of the British Empire to show how an entire culture has lost the innocence that other generations were able to maintain.

Real Life

In the play, Jimmy Porter is consumed with the desire to live a more real and full life. He compares this burning desire to the empty actions and attitudes of others. At first, he generalizes this emptiness by criticizing the lax writing and opinions of those in the newspapers. He then turns his angry gaze to those around him and close to him, Alison, Helena, and Cliff.

Osborne's argument in the play for a real life is one in which men are allowed to feel a full range of emotions. The most real of these emotions is anger and Jimmy believes that this anger is his way of truly living. This idea was unique in British theater during the play's original run. Osborne argued in essays and criticisms that, until his play, British theater had subsumed the emotions of characters rendering them less realistic. Jimmy's desire for a real life is an attempt to restore raw emotion to the theater.

Sloth in British Culture

Jimmy Porter compares his quest for a more vibrant and emotional life to the slothfulness of the world around him. It is important to note that Jimmy does not see the world around him as dead, but merely asleep in some fundamental way. This is a fine line that Osborne walks throughout the play. Jimmy never argues that there is a nihilism within British culture. Instead, he sees a kind of slothfulness of character. His anger is an attempt to awaken those around him from this cultural sleep.

This slothfulness of emotion is best seen in the relationship between Alison and Cliff. Alison describes her relationship with Cliff as "comfortable." They are physically and emotionally affectionate with each other, but neither seems to want to take their passion to another level of intimacy. In this way, their relationship is lazy. They cannot awaken enough passion to consummate their affair. Jimmy seems to subconsciously understand this, which is the reason he is not jealous of their affection towards one another.

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The Rise and Fall of the British Empire

The character of Colonel Redfern, Alison's father, represents the decline of and nostalgia for the British Empire. The Colonel had been stationed for many years in India, a symbol of Britain's imperial reach into the world. The Edwardian age which corresponded to Britain's height of power, had been the happiest of his life. His nostalgia is representative of the denial that Osborne sees in the psyche of the British people. The world has moved on into an American age, he argues, and the people of the nation cannot understand why they are no longer the world's greatest power.

Masculinity in Art

Osborne has been accused by critics of misogynistic views in his plays. Many point to Look Back in Anger as the chief example. These critics accuse Osborne of glorifying young male anger and cruelty towards women and homosexuals. This is seen in the play in specific examples in which Jimmy Porter emotionally distresses Alison, his wife, and delivers a grisly monologue in which he wishes for Alison's mother's death.

Osborne, however, asserts that he is attempting to restore a vision of true masculinity into a twentieth century culture that he sees as becoming increasingly feminized. This feminization is seen in the way that British culture shows an "indifference to anything but immediate, personal suffering." This causes a deadness within which Jimmy's visceral anger and masculine emotion is a retaliation against.

5.4 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **What themes of the play are represented by Osborne's meticulous description of the Porter's attic apartment?**
2. **What does Jimmy and Alison's playful game of bear and squirrel represent?**
3. **Why or why not is Helena Charles the moral compass of the play?**
4. **Though Jimmy is antagonistic towards those that reminisce for England's past, he also has a strong sense of nostalgia for previous ages. Why do you think this is the case?**
5. **What imagery does Osborne use to explore the ideas of modern chivalry?**

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **Do you believe that Osborne is misogynistic in the play?**
2. **What is the purpose of Cliff's character in the play?**
3. **Why does Jimmy see suffering as a crucial event for living a "real" life?**
4. **Discuss Osborne's view of religion in the play?**
5. **As Alison prepares to leave, she tells her father that, "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it." What does Alison mean by this?**

5.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **In what month does the play's first act take place?**
   a. December
   b. May
   c. February
   d. April

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2. In what kind of room do the Porter's live?

a. An Empty Room
b. An Attic
c. A Storage Room
d. A Basement

3. Which stuffed animal does not occupy the Porter's residence?

a. Squirrel
b. Frog
c. Bear
d. Doll

4. What is the best word to describe the furniture in the Porter's residence?

a. Shabby
b. Tidy
c. Leather
d. Pristine

5. How old is Jimmy Porter?

a. 20
b. 35
c. 40
d. 25

6. About how old is Cliff?

a. 45
b. 55
c. 35
d. 25

7. Which word does Osborne use to describe Cliff?

a. Active
b. Lethargic
c. Pusillanimous
d. Vivacious

8. Which character is described as demanding other people's love?

a. Alison
b. Helena
c. Jimmy
d. Cliff

9. In the first Act, what domestic activity is Alison performing?

a. Washing Dishes
b. Folding Laundry
c. Painting
d. Ironing

10. What are Cliff and Jimmy doing at the beginning of the play?

a. Reading books
b. Playing instruments
c. Playing chess
d. Reading papers

♦♦♦♦♦

ANSWER KEY

UNIT I

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

UNIT II

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

UNIT III

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

UNIT IV

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

UNIT V

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

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    a) Beckett's Endgame (1957) features a more antagonistic pair of men in an even drearier
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43. b) Joseph Heller's Catch22 (1961) is a famous dark comedy in novel form that deals with the absurdity of the military in World War II.
44. c) Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966) is often seen as a play that consciously imitates Beckett's Waiting for Godot.
45. d) Eugene lonesco's The Bald Soprano (1950), The Lesson (1951), and The Chairs (1952) all epitomize the Theatre of the Absurd and provide interesting similarities and contrasts with Beckett's Waiting for Godot.

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