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قسم الآداب واللغة الانجليزية

The Booklet is designed for L2

INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY TEXT

A GUIDE TO SECOND YEAR STUDENTS

Prepared by:
Dr Bachir SAHED

Academic Year: 2023-2024

Preface

Welcome to “Introduction to Literary Text - A Guide to Second Year Students,” a booklet specially designed to accompany you on an enriching journey into the captivating world of literature. As you embark on this adventure, you will be equipped with the essential tools to analyze literary works and connect them to their context, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of these masterpieces.

Literature has always been a beacon of human expression, a repository of diverse perspectives, and a reflection of the societies we inhabit. Whether you are just beginning to explore literary texts or have already encountered some fascinating pieces, this guide will serve as your faithful companion, unveiling the hidden treasures that lie within the written word.

The primary aim of this booklet is to empower you, as literary text students, to confidently engage with literary works. Delving into literature in a foreign language may present its own set of challenges, but it is also an opportunity for immense growth. By delving into the pages of timeless classics and contemporary gems, you will not only enhance your linguistic proficiency but also broaden your horizons as a global citizen, connecting with different cultures and experiences.

In this booklet, you will discover a comprehensive approach to analyzing literary texts. It guides you through the fundamental elements of literature, such as plot, character, setting, theme, and literary devices, helping you unravel the intricate layers of meaning woven into each story, novel, poem, play… As you become more adept at textual analysis, you will find yourself uncovering new dimensions within these narratives, gaining insights that will resonate with your own life and experiences.

Moreover, literature does not exist in a vacuum but is deeply rooted in historical, social, and cultural contexts. Hence, the booklet devotes a significant portion of this guide to contextual analysis, encouraging you to explore how these texts relate to the time and place in which they were created. By contextualizing literary works, you will gain a richer understanding of the author's intentions, the prevailing ideologies, and the impact these works had on their contemporary audiences.

Throughout this journey, it is important to actively interact with the text. Literature is not meant to be a passive experience; rather, it invites you to immerse yourself in its world, question its nuances, and challenge your own perspectives. You are encouraged you to keep a reading journal, engage in discussions, and explore alternative interpretations. By doing so, you will refine your analytical skills and develop your unique voice as a thoughtful interpreter of literature.

As you move forward, remember that every literary text is a doorway to endless possibilities. The magic of literature lies in its ability to transport humans across time and space, offering solace, inspiration, and profound understanding. This guide aims to ignite that magic within you, as you navigate the labyrinth of words and ideas.

Hopefully, “Introduction to Literary Text - A Guide to Second Year Students” will become an invaluable companion on your literary expedition, accompanying you through the twists and turns of literary texts. Embrace the beauty of language, the power of narrative, and the universality of human emotions that resonate through these works.

May this journey kindle a lifelong love affair with literature and, in doing so, expand your appreciation for the myriad perspectives that make our world endlessly fascinating.

Dr Bachir SAHED

Objectives of the Booklet

Introduction to Literary Text - A Guide for Second Year Students

The primary objective of the booklet "Introduction to Literary Text: A Guide for L2 Students" is to equip second-year LMD students of English, specifically enrolled in the Literary Text module, with the necessary tools and insights to proficiently analyse and comprehend a diverse range of literary works from different periods of British literature. The booklet aims to foster a deep understanding of the texts, enabling students to effectively connect them with their historical, cultural, and societal contexts.

The specific objectives of the booklet are as follows:

Comprehensive Analysis: The booklet aims to empower students to engage in thorough textual analysis. By delving into the chosen literary works, students will be able to identify and interpret various literary elements, including themes, symbolism, imagery, characterization, and narrative techniques. This skill set will enable them to appreciate the intricate layers of meaning within the texts.

Contextual Exploration: Through the study of the selected texts, students will be able to contextualize literary works within their respective historical and cultural backgrounds. They will be able to recognize how societal norms, values, and ideologies of the time influence the creation and interpretation of literary works.

Interdisciplinary Connections: The booklet encourages students to make connections between literature and other disciplines, such as history, philosophy, and psychology. By

examining how literature reflects and responds to broader intellectual and cultural trends, students will gain a more holistic understanding of the texts.

Critical Thinking: One of the core objectives of the booklet is to cultivate critical thinking skills. Students will be guided in questioning the text, challenging assumptions, and forming well-reasoned interpretations. This skill will not only aid in literary analysis but also in broader academic and intellectual pursuits.

Active Engagement: The booklet promotes an interactive approach to studying literary works. Students are encouraged to actively engage with the texts by participating in discussions, debates, and reflective practice. This engagement will deepen their comprehension and foster a sense of ownership over their learning.

Period Exploration: The booklet provides an overview of key periods in British Literature, including Medieval Literature, Renaissance Literature, Metaphysical Poetry, and British Romanticism. By exploring representative works from each period, students will gain insights into the evolution of literary styles, themes, and techniques over time.

Language Proficiency: As the booklet is designed for second year students, it aims to enhance their language proficiency by exposing them to rich and varied language usage present in the selected literary works. This exposure will contribute to the development of vocabulary, syntax, and language comprehension. As such, students will be able to write a literary essay discussing different topics in these literary works.

In conclusion, "Introduction to Literary Text: A Guide for L2 Students" seeks to empower second-year LMD students of English with the skills and knowledge necessary

to critically analyse and appreciate a selection of British literary works. By achieving the outlined objectives, students will not only excel in their Literary Text module but also lay a solid foundation for a deeper lifelong appreciation of literature and its multifaceted contexts.

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Introduction

Welcome to “Introduction to Literary Text: A Guide to Second Year Students.” This booklet has been meticulously crafted to be your companion on an enriching journey through the captivating world of literary analysis. Tailored specifically for second-year LMD students of English, this guide is designed to enhance your understanding of literary works while delving into their intricate contextual dimensions.

In the realm of language acquisition, the study of literary texts holds a special place. Not only does it offer an opportunity to explore the nuances of language, but it also provides a gateway to understanding culture, history, and the human experience across time. This guide is tailored to support you in your exploration of literary texts, focusing on key periods in British Literature, from the Medieval era to the Romantic movement.

The booklet aims: to empower you with the tools to not only understand literary masterpieces but also to dissect and analyze them, unraveling the layers of meaning and unraveling the context in which they were created. Whether you're navigating Chaucer's intricate narratives in "The Canterbury Tales," pondering the philosophical questions posed in Shakespeare's "Hamlet," or marveling at the vivid imagery in William Wordsworth’s "The Daffodils," this guide will equip you to engage deeply with these texts.

Each section of this booklet focuses on a specific literary period, providing you with insightful discussions and thought-provoking questions. We will explore how writers from different epochs approached themes, language, and storytelling techniques, allowing you to grasp the evolution of literary expression across time.

Moreover, we will guide you in connecting these works to their historical, social, and cultural contexts, enriching your appreciation of the texts.

Throughout this guide, you are encouraged to interact with the texts actively. Engage in critical thinking, discuss ideas with peers, and reflect on your own interpretations. By doing so, you will not only strengthen your analytical skills but also develop a deeper connection with the literary heritage that has shaped English language and culture.

As you embark on this journey through Medieval Literature, Renaissance masterpieces, Metaphysical poetry, and the rich tapestry of British Romanticism, remember that literature is a reflection of human experience—an exploration of our shared dreams, dilemmas, and desires. May this guide serve as a beacon, illuminating your path through the intricate world of literary texts and helping you uncover the treasures they hold.

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE: GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S

THE CANTERBURY TALES

Introduction

> *Chaucer was a raconteur, a teller of amusing stories, and he did whatever he had to do to keep audiences interested.* **David Kelly**

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, the outstanding English poet before Shakespeare, ranks as one of the greatest poetic works in English. Chaucer also contributed importantly in the second half of the 14th century to the management of public affairs as courtier, diplomat, and civil servant. But it is his avocation – the writing of poetry – for which he is remembered.

1. Geoffrey Chaucer 1343-1400

Born in the early 1340s to a successful wine merchant, John Chaucer, and his wife, Agnes de Copton, said to be related to an official at the British Mint, young Chaucer began his life in the relatively secure and prosperous middle class of London. His life was not secure from every threat, though. When Chaucer was a child, a rat hosting a flea carrying the bacterium responsible for the Black Plague, travelled on a ship from France to Dorset in England in 1348, and nearly a third of the population died. Chaucer and his family escaped the wave of illness and death, most likely because the family had the means to stay in Southampton, away from the dirty and densely populated city of London.

Chaucer's parents could have afforded private tutors, and Chaucer may have intermittently attended nearby St. Paul's School where he possibly received instruction in Latin and French, Ovid and Virgil.

Chaucer spent his lifetime as a well-respected public servant. He participated in campaigns during the Hundred Years War, was captured in France and ransomed for a sum to which Edward III personally contributed. In 1366 he married Philippi de Roet, a lady-in-waiting in the court. In 1368 Chaucer began traveling as the king's emissary to France and Italy. Already multilingual, Chaucer learned Italian, and scholars speculate that his sojourns in Italy may have acquainted him with Boccaccio and his *Decameron,*[1] Dante, and Petrarch, which was later to have profound influence upon his own writing.

Between 1380 and 1387 Chaucer wrote *The House of Fame, The Parliament of Fowls, Troilus and Criseyde,* and *The Legend of Good Women.* He began work on *The Canterbury Tales* in 1380 and continued until he died, leaving a great but incomplete work. He died in 1400 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, the first in what is now known as the Poets' Corner.

2. Historical context

The time of the writing of *The Canterbury Tales* was a turbulent time in English history. The Catholic Church was in the midst of the Great Schism and, though it was still the only Christian authority in Europe, was the subject of heavy controversy. Lollardy, an early English religious movement led by John Wycliffe, is mentioned in *the Tales,* as is a specific incident involving pardoners, who gathered money in exchange for absolution from sin "indulgences".

[1] The Decameron is a 14th-century medieval allegory by Giovanni Boccaccio, told as a frame story encompassing 100 tales by ten young people. The various tales of love in The Decameron range from the erotic to the tragic. Tales of wit, practical jokes, and life lessons contribute to the mosaic. In addition to its literary import, it documents life in 14th-century Italy.

Political clashes, such as the 1381 Peasant's Revolt and clashes ending in the deposing of King Richard II, further reveal the complex turmoil surrounding Chaucer in the time of the Tales' writing.

3. *The Canterbury Tales*

Chaucer's great literary accomplishment of the 1390[s] was *The Canterbury Tales*. In it a group of about 30 pilgrims gather at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, across the Thames from London, and agree to engage in a storytelling contest as they travel on horseback to the shrine of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury, Kent, and back. Harry Bailly, host of the Tabard, serves as master of ceremonies for the contest. The pilgrims are introduced by vivid brief sketches in the General Prologue. Interspersed between the 24 tales told by the pilgrims are short dramatic scenes presenting lively exchanges, called links and usually involving the host and one or more of the pilgrims. Chaucer's death, in 1400, prevented him from completing the full plan for his book; the return journey from Canterbury is not included, and some of the pilgrims do not tell stories. Further, the surviving manuscripts leave room for doubt at some points as to Chaucer's intent for arranging the material. The work is nevertheless sufficiently complete to be considered a unified book rather than a collection of unfinished fragments.

Use of a pilgrimage as a framing device for the collection of stories enabled Chaucer to bring together people from many walks of life, and the storytelling contest allowed presentation of a highly varied collection of literary genres. Because of this structure, the sketches, the links, and the tales all fuse as complex presentations of the pilgrims, while at the same time the tales present remarkable examples of short stories in verse, plus two expositions in prose. Over the expanse of this intricate dramatic narrative, he presides as Chaucer the poet, Chaucer the civil servant, and Chaucer the

pilgrim; somewhat slow-witted in his pose and always intrigued by human frailty but always questioning the complexity of the human condition and always seeing both the humour and the tragedy in that condition.

4. Language

Chaucer's lifetime coincided with the return of English as the official language of England. The nation's earliest literature – Caedmon's *Hymn* (c. 658) and *Beowulf* (anonymous, eighth century) – was written in Old English (Anglo-Saxon). After the Norman Conquest in 1066, French supplanted English as the language of the ruling aristocracy while Latin was the language of the church. Chaucer's various business transactions were conducted in French, but he spoke in the Middle English dialect of London. As the Norman influence waned, English was reinstated, invigorated by an infusion of English vernacular and eloquent court rhetoric. With his broad education and knowledge of languages, Chaucer was both a beneficiary of and contributor to this evolution of the English language and literature.

Chaucer scholar Lee Patterson argues that Chaucer believed England was capable of creating a national literature:

> [*The Canterbury Tales*] . . . is a compilation of almost every kind of writing known to the Middle Ages. Epic, romance, fabliau, saint's life, exemplum, sermon, mirror of princes, penitential treatise, tragedy, animal fable, Breton lay, confessional autobiography, Marian miracle – all these and more are present … Each of the genres … invokes not just specific writers but a whole lexicon of different kinds of writing.

5. Characterisation

Chaucer's characters come from all walks of life ranging from a Knight to a humble Ploughman. Noble pilgrims include The Knight, The Squire, and The Yeoman. There are also some characters from the clergy. These comprise of The Prioress (the nun), The Nun's Priests, The Friar, The Monk, The Parson, The Pardoner, The Summoner, and The Clerk. Chaucer pokes fun at these people involved with the church. Last but not least, Chaucer employs characters from the "upper" and "lower" classes including The Wife of Bath, The Merchant, The Franklin, The Skipper, The Manciple, The Reeve, The Miller, The Physician, The Lawyer, The Host, The Weaver, The Dyer, The Carpenter, The Tapestry Maker, The Cook, and The Haberdasher. The names given to the pilgrims refer to their professions.

The narrator describes the pilgrims, revealing their personalities through direct and indirect characterization, sharp images, and figurative comparisons.

a) **Direct characterization** presents direct statements about a character, such as Chaucer's statement that the Knight "followed chivalry, / Truth, honor. . . ."
b) **Indirect characterization** uses actions, thoughts, and dialogue to reveal a character's personality. By saying "he was not gaily dressed," for instance, Chaucer suggests that the Knight is not vain and perhaps takes the pilgrimage seriously enough to rush to join it straight from battle.

Each character in *The Canterbury Tales* represents a different segment of society in Chaucer's time. By noting the virtues and faults of each, Chaucer provides social commentary, writing that offers insight into society, its values, and its customs.

In the Prologue, Chaucer sketches a brief but vivid portrait of each pilgrim, creating a lively sense of medieval life. The description may literally describe clothing, look,

speech, acts, thoughts, and feelings but figuratively imply something about that character. The narrator's declaration that he will tell us about the "condition," "degree," and "array" (dress) of each of the pilgrims suggests that his portraits will be based on objective facts as well as his own opinions. That is why Chaucer is called **the "father of realism" or the master of realism**.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S THE GENERAL PROLOGUE, 1-18

Read the 18 lines of the General Prologue and do the following tasks.

(See Appendix 1).

Task 1: Summarizing the 18 Lines

Write a concise summary of the first 18 lines of the General Prologue. Avoid copying Chaucer's original text verbatim; instead, use your own words to capture the essence of the passage. Be sure to include the main characters introduced and the overall purpose of these lines.

Task 2: Analysis of Themes

Identify and discuss the major themes that emerge from the General Prologue. Consider the portrayal of different social classes, the concept of pilgrimage, the role of the narrator, and any other themes you find relevant. Support your analysis with specific references to the text.

Task 3: Analysis of Style

Examine Chaucer's style in the General Prologue. Pay attention to the use of language, imagery, and poetic techniques that contribute to the overall atmosphere and tone of the passage. Discuss how Chaucer's style enhances the storytelling experience and captures the essence of the characters.

Task 4: Analysis of Symbols

Explore the symbols or symbolic elements present in the General Prologue. Symbols can be objects, actions, or characters that carry deeper meanings beyond their literal

representation. Analyze the significance of these symbols and how they contribute to the themes and overall narrative of the Canterbury Tales.

1. The Prologue's Text

Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote	*When in April the sweet showers fall*
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote	*That pierce March's drought to the root and all*
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,	*And bathed every vein in liquor that has power*
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;	*To generate therein and sire the flower;*
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth	*When Zephyr also has with his sweet breath,*
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth	*Filled again, in every holt and heath,*
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne	*The tender shoots and leaves, and the young sun*
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,	*His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run,*
And smale foweles maken melodye,	*And many little birds make melody*
That slepen al the nyght with open eye-	*That sleep through all the night with open eye*
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages);	*(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)*
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages	***Then folk do long to go on pilgrimage,***
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes	*And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,*
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;	*To distant shrines well known in distant lands.*
And specially from every shires ende	*And specially from every shire's end*
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,	*Of England they to Canterbury went,*
The hooly blisful martir for to seke	*The holy blessed martyr there to seek*
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.	*Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak*

2. Synopsis

In April the pleasant showers of rain had pierced the drought of March to the very root and bathed every plant with life-giving moisture. The refreshing west wind had quickened the young shoots in every wood and field. The young sun had completed its second half course in the zodiac sign of the Aries, and the small birds encouraged by nature sang melodiously. People longed to go on pilgrimages and seek strange shores in this rejuvenating month. People from every corner of England went to Canterbury to seek the holy blessings at the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket.

One spring day at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, while the narrator (Chaucer) was waiting for the next day to go on his pilgrimage to Canterbury, a group of twenty-nine pilgrims arrived at the inn. The narrator was accepted into their company and they decided to rise early next morning and carry on their journey. The narrator describes each of these pilgrims and tells the reader about their ranks and the kind of clothes they wore.

3. Analysis and Appreciation

“When in April” places us immediately in the reverdie tradition -- literally the "re-greening," a mode in medieval lyric poetry celebrating the revival of spring and all that that entails.

1-18 lines present a unified and ideal organic hierarchy -- a great chain of awakenings from the rain to the roots of the plants to the flowers, the sun to the fields and the birds growing musical, to humans who maybe sublimate the same impulses into pilgrimages to holy shrines of martyrs. So we progress from the natural to the divine, or from the natural/divine to the anthropomorphic/sacred.

As a tradition, in the Middle ages, if a poet began his poem with spring, the reader would learn that the poet would tell a love story. *The General Prologue* begins with the description of spring characteristic of dream visions of secular love, the same tone, even some of the same details in his *Le Roman de la rose.* His audience may well have thought they were about to hear another elegant poem on aristocratic love. However, they hear instead:

Then longen folk to gon on pilgrimages. The focus changes from secular love to religion, to a pilgrimage, and the texture shifts from the elegant abstractions and allegorical personages to a very real London in the fourteenth century.

At line 20, the narrator abandons his unfocused, all-knowing point of view, identifying himself as an actual person for the first time by inserting the first person—"I"—as he relates how he met the group of pilgrims while staying at the Tabard Inn. He emphasizes that this group, which he encountered by accident, was itself formed quite by chance (25–26). He then shifts into the first-person plural, referring to the pilgrims as "we" beginning in line 29, asserting his status as a member of the group.

4. Style

-*The Canterbury Tales* is a long narrative poem. When Chaucer chooses to have each of his pilgrims tell a story on the way to Canterbury, he is using the **"frame story".** A frame story is one which contains either another tale, a story within a story, or a series of stories. Well-known instances are the *Arabian Nights*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Hence, in *The Canterbury Tales*, **The Outer Frame Story** is about the pilgrims meeting at the Tabard Inn preparing for a journey to Canterbury; and **The Inner Frame Story** would be all the stories told by the assembled pilgrims along their journey to and from Canterbury.

-Still another stylistic feature in which Chaucer is considered a pioneer is his use of the **"heroic couplet"**. It comprises rhymed decasyllables (10 syllables), nearly always in iambic pentameters rhymed in pairs.

*Whan that Aprill, with his shoures **soote***

*The droghte of March hath perced to the **roote***

Chaucer was also the first to use **"rhyme royal"**, a stanza form of seven decasyllabic lines rhyming (**ababbcc**).

Chaucer's work is also characterized by **a lack of alliteration**, which is a figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words are repeated. It is a very old device indeed in English verse (older than rhyme) and is common in verse generally. It is used to achieve special effect.

The Canterbury Tales is an example of **allegory**. The pilgrims' stories are stories in which the characters, settings, and events stand for abstract or moral concepts relate directly or indirectly to 14th-century London and which also translate well to our modern times.

The *Tales* is also a good example of **satire**. It is a literary technique of writing or art which principally ridicules its subject often as an intended means of provoking change. For example, the Pardoner, a religious man, talks about being corrupt. Therefore, Chaucer is saying the church is corrupt.

5. Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Springtime: *The Canterbury Tales* opens in April, at the height of spring. The springtime symbolizes rebirth and fresh beginnings, and is thus appropriate for the beginning of Chaucer's text. Springtime also evokes erotic love, for example, the Squire is compared to the freshness of the month of May, in his devotion to courtly love.

6. Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. *The Canterbury Tales* has several overlapping themes, which not only enrich the book's texture but also lend it some kind of coherence and unity. Most of these themes are abstract and cannot be stated as singular propositions. The major themes include:

- Critique of the church
- Wickedness of human nature and decline of moral values
- The problem of the position of women and marriage relationships
- Themes of honor and truth
- Themes of Christian virtue and chivalry

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S *THE PARDONER'S TALE*

Read Chaucer's The Pardoner's Tale (See Appendix 2) and do the following tasks:

Task 1: Context

Begin by researching and explaining the historical and literary context of "The Pardoner's Tale." Discuss Chaucer's role as an author in the medieval period, *The Canterbury Tales*, and the framework of the narrative, which involves a group of pilgrims telling stories as they travel to Canterbury.

Task 2: Summary

Summarize "The Pardoner's Tale" in your own words. Provide a concise yet comprehensive overview of the plot, its main characters, and the main conflict.

Task 3: Themes

Identify and discuss the major themes present in "The Pardoner's Tale." Consider the moral lessons, allegorical elements, and the deeper messages conveyed by Chaucer throughout the story. Analyze how these themes are still relevant in contemporary society.

Task 4: Types of Irony

Explore the different types of irony present in the tale. Identify examples of verbal, situational, and dramatic irony. Discuss how these instances of irony contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the story.

Task 5: Genre, Mood, and Tone

Analyse the genre of “The Pardoner’s Tale” and explain why it fits into the medieval allegorical tradition. Examine the mood and tone established by Chaucer in the narrative. Discuss how the author’s use of language, imagery, and characterization influences the reader’s emotional response to the tale.

Task 6: Personal Reflection

In your conclusion, offer your personal reflections on “The Pardoner’s Tale.” Explain what you found most compelling about the story and how it has affected your understanding of medieval literature and the universal human condition.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S *THE PARDONER'S TALE*

Introduction

The Pardoner's Tale is one of *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. In the order of the *Tales*, it comes after *The Physician's Tale* and before *The Shipman's Tale.*

1. Context

In the Middle Ages, church was a big influence and people were firm believers in being forgiven for their sins. The church had a lot of power and controlled quite a bit of people's everyday lives. Usually if you were a church member, you were respected and people rarely doubted your actions. So when the Pardoner would ask people for money or food they would never think that he was going to use it for his own pleasure.

2. Who is a pardoner?

A pardoner is a church official licensed to sell papal pardons or indulgences. In medieval times, pardoners take money from the people which would then act as repayment for their sins. They used to keep a certain percentage of the indulgences. Most of them were corrupt and dishonest.

There was widespread dissatisfaction with pardoners in Chaucer's time. They were popular subjects of satire and joking. "The Pardoner's Tale" is an allegorical, satirical, and ironic conveyance of the greed of the church and the recognition that the church was corrupted during this time period.

3. The Prologue to The Pardoner's Tale

The host asks the Pardoner to tell a tale; the pilgrims ask for a moral story. He carries a bag of pardons signed by the pope and holy relics that he sells to the peasants in return for indulgences. He admits to being guilty of avarice and other sins despite his position in the Church. The pardoner is very persuasive in his sermons to the peasants. Whenever he preaches his theme is always "That greed is the root of all evil." He launches his story by remarking that his wickedness does not prevent him from telling a moral story.

4. Summary

Three rioters are drinking, and hear that a mysterious figure named **D**eath has killed one of their friends. The drunken friends see an old man (who has been waiting for Death to come and take him.) The old man tells them where they can find Death, in a grove, under a tree. But instead of Death, they find a treasure of gold coins. This treasure causes the young men to meet Death in a way that was not expected, as they turn on each other because of their greed to keep the treasures for themselves. This connects back to the prologue, the theme of the Pardoners sermon, "greed is the root of all evil."

This story is followed by another sermon against avarice and the beginning of a sales pitch for the relics the Pardoner carries. The Pardoner asks the pilgrims to buy a pardon. The Host interrupts. He refuses to go along with any more of what he perceives as the Pardoner's hypocrisy.

5. Themes

- Greed is the root of all evil.
- Practice what you preach.

6. Irony: The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning

Types of irony

Verbal Irony: saying the opposite of what is meant (sarcasm)

e. g. “Who would have thought this morning was to be our lucky day?”

e. g. Death is personified throughout the tale, and the rioters ironically confuse the abstract and the concrete by speaking of Death as it were a living person. “Killing Death” is an oxymoron. (Death = Black Death, plague)

e. g. The rioters seek Death but they find gold. (love of money is spiritual death)

Situational Irony: discrepancy between what one anticipates and what actually happens

e. g. The Pardoner preaches against greed, but he is greedy himself.

e. g. The rioters seek death, and they end up killing each other.

e. g. The rioters will die because of their greed before they can enjoy their wealth.

Dramatic Irony: the reader knows something that the character(s) do not

e. g. The two rioters celebrate the murder of the youngest rioter by drinking the poisoned wine that the youngest rioter concocted for them.

7. Genre

Tale of Morality/Exemplum: a type of story often used to emphasize a moral point. It shows the disastrous effects of greed.

Allegory: An allegory is a narrative that includes characters, setting, etc. that have both literal and figurative (symbolic) meanings. The pardoner's Tale is an example of allegory. In this case, Avarice, Gluttony, and Sloth meet Death at their own hands; in other words, these vices lead invariably to spiritual death. Chaucer is making a symbolic association between greed and death of the soul.

Satire: A satire is a form of literature that criticizes a subject by making it seem ridiculous, amusing, or contemptible. The pardoner claims that he cannot start his story until he has taken a drink and then immediately starts by warning his listeners against drinking with several stories from the Bible. Thus, the Pardoner's Tale is a criticism of church system in medieval times. People claim to be religious, but they often use their positions to take advantage of others.

8. Tone and Mood

The Pardoner's tone is hypocritical. In speaking to the old man, the rioters use a cruel, demeaning tone. The mood is sinister.

RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

> *... What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty. In form and moving how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god. The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.* **William Shakespeare, *Hamlet***

1. Movement Origin c. 1450

It could be argued that no other literary period in history is as rich—or paradoxical—as the Renaissance. Many historians locate the Renaissance from the mid-fifteenth until the early seventeenth century. There are, however, a few writers from other time periods whom historians and critics commonly associate with the Renaissance. The European Renaissance produced some of history's greatest writers and works of literature, yet many historians and critics disagree about when it actually took place. Contemporary Renaissance fairs and many movies set in Renaissance times are often set in England. In reality, however, the Renaissance started in Italy, then spread slowly east to other European countries, most notably France, Spain, and finally, England.

The Renaissance (from the French word for "rebirth") refers to the emergence and new interest in classical Greek and Latin literature and culture that took place between the Middle Ages and the modern period. With the advent of the printing press in 1440, the development of vernacular languages, and the weakening influence of the Catholic Church on daily life, among other historic events, Renaissance writers and scholars had new avenues for expressing their views. Many Renaissance works survive into the twenty-first century as some of the most celebrated in history. Early writers such as Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More staged direct attacks on the Church and society with works such as Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* and More's *Utopia*. These writers

helped open doors for later ones, including William Shakespeare, who some critics consider the greatest dramatist and poet of all time.

Humanism is an intellectual liberation movement of the Renaissance. It is a system of thought that considers that solving human problems with the help of reason is more important than religious beliefs. It emphasizes the fact that the basic nature of humans is good. Humanism was a more worldly and thus more secular philosophy; and it was anthropocentric. It sought to dignify and ennoble man. In their more extreme forms humanistic attitudes regarded man as the crown of creation; a point of view marvelously expressed in *Hamlet*, by Hamlet:

> … What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty. In form and moving how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god. The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.

At its best, humanism helped to civilize man, to make him realize his potential powers and gifts, and to reduce the discrepancy between potentiality and attainment. It was a movement that was at once a product of and a counteraction to a certain prevalent skepticism; a way of dealing with the disequilibrium created by the conflict between belief and doubt. Humanism turned out to be a form of philosophy which concentrated on the perfection of a worldly life, rather than on the preparation for an eternal and spiritual life.

In Medieval times, writers thought more of the community than of the individual. Most of their literature was religious; and plays were morality and mystery plays spinning around bible stories and miracles. They were teaching lessons that the church wanted people to learn. Starting from the Renaissance, influenced by the spirit of humanism, writers focused on people as individuals rather than on the community.

2. Socio-historical Context

- The invention of the printing press in 1450 in Germany by Johann Gutenberg
- The development of vernacular languages
- Increase of literacy
- Solitary reading: Individual interpretations of the bible
- The weakening influence of the Catholic Church on daily life
- Universities began to offer more secular curricula
- The Protestant Reformation in 1517
- The English Reformation in 1529

3. Representative Authors and Works

3.1. Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536)

Desiderius Erasmus was born October 27, 1466, most likely in Rotterdam, Netherlands. He attended cathedral school, where he was first exposed to Renaissance humanistic thought, and his desire for the intellectual life was born. He used his religious education to access as many classics as he could find. Unlike many Renaissance writers who followed him, Erasmus wrote entirely in Latin, still considered at this time to be the language of the educated. Although he made plans to obtain a degree in theology, these plans were constantly postponed because of his intellectual pursuits, including several trips to England, where he met influential English humanists such as Thomas More. Following More's lead, Erasmus eventually combined his religious and intellectual interests into a new program of reform, using his literary works to stage satirical attacks on the Church and society. It should be noted that Erasmus, like other humanist writers, wished to reform the Catholic Church while keeping it unified. However, in his criticisms of the Church and his scholarly

interpretation and translation of the Bible, Erasmus was one of many humanists who inadvertently helped to instigate the Protestant Reformation and subsequent division of the Church. Erasmus died on July 12, 1536, in Basel, Switzerland.

The Praise of Folly

Desiderius Erasmus published his satire *The Praise of Folly* in 1511. Making use of the goddess Folly, the book features biting commentary on the injustices the author perceived in his world, most notably examples of religious foolishness such as the sale of indulgences (vouchers people could buy to absolve themselves of sin). The work immediately angered conservative Church officials. In Renaissance fashion, Erasmus incorporates classical references throughout the work and parodies the blind idealism of medieval times, a technique which influenced later humanist writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Cervantes. Erasmus's various uses of the word "folly" have perplexed readers for over four centuries.

3.2. Niccolô Machiavelli (1469–1527)

Niccolô Machiavelli was born on May 3, 1469, in Florence, Italy, to a middle-class family of civic workers. He studied Latin from an early age and was drawn to the classics, particularly texts about the Roman Republic. He followed family tradition and entered the Florentine political scene during Italy's politically unstable city-state period, when large cities such as Florence acted as independent republics. Within Florence, a number of factions vied for power. In 1498, Machiavelli helped one of them overthrow the dominant religious and political figure. Through a few other political posts he held over the next fourteen years, Machiavelli gained influence, while observing the harsh realities of politics. After the Medici family returned to power in 1512 and exiled Machiavelli to his country home, Machiavelli spent much of his time

translating his political experiences into two treatises, or explanatory documents. The most infamous of these is *The Prince*. Machiavelli died of illness June 21, 1527, in Florence.

The Prince

It can be argued that no other work in the history of literature has inspired more long-term, widespread distaste than Niccolô Machiavelli's *The Prince*, published in 1532, five years after the author's death. Although Machiavelli intended the work to be a handbook for political leaders, most readers in the sixteenth century were openly disgusted by the book's cold discussion and support of the unethical methods, such as murder, that successful leaders used to acquire and remain in power. At the time of its publication, the book was condemned as a manual for tyranny, and many critics since that time have had a similar response to the work. Largely due to the deliberate spread of mistranslations of *The Prince*, English Renaissance writers such as Shakespeare and Marlowe incorporated negative depictions of Machiavelli into some of their works. The book even inspired the term "Machiavellian" (meaning duplicitous), which remains in use into the twenty-first century.

Only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was *The Prince* accurately translated and reevaluated in its historical context. In this modern light, the intentions of the author have been hotly debated. Some critics have conjectured that Machiavelli was simply reporting on behaviours that he observed, while others believe that Machiavelli wrote the book as a satiric attack on tyranny. In any case, through works such as *The Prince*, Machiavelli has been referred to as the founder of empirical political science.

3.3. Sir Thomas More (1478–1535)

The records for Sir Thomas More's birth are not exact, although historians surmise he was born February 7, 1478, in London, England. While in his early- to mid-twenties, More lived with monks and adopted their lifestyle. Like his friend Erasmus, More combined his religious and intellectual pursuits into one humanistic ideal that he pursued for the rest of his life. The ultimate expression of this ideal came with the publication of *Utopia* (1516). In his adult life, More served Henry VIII and Parliament, and in 1521 he was knighted. When Henry declared himself head of the Church of England in 1531, however, More was forced to choose between his king and his Church. Faithful to the Church until his last days, More resigned his chancellor position and three years later refused to swear an oath endorsing the authority of Henry VIII over the Church of England and nullifying that of the pope in England. More was sent to the Tower of London and was beheaded July 6, 1535.

Utopia

Thomas More's *Utopia*, published in 1516, is one of the most influential works written during the Renaissance. The book has two parts. The first critiques the social and political problems More saw, while the second describes life in an idealistic fictional society called Utopia. Utopians employ various communist methods to prevent problems experienced in sixteenth-century England. In both parts, More himself is the narrator and, as such, acts as the Renaissance sceptic for the reader. In addition to criticizing his own society, he also criticizes as absurd the methods that the utopians use, causing critics to debate what More's true beliefs were. The author never resolves the issues, leaving the book open-ended instead of trying to provide a clear

solution. Critics have noted that this ambiguity invited his readers to join in the discussion on these topics, a call heeded by other Renaissance writers.

3.4. Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616)

Miguel de Cervantes was born on or about September 29, 1547, in Alcaláde Henares, Spain. After studying under a humanist teacher in Madrid, Cervantes enlisted in the Spanish military and helped to defend southern Europe from the invasion of the Ottoman Turks. While involved in this effort, Cervantes suffered an injury that crippled his left hand. On the way back home from the front, Cervantes and other Spanish soldiers were captured by pirates and detained in northern Africa for five years, at which time they returned to Spain as heroes. However, economic times were tough, and Cervantes's status as a hero soon waned. He turned to writing plays but with little success. He finally was able to secure a civic position as a supplies manager, whereupon he was blamed for the mismanagement of food and jailed. Following these misfortunes, Cervantes wrote his masterpiece *El Ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de La Mancha* (translated as *The History of that Ingenious Gentleman: Don Quixote de La Mancha*), commonly referred to simply as *Don Quixote*, which details the misadventures of a madman. Cervantes died of edema on April 22, 1616, in Madrid, Spain.

Don Quixote

The two parts of Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote, were published in 1605 and 1615, respectively. The story details the misadventures of an old man who has gone mad from reading too many chivalric romances, a form of medieval literature that was popular in Spain during Cervantes' lifetime. True to the form of chivalry, the old man idealizes everything he sees, to much humorous effect. At the end of the novel, Quixote

comes to his senses and denounces chivalric ideals before he dies. The novel paints an accurate picture of life in early seventeenth-century Spain and struck a resonant chord with Cervantes' public. Although Cervantes himself thought the work nothing more than a parody, modern critics have noted the book's Renaissance view of favouring realism over idealism and have credited the book with influencing the development of the modern novel. In addition, Cervantes' novel spawned the term "quixotic" (the pursuit of foolish ideals), which is still used in the twenty-first century.

3.5. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)

Christopher Marlowe was born in February 1564 in Canterbury, England. Although he embarked on a humanistic education, receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Cambridge while on scholarship, Marlowe was initially denied his Master of Arts degree due to his absences during his studies. Marlowe's activities were vouched for, however, by the court of Queen Elizabeth. Historical evidence suggests that during his educational absences, Marlowe was serving as a spy in the queen's service, helping to uncover and foil an insurrection plot by expatriate Roman Catholics. This life of intrigue and suspicion continued during Marlowe's six years in London, where he was imprisoned for a short time as an accomplice to murder. During the six years he was in London, Marlowe wrote plays, the most famous of which is *Dr. Faustus*.

Doctor Faustus **(play)**

The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, commonly referred to simply as *Doctor Faustus*, is a play by Christopher Marlowe, based on the Faust story, in which a man sells his soul to the devil for power and knowledge. Doctor Faustus was first published in 1604.

3.6. William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Tradition holds that William Shakespeare, son of John and Mary Arden Shakespeare, was born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, although the specific date of his birth has not been verified. In fact, for a man who is regarded by many critics as one of the most important writers in history, surprisingly little is known about Shakespeare. Most of the details are derived through speculation. Because his father was a man of some civic importance, it is assumed that Shakespeare received a well-rounded, humanistic education. Some scholars also take Shakespeare's references to schools in his plays as proof of his own education. Given the enormous variety of experiences Shakespeare describes in his plays, it is also assumed that he pursued or observed many vocations and activities. Not much else is known about Shakespeare until 1592, when he became popular as an actor and writer in the London theatre scene. He wrote more than thirty plays, including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar*. Tradition holds that Shakespeare died in Stratford-upon-Avon, on April 23, 1616, exactly fifty-two years after his birth.

Hamlet

William Shakespeare was first and foremost a humanist, and all of his plays distinctly capture this Renaissance spirit. In his first tragedy, Hamlet, Shakespeare gives his title character an introspective intellect that is both humanist and modern. The play, published in 1600 or 1601, details the internal struggle that Prince Hamlet faces in deciding whether to avenge his father's murder. Although his father's ghost commands Hamlet to kill the murderer (Hamlet's uncle), Hamlet is not so easily swayed and *thinks* through the problem for himself. In the process, Hamlet considers many ideas about philosophy and human experience, all the while experiencing a

spiritual crisis. The play resonated with Shakespeare's contemporary audience and has continued to affect audiences and critics into the twenty-first century, many of whom note its psychological depth.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS (1604)*

"Homo fuge," Latin for ***"O man, fly"***

Task: *Read Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and try to analyse the paly in relation to the context of the Renaissance.*

The Elizabethan poet Christopher Marlowe was Shakespeare's most important predecessor in English drama. He is noted especially for his establishment of dramatic blank verse. In a playwriting career that spanned little more than six years, Marlowe's achievements were diverse and splendid: *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587), *The Jew of Malta* (1590), *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594) and *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1604). *Doctor Faustus* is Marlowe's most famous play, in which he tells the story of the doctor-turned-necromancer Faustus, who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power.

1. Socio-historical Context

Conflict between the medieval world and the world of the emerging Renaissance

- The medieval world placed God at the centre of existence and put aside man and the natural world.
- With Renaissance, a new emphasis on the individual, on classical learning of Greek, and on scientific inquiry into the nature of the world.
- In the medieval academy, theology was the queen of the sciences. In the Renaissance, secular matters became important.
- In the medieval model, tradition and authority, not individual inquiry, were key.

2. Renaissance Humanism in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

- Emphasis on classical learning and life
- Dignity of human beings (individualism)
- Importance of the present life
- Emphasis on science / knowledge / discovery (era of Galileo and Copernicus)
- Fewer religious restraints

3. Summary

Prologue: Dr. Faustus, Rhodes, Germany

Scene 1: Faustus dissatisfies with all his knowledge and determines to study magic.

Scene 3: Faustus calls Mephistophilis, Lucifer's minister.

Scene 5: Faustus surrenders his soul to Satan and has great power among 24 years.

Scene 7: Faustus amazes the Pope by becoming invisible.

Scene 9: Faustus calls the spirit of Alexander the Great

Scene 11: Faustus brings ripe grapes in January.

Scene 12,13: When 24 years is almost over, he begins to fear Satan and nearly repents.

He is shown the Seven Deadly Sins and carried off by devils at the end.

4. Characterization—Faustus

- He is brave enough to sell his soul to the Devil for ultimate knowledge.
- He is sometimes ultimately arrogant, excessively confident.
- He is a loner who faces the ultimate test by himself (individual).

- He can be viewed as naïve.
- A contradictory character: Tells himself hell is not bad **but** wants to go to heaven. He is ambitious **but** wastes powers.
- Represents the spirit of the Renaissance

5. Faustus as a Renaissance man

- Rejection of the medieval, God-centered universe
- His belief in human possibility. In Medieval time a man should remain content with his position in life. Any attempt or ambition to go beyond his assigned place was considered a great sin of pride. For the medieval person, pride was one of the greatest sins that one could commit.
- Faustus is the personification of possibility and pride.
- He goes through every field of scholarship, beginning with logic and proceeding through medicine, law, and theology.
- He resolves, in full Renaissance spirit, to accept no limits, traditions, or authorities in his quest for knowledge, wealth, and power.

6. Faustus's Internal Conflict

- Faustus is constantly undecided about whether he should repent and return to God or continue to follow his pact with Lucifer.
- Faustus constantly turns his mind to God and he wonders if it is too late for him to repent.
- The good angel and the evil angel, both of whom appear at Faustus's shoulder symbolize this struggle.
- "[m]y heart's so hardened I cannot repent!"
- Personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins to offer entertainment

- Faustus begins to appeal to Christ for mercy, but then Lucifer and Mephastophilis enter. They tell Faustus to stop thinking of God and then present a show of the Seven Deadly Sins. Each sin—Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth, and finally Lechery—appears before Faustus and makes a brief speech. The sight of the sins delights Faustus's soul, and he asks to see hell. Lucifer promises to take him there that night.

7. Important Themes

a) The Idea of Sin – acting contrary to *the will of God.*

In making a pact with Lucifer, Faustus not only renounces God, but he chooses to swear allegiance to the devil. His *despair* is a further sin – doubting God's grace. He receives admonitions to repent (Angels, Old Man, Scholars, etc.) – until the very last scene, when Marlowe removes the possibility of redemption. To heighten the dramatic effect, there is no forgiveness when Faustus begs for it.

b) Conflicting World Views: Conflict between the value systems of the middle ages and the Renaissance (Early Modern Period).

c) The Corruption of Power: In the beginning, Faustus has heroic plans, he wants to transcend ordinary limitations, expand the boundaries of science, and unveil the secrets of the world (while making a little money and becoming famous, too). However, when he gains limitless power, he contents himself with cheap tricks for the nobility and even cheaper pranks for the commoners. His great individualism degrades into immorality.

d) The image of Man Divided: Faustus often wonders whether he should repent. He is caught between **two desires**: to do good and to serve God, or to grasp the power and the pleasure that of the devil. External symbols of this interior struggle are the Good and the Bad Angels. This a very Protestant idea (Martin Luther's theology),

that man is by nature weak and divided, and that one can be saved only by personal trust in God's grace.

Conclusion: The desire for complete knowledge about the world and power can be destructive.

RENAISSANCE ELEMENTS IN MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

"Homo fuge!" Latin for *"O man, fly!"*

Read the following extracts from Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and analyse the Renaissance Elements in the play. **(See appendix 3).**

> *Enter with Devils, giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus, and dance then depart.*
> *Faustus: Speak, Mephistopheles. What means this show?*
> *Mephistopheles: Nothing, Faustus, but to delight thy mind withal*
> *And to show thee what magic can perform (DF 2. I. 83-5).*

Doctor Faustus as the true embodiment of Renaissance spirit starts dreaming of gaining super-human powers and of performing miraculous deeds with the help of spirits raised by him:

> *I'll have them read me strange philosophy,*
> *And tell the secrets of all foreign kings;*
> *I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,*
> *And chase the prince of Parma from our land,*
> *And reign sole king of all the provinces.*

All these proud assertions clearly reveal Faustus's Renaissance spirit of adventure and supreme craze for knowledge and power without any limit. And finally as a true follower of Machiavelli, we find Faustus discarding God and defying all religious and moral principles, when he sells his soul to the Devil to master all knowledge and to gain super-human powers.

To the man of the Renaissance, knowledge and power were inseparable, Doctor Faustus is such a superman; he sells his soul to the devil in exchange for moral happiness, knowledge and power. But the desires this power in order to render his country impregnable, to surround it with an iron wall, to create an unconquerable army, to establish universities etc. The high ambition of the Renaissance bourgeoisies to

conquer distant lands is also reflected in Faustus's word about his future programme. For instance:

By him I'll be great emp'ror of the world,
And make a bridge through the moving air
To pass the Ocean with a band of men;
I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore
And make that [country] continent to Spain,
And both contributory to my crown,
The Emperor shall not live but by my leave,
Nor any potentate of Germany.

Theme: The theme of this play of misdirected desire is sustained all through Faustus's opening soliloquy. His ambition to become a great physician is directed only by the craving for present wealth and posthumous fame:

Be a physition Faustus, heape vp golde,
And be eternizde for some wondrous cure.

But neither wealth nor fame can satisfy an aspiration which transcends mortal limits. Like Tamburlaine, Faustus desires a godlike power over life and death:

Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man
Wouldst thou make man to live eternally?
Or being dead, raise them to life again?
Then this profession were to be esteemed.

Doctor Faustus is Marlowe's greatest and most personnel tragedy in the sense that it treats a great psychological theme and also that it offers the reader and the audience a great moral lesson. But what is this great psychological theme? It is the theme of the great struggle of a human soul that has the noblest ambition of acquiring unlimited knowledge; but as knowledge is power and that power is a positive evil if knowledge is abused or misused. So, Doctor Faustus who pursues false knowledge i.e. necromancy in bad manner, is given the severest penalty in the form of mental disquietness and unrest through and till the end of his life. This is the greatest lesson of human wishes and on the wages of sin. Marlowe abuses knowledge and hence, the power of God who

delights not in more material prosperity or physical strength or brute supremacy or in sensuous indulgences to which Doctor Faustus surrenders himself completely and to which, therefore, is bitterly reacted in the form of moral degradation, spiritual lapses and incapacity for repentance or contrition or prayer to God.

Faustus even after getting his degree of Doctorate and studying all the important branches of learning like Philosophy, Physics, Law and Divinity realizes that he is 'still but Faustus and a man'. All are inadequate and none of these subjects can help him to become as powerful 'on earth, as Jove in the Sky'. Faustus's dream is to gain super-human power so that:

All things that move between the quiet poles,
Shall be at my command: emperors and kings,
Are obey'd in their sev'ral provinces,
Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds,
But his dominion that exceeds in this,
Stretched as far as doth the mind of man.

This inordinate desire to attain super-human power is absolutely in keeping with the adventurous spirit of the age of Renaissance.

Finally, he was left pitifully alone in his room to face his inevitable doom and damnation. Horror of the impending doom made him tragic and his terror-struck soul fervently wished that movement of time might stop or the final hour might be lengthened so that he could have a last chance to repent and pray for God's mercy. But nothing is of any avail. The Devils appear and carry away the soul of Faustus for eternal damnation. And thus:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,
That sometime grew in this learned man.

The theme of Faustus, in this way, is the pursuit of knowledge to infinity and its constant hazards and pangs.

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
O, I'll leap up to my God-who pulls me down?....
Earth, gape! O, no, it will not harbour me!.....
O, strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air, ……..
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll turn books! – Ah, Mephistophilis!

Faustus is now dreaming of what he is going to do after becoming the master of the universe. The following verses exemplify this fact:

But his domain that exceeds in this
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
A sound magician is a mighty god:

It means to proclaim that all these dreams are dreams of the Renaissance people who actually dream and also achieve to a great extent some of their dreams particularly the dram of discovering new lands and colonizing them and ultimately exploiting all the resources of those lands and their people.

But Mephistophilis explains the location and nature of hell and says to Faustus that hell means both mental and physical torture that whoever happens to be deprived of the blessing of God is in hell. Here, the words of Mephistophilis to Faustus may be quoted:

Faustus: *Where are you damned?*
Mephostophilis: *In hell.*
Faustus: *How comes it then that thou art out of Hell?*
Mephostophilis: *Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it.*
Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?

Thus, heaven and hell and the acquisition of unlimited knowledge form the main idea of the aspiration of the play.

Faustus feds remorse on time passing and says:

Stand still, you over-moving spheres of Heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come!
Fear Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make

Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

DRAMA AND THEATRE IN THE RENAISSANCE

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
William Shakespeare

Introduction

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. Unlike other forms of literature, the enactment of drama in theatre, performed by actors on a stage before an audience, or even the very structure of dramatic texts, is directly influenced by some collaborative modes of production and a collective form of reception. The early modern tragedy *Hamlet* (1601) by Shakespeare and the classical Athenian tragedy Oedipus the King (c. 429 BCE) by Sophocles are among the supreme masterpieces of the art of drama.

1. What is Drama?

As the adjective dramatic usually indicates, the ideas of conflict, tension, contrast, and emotion are usually associated with drama.

The word drama comes from a Greek word meaning "to do," and thus drama is usually associated with the idea of action. It is a form of literature, either prose or verse, usually in dialogue form, intended for performance; the dramatic arts are the components necessary for writing and producing the drama, such as playwriting, acting, and costume and scenic design.

The two masks associated with drama represent the traditional generic division between comedy and tragedy. They are symbols of the ancient Greek Muses, Thalia (the laughing face, the Muse of comedy), and Melpomene (the weeping face, Muse of tragedy).

Considered as a genre of poetry in general, the dramatic mode has been contrasted with the epic and the lyrical modes ever since Aristotle's Poetics (c. 335 BCE)—the earliest work of dramatic theory. Drama is often combined with music and dance: the drama in opera is sung throughout; musicals include spoken dialogue and songs; and some forms of drama have regular musical accompaniment. In certain periods of history (the ancient Roman and modern Romantic) dramas have been written to be read rather than performed. In improvisation, the drama does not pre-exist the moment of performance; performers devise a dramatic script spontaneously before an audience.

2. Theatres and plays

Through much of history, theatre has existed on three levels simultaneously:

1. As loosely organized popular entertainment, consisting of individuals or small groups, usually working outside established theatrical channels performing anything from circus skills to farcical plays for a mass audience. This form predates the oldest known plays and is exemplified today by commercial television.

2. As a mainstream public activity, which is most commonly literary drama performed at public theatres; it is usually commercial or else state supported for accessibility to the general public. Greek tragedy, medieval morality plays, and contemporary Broadway theatre fall into this category.

3. As an elitist art form, most simply defined by its intended audience, a limited group with specialized tastes. This form ranges from the court performances of the Renaissance to modern avant-garde theatre.

3. Elements of Theatrical Performance

A performance has only two essential elements: a performer and an audience. The performance may be pantomimed or may use language. The performer need not even be human: puppet drama has been popular throughout history; and mechanical or machine plays have been presented.

A performance may be enhanced by costume, makeup, scenery, props, lighting, music, and special effects. These are needed, however, only to help create the illusion of a different character, place, and time or to enhance the special quality of the performance and differentiate it from everyday experience.

4. Special Forms of Drama

a. Opera

Western opera is a dramatic art form, which arose during the Renaissance in an attempt to revive the classical Greek drama tradition in which both music and theatre were combined. Being strongly intertwined with western classical music, the opera has undergone enormous changes in the past four centuries and it is an important form of theatre until this day. Noteworthy is the huge influence of the German 19th century composer Richard Wagner on the opera tradition. In his view, there was no proper balance between music and theatre in the operas of his time, because the music seemed to be more important than the dramatic aspects in these works. To restore the connection with the traditional Greek drama, he entirely renewed the operatic format, and to emphasize the equal importance of music and drama in these new works, he called them "music dramas".

b. Pantomime

These stories follow in the tradition of fables and folk tales, usually there is a lesson learned, and with some help from the audience the hero/heroine saves the day. This kind of play uses stock characters seen in masque and again *commedia del arte*, these characters include the villain, the clown/servant, the lovers *etc*. These plays usually have an emphasis on moral dilemmas, and good always triumphs over evil, this kind of play is also very entertaining making it a very effective way of reaching many people. These plays usually have an emphasis on moral dilemmas, and good always triumphs over evil.

c. Melodrama: It is a chanted play that arouses pity and fear through simple means. Good and evil are clearly depicted in white and black motifs. Plot is emphasized over character development.

d. Farce: aimed at arousing explosive laughter using crude means. Conflicts are violent, practical jokes are common, and the wit is coarse. Psychologically farce may boost the readers' spirt and purge hostility and aggression. Farce is a funny play provoking mirth of the simplest and most basic kind: roars of laughter rather than smiles. It is a matter, therefore, of humour rather than wit.

5. Types of Drama

Drama has one characteristic peculiar to itself - it is written primarily to be performed through actors on a stage before an audience, not read. According to Aristotle, dramatic poets "represent people in action," and so as opposed to a third-person narrative or the mixture of narrative and direct speech as done by Homer, the dramatist is limited to only one point of view- the objective or dramatic. The playwright cannot directly comment on the action or the character and cannot directly enter the

minds of characters and tell us what is going on there. But there are ways to get around this limitation: through the use of the soliloquy (a character speaking directly to the audience), or the chorus (a group on stage commenting on characters and actions), one character can comment on another, too.

5.1. The Tragedy: (Gk 'goat song') In the first place it almost certainly denoted a form of ritual sacrifice accompanied by a choral song in honour of Dionysus, the god of the fields and the vineyards. Out of this ritual developed Greek dramatic tragedy.

According to Aristotle, a tragedy is the imitation in dramatic form of an action that is serious and complete, with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith it effects a catharsis of such emotions. The language used is pleasurable and throughout appropriate to the situation in which it is used. [with] The action, proceeding in the way defined, as one continuous whole. (*Poetics,* Aristotle)

The chief characters are noble personages ("better than ourselves," says Aristotle) and the actions they perform are noble actions.

5.1.1. The Tragic Hero

A man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement. The perfect Plot, accordingly, must have a single, and not a double issue; and the change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery. (Poetics, Aristotle)

5.1.2. Human Greatness

Tragedy has tended to be a form of drama concerned with the fortunes and misfortunes, and, ultimately, the disasters that befall human beings of title, power and position. What makes them tragic figures is that they have qualities of excellence, of nobleness, of passion; they have virtues and gifts that lift them above the ordinary run of mortal men and women. In tragedy these attributes are seen to be insufficient to save them either from self-destruction or from destruction brought upon them. And there is no hope for them. There is hope, perhaps, after the tragedy, but not during it.

5.1.3. Catharsis: Crying and Laughing

By participating vicariously in the grief, pain and fear of the tragic hero or heroine, the spectator, in Aristotle's words, experiences pity and fear and is purged. Or, he has a good cry and feels better. Comedy purges, too – through laughter. And laughter and tears are so closely associated physically and physiologically that often we do not know whether to laugh or to cry. And comic relief in tragedy serves many purposes, not least preventing the spectator from being overcharged with tragic emotion.

5.1.4. Tragic Flaw, Hamartia, Hubris

The tragic Flaw is that defect in a tragic hero or heroine which leads to their downfall. Hamartia (Gk 'error'): Aristotle points out that the tragic hero ought to be a man whose misfortune comes to him, not through vice or depravity, but by some error. Hubris is that excessive pride or passion manifest in the tragic hero. For example, Oedipus kills his father from impulse; and Antigone resists the law of the state from stubbornness and defiance.

6. Central features of the Aristotelian tragedy

a) The tragic hero is a character of noble stature and has greatness. If the hero's fall is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear, it must be a fall from a great height.

b) Though the tragic hero is pre-eminently great, he/she is not perfect. Tragic flaw, hubris (excessive pride or passion), and hamartia (some error) lead to the hero's downfall.

c) The hero's downfall, therefore, is partially her/his own fault, the result of one's own free choice, not the result of pure accident or villainy, or some overriding malignant fate.

d) Nevertheless, the hero's misfortune is not wholly deserved. The punishment exceeds the crime. The hero remains admirable.

e) Yet the tragic fall is not pure loss - though it may result in the hero's death, before it, there is some increase in awareness, some gain in self-knowledge or, as Aristotle puts it, some “discovery."

f) Though it arouses solemn emotion - pity and fear, says Aristotle, but compassion and awe might be better terms - tragedy, when well performed, does not leave its audience in a state of depression. It produces a catharsis or an emotional release at the end, one shared as a common experience by the audience.

7. Dramatic Unities: Action, Time, Space (ATS)

In Poetics, Aristotle was the first to consider the problem of the dramatic unities of action, time, and space/place.

Action: "The fable should be the imitation of one action, and of the whole of this and the parts of the transactions should be so arranged, that any one of them being transposed, or taken away the whole would become different and changed".

Time: "Tragedy endeavours to confine itself to one revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit".

Space: that tragedy should be confined to a narrow compass.

The supporters of the Classical precepts required that a play should be a unified whole, that the time of action should be limited to twenty-four hours and that the scene should be unchanged (or at any rate confined to one town or city).

8. Comedy

Comedy lies between satire and romance. It deals in an amusing way with ordinary characters in rather everyday situations. Evanthius says that in comedy the men are of middle fortune, the dangers they run into are neither serious nor pressing and their actions conclude happily. Evanthius goes on to say that whereas in tragedy life is to be fled from, in comedy it is to be grasped. The essential difference between tragedy and is in the depiction of human nature: tragedy shows greatness in human nature and human whereas comedy shows human weakness and human limitation. Laughter expresses recognition of some absurdity in human behaviour.

Central features of the comedy

a) The norms of comedy are primarily social; the protagonist is always in a group or emphasizes commonness. A tragic hero possesses overpowering individuality - so that the play is often named after her/him (Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth); the comic protagonist tends to be a type and the play is often named for the type (The Misanthrope, The Alchemist, The Brute).

b) Comic plots do not exhibit the high degree of organic unity as tragic plots do. Plausibility is not usually the central characteristic (cause-effect progression) but coincidences, improbable disguises, mistaken identities make up the plot.

c) The purpose of comedy is to make us laugh and at the same time, help to illuminate human nature and human weaknesses. Conventionally comedies have a happy ending. Accidental discovery, act of divine intervention, and sudden reform, are common comedic devises.

9. Important Terms Related to Drama

9.1. Stage Directions: They tell how actors move and speak on stage. They can also tell where action takes place (what's going on). They are notes added to the script of a play to indicate the moment of a character's appearance, character, manner; the style of delivery; the actor's movements; details of location, scenery and effects. (e.g. *Enter two servants; Music; Dies; Sings; Exit; Stabs him*). Most stage directions are in parentheses or in italics.

9.2. Dialogue: A verbal exchange between characters revealing their thoughts, responses and emotional states. We can infer a lot from characters' dialogue.

9.3. Soliloquy: In Latin: *soliloquium,* from *solus*, 'alone' and *loqui*, 'to speak'. It is a speech delivered by a character alone on stage revealing his state of mind and heart, his most intimate thoughts and feelings, his motives and intentions.

9.4. Aside: A speech directed to the audience understood to be unheard by other characters on stage, revealing the speaker's true opinion, desire or plan.

9.5. Dramatic Irony: When the audience knows sth. The character(s) does not.

9.6. Flashback: Any scene or episode in a play, novel, story or poem which is inserted to show events that happened at an earlier time. Flashbacks also have some psychological effects.

Conclusion

If theatre is viewed simply as a branch of literature or only as a form of narrative, then large segments of theatre history are inevitably slighted. Some periods or cultures have emphasized dramatic literature (plays) but others have stressed aspects of theatrical production. Some cultures see theatre's value as a means of storytelling; others see it as religion, spectacle, or entertainment.

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ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THE *GLOBE* THEATRE

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
William Shakespeare

Introduction

Drama during Shakespeare's time was referred to as Elizabethan drama because Queen Elizabeth (ruled 1558-1625) was the English monarch during the first part of Shakespeare's career. Plays performed during King James I (ruled 1603-1625) were referred to as Jacobean drama. Thus, Shakespeare's plays were performed between 1583 and 1613.

Theatre was illegal in London. It wasn't the high-class art form we consider it today. It was considered common and rude compared with poetry which the nobility preferred. London theatres were closed in 1596 by the Church of England under the influence of the Puritans who considered theatre immoral. But there was also the fear of bubonic plague or the Black Deaths for large gatherings would spread the disease. So, putting on plays was against the law in London during much of the period. Hence, Shakespeare had to build his theatre in Southwark, a borough of South London, on the opposite side of the Thames from the City. Historically, it was one of London's main centres for entertainment.

1. The Globe Theatre (1599)

It was a round wooden building which Shakespeare referred to once as "the Wooden O". Like a stadium or an arena, it was open-air in the middle.

1.1. Show-time: All productions took place in the afternoon since there was no artificial lighting. (no electricity)

1.2. Architecture and Design: The Globe was a typical 16th century London building. It was composed of:

- An elevated stage
- Two small doors (right – left) for exits and entrances
- A balcony
- The tiring house: costumes and props
- The gallery: lower, upper, and middle for the audience
- A canon that could be fired for the battle scenes (using gunpowder)
- A trapdoor, a grave, underworld (hell)
- The stage roof was referred to as the heavens
- The stage platform was earth

This symbolism suggests that theatre was like a little world. Thus, there was a quotation written on its roof in Latin from the Roman writer Petronius, *"Totus mundus agit historionem"* ("All the world's a stage"). This phrase also begins a monologue from Shakespeare's *As You Like It.*

> *All the world's a stage,*
> *And all the men and women merely players:*
> *They have their exits and their entrances;*
> *And one man in his time plays many parts,*

1.3. Setting: There were no painted sets behind. Shakespeare employed scene settings where a character would explain the place and time of speech.

1.4. Advertisement for the Shows: Theatres used coloured flags to show the people what kind of play is being performed:

- White flag: a comedy
- Black flag: a tragedy
- Red flag: history plays
- Seating arrangements
- The higher the more expensive
- Upper and middle class audience members paid more for the best seats in the gallery: lower, middle and upper for they were less exposed to rain and bad weather.
- Poor people paid only a penny to stand in front of the stage. They were called the Groundlings; they would cheer up the hero and boo the villain.
- Venders: would walk around to sell oranges, peanuts, soda …

1.5. Female roles

Since theatre was considered crude, uncommon and against the supposedly more delicate sensibilities of women, women were not allowed to appear on stage, being looked at by crowds of strange men, was explicitly against the law. So, female roles were played by adolescent boys wearing platform shoes and wigs and long dresses and lot of make up to make them look like women.

2. Shakespearean Tragedy

2.1. Plot

a) The story of a hero

- leads up and includes the death of a hero
- a tale of suffering and calamity leading to death

b) Suffering

- severe
- unexpected change and contrast to a previous glory

c) Concerned with a person of a high degree

- a leader or a head of state
- his fate affects the nation
- his death suggests the power of fate

2.2. Action: tragedy proceeds from actions of people

- main source of action is character
- the hero contributes to his own demise

2.3. Conflict: external and internal

2.4. Elements of the story

- the hero has abnormal condition of the mind
- encounters with the supernatural
- encounters with chance and accident

2.5. The hero

- exceptional nature

- desire, passion and will
- tragic trait: flaw (fatal)
- a great waste of potential

2.6. Good vs. Evil

- Villainy is defeated in the end
- The hero’s actions cause his destruction

HAMLET, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Introduction

Hamlet is without question the most famous play in the English language. Although Shakespeare has written many tragedies before it, but it is said that he reached the perfection of his artistic maturity and dramatic development in *Hamlet.* Probably written in 1601 or 1602, the tragedy is a brilliant depiction of the hero's struggle with two opposing forces: moral integrity and the need to avenge his father's murder.

Shakespeare's focus on the inner conflict was a revolutionary departure from contemporary revenge tragedies, which tended to graphically dramatize bloody deeds and violent acts on stage. In the words of Ernest Johnson, "the dilemma of Hamlet the Prince and Man" is "to disentangle himself from the temptation to wreak justice for the wrong reasons and in evil passion, and to do what he must do at last for the pure sake of justice…. From that dilemma of wrong feelings and right actions, he ultimately emerges, solving the problem by attaining a proper state of mind." Hamlet endures as the object of universal identification because his central moral dilemma transcends the Elizabethan period, making him a man for all ages. In his difficult struggle to somehow act within a corrupt world and yet maintain his moral integrity, Hamlet ultimately reflects the fate of all human beings.

1. William Shakespeare (1564- 1616)

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 to a successful middle-class glove-maker in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Shakespeare attended grammar school, but his formal education proceeded no further. In 1582 he married an older woman, Anne Hathaway, and had three children with her. Around 1590 he left his family behind and

travelled to London to work as an actor and playwright. Public and critical success quickly followed, and Shakespeare eventually became the most popular playwright in England and part-owner of the Globe Theatre. His career bridged the reigns of Elizabeth I (ruled 1558–1603) and James I (ruled 1603–1625), and he was a favourite of both monarchs. Indeed, James granted Shakespeare's company the greatest possible compliment by bestowing upon its members the title of King's Men. Wealthy and renowned, Shakespeare retired to Stratford and died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two. At the time of Shakespeare's death, literary luminaries such as Ben Jonson hailed his works as timeless.

Shakespeare's works were collected and printed in various editions in the century following his death, and by the early eighteenth century his reputation as the greatest poet ever to write in English was well established. The unprecedented admiration garnered by his works led to a fierce curiosity about Shakespeare's life, but the dearth of biographical information has left many details of Shakespeare's personal history shrouded in mystery. Some people have concluded from this fact that Shakespeare's plays were really written by someone else—Francis Bacon and the Earl of Oxford are the two most popular candidates—but the support for this claim is overwhelmingly circumstantial, and the theory is not taken seriously by many scholars.

In the absence of credible evidence to the contrary, Shakespeare must be viewed as the author of the thirty-seven plays and 154 sonnets that bear his name. The legacy of this body of work is immense. A number of Shakespeare's plays seem to have transcended even the category of brilliance, becoming so influential as to profoundly affect the course of Western literature and culture ever after.

2. About *Hamlet*

Written during the first part of the seventeenth century (assumably in 1600 or 1601), *Hamlet* was probably first performed in July 1602. The first edition of *Hamlet* was published in 1603, from a previous sketch composed several years earlier, the second one following in 1604, under the title of *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much as it was, according to the true and perfect copy. In comparing the two editions we find a remarkable improvement in the command of language, with greater philosophic depth, and a wondrous insight into what is most hidden and obscure in men's characters and motives.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a transformation of The *Ur-Hamlet* into an exceptional tragedy. The *Ur-Hamlet*, or "original *Hamlet*," is a lost play that scholars believe was written mere decades before. Numerous sixteenth-century records attest to the existence of the *Ur-Hamlet*, with some references linking its composition to Thomas Kyd. Other principal sources available to Shakespeare were Saxo Grammaticus's *Historiae Danicae* (circa 1200), which features a popular legend with a plot similar to *Hamlet*, and François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques, Extraicts des Oeuvres Italiennes de Bandel* (7 Vols.; 1559-80), which provides an expanded account of the story recorded in the *Historiae Danicae*. From these sources Shakespeare created *Hamlet*, a supremely rich and complex literary work that continues to delight both readers and audiences with its myriad meanings and interpretations.

The raw material that Shakespeare appropriated in writing Hamlet is the story of a Danish prince whose uncle murders the prince's father, marries his mother, and claims the throne. The prince pretends to be feeble-minded to throw his uncle off guard, then

manages to kill his uncle in revenge. Shakespeare changed the emphasis of this story entirely, making his Hamlet a philosophically-minded prince who delays taking action because his knowledge of his uncle's crime is so uncertain. Shakespeare went far beyond making uncertainty a personal quirk of Hamlet's, introducing a number of important ambiguities into the play that even the audience cannot resolve with certainty. For instance, whether Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, shares in Claudius's guilt; whether Hamlet continues to love Ophelia even as he spurns her, in Act III; whether Ophelia's death is suicide or accident; whether the ghost offers reliable knowledge, or seeks to deceive and tempt Hamlet; and, perhaps most importantly, whether Hamlet would be morally justified in taking revenge on his uncle. Shakespeare makes it clear that the stakes riding on some of these questions are enormous—the actions of these characters bring disaster upon an entire kingdom. At the play's end it is not even clear whether justice has been achieved.

3. Context

By modifying his source materials in this way, Shakespeare was able to take an unremarkable revenge story and make it resonate with the most fundamental themes and problems of the Renaissance.

Hamlet's famous speech in Act II: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!" (II.ii.293–297) is directly based upon one of the major texts of the Italian humanists, Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man.* For the humanists, the purpose of cultivating reason was to lead to a better understanding of

how to act, and their fondest hope was that the coordination of action and understanding would lead to great benefits for society as a whole.

As the Renaissance spread to other countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, a more skeptical strain of humanism developed, stressing the limitations of human understanding. For example, the sixteenth-century French humanist, Michel de Montaigne, was no less interested in studying human experiences than the earlier humanists were, but he maintained that the world of experience was a world of appearances, and that human beings could never hope to see past those appearances into the "realities" that lie behind them. This is the world in which Shakespeare places his characters. Hamlet is faced with the difficult task of correcting an injustice that he can never have sufficient knowledge of—a dilemma that is by no means unique, or even uncommon. And while Hamlet is fond of pointing out questions that cannot be answered because they concern supernatural and metaphysical matters, the play as a whole chiefly demonstrates the difficulty of knowing the truth about other people—their guilt or innocence, their motivations, their feelings, their relative states of sanity or insanity. The world of other people is a world of appearances, and *Hamlet* is, fundamentally, a play about the difficulty of living in that world.

4. Literary Analysis

4.1. Plot Overview

On a dark knight, two watchmen of Elsinore Castle in Denmark see a ghost resembling the recently deceased King walking the ramparts. the scholar Horatio, who sees the ghost too, brings Prince Hamlet, the son of Gertrude and the dead king. When Hamlet urges the ghost to speak to him, it declares ominously that it is indeed his

father's spirit, and that he was murdered by none other than Claudius whose brother Claudius, who has inherited the throne and married the king's widow, Queen Gertrude. Ordering Hamlet to seek revenge on the man who usurped his throne and married his wife, the ghost disappears with the dawn.

Because Prince Hamlet is contemplative and thoughtful by nature, he delays the revenge, entering into a deep melancholy and even apparent madness. Claudius and Gertrude worry about the prince's erratic behaviour and attempt to discover its cause. They employ Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two friends of the prince, to watch him. Polonius, the pompous Lord Chamberlain, suggests that Hamlet may be mad with love for his daughter, Ophelia, but this doesn't seem to be the case.

Hamlet wants to test his uncle's guilt, so he has some actors perform a scene closely resembling the sequence by which Hamlet imagines his uncle to have murdered his father, so that if Claudius is guilty, he will surely react. When the moment of the murder arrives in the theatre, Claudius leaps up and leaves the room. Hamlet and Horatio agree that this proves his guilt. Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but finds him praying. Since he believes that killing Claudius while in prayer would send Claudius's soul to heaven, Hamlet considers that it would be an inadequate revenge and decides to wait. Claudius, now frightened of Hamlet's madness and fearing for his own safety, orders that Hamlet be sent to England at once.

Hamlet goes to confront his mother, and, hearing a noise from behind the tapestry, he believes the king is hiding there. He draws his sword and stabs through the fabric, killing Polonius, who has hidden behind a tapestry. For this crime, he is immediately dispatched to England with his two friends. However, Claudius's plan for Hamlet

includes more than banishment, as he has given Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sealed orders for the King of England demanding that Hamlet be put to death.

In the aftermath of her father's death, Ophelia goes mad with grief and drowns in the river. Polonius's son, Laertes, who has been staying in France, returns to Denmark in a rage. Claudius convinces him that Hamlet is to blame for his father's and sister's deaths. When Horatio and the king receive letters from Hamlet indicating that the prince has returned to Denmark after pirates attacked his ship en route to England, Claudius concocts a plan to use Laertes' desire for revenge to secure Hamlet's death. Laertes will fence with Hamlet in innocent sport, but Claudius will poison Laertes' blade so that if he draws blood, Hamlet will die. As a backup plan, the king decides to poison a goblet, which he will give Hamlet to drink should Hamlet score the first or second hits of the match. Hamlet returns to the vicinity of Elsinore just as Ophelia's funeral is taking place. Stricken with grief, he attacks Laertes and declares that he had in fact always loved Ophelia. Back at the castle, he tells Horatio that he believes one must be prepared to die, since death can come at any moment. A foolish courtier named Osric arrives on Claudius's orders to arrange the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes.

The sword-fighting begins. Hamlet scores the first hit, but declines to drink from the king's proffered goblet. Instead, Gertrude takes a drink from it and is swiftly killed by the poison. Laertes succeeds in wounding Hamlet, though Hamlet does not die of the poison immediately. First, Laertes is cut by his own sword's blade, and, after revealing to Hamlet that Claudius is responsible for the queen's death, he dies from the blade's poison. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge.

At this moment, a Norwegian prince named Fortinbras, who has led an army to Denmark and attacked Poland earlier in the play, enters with ambassadors from England, who report that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is stunned by the gruesome sight of the entire royal family lying sprawled on the floor dead. He moves to take power of the kingdom. Horatio, fulfilling Hamlet's last request, tells him Hamlet's tragic story. Fortinbras orders that Hamlet be carried away in a manner befitting a fallen soldier.

4.2. Character Analysis

Hamlet: The mystery which surrounds the play centres in the character of Hamlet himself. He is of a highly cultivated mind, a prince of royal manners, endowed with the finest sense of propriety, susceptible of noble ambition, and open in the highest degree to an enthusiastic admiration of that excellence in others in which he himself is deficient. However, he acts the part of madness with unrivalled power, convincing the persons who are sent to examine into his supposed loss of reason merely by telling them unwelcome truths and rallying them with the most caustic wit. But in the resolutions which he so often embraces and always leaves unexecuted, his weakness is too apparent; he is not solely impelled by necessity to artifice and dissimulation, he has a natural inclination for curved ways; he is a hypocrite toward himself; his far-fetched scruples are often mere pretexts to cover his want of determination--thoughts, as he says, which have

> But one part wisdom
> And ever three parts coward.

Hamlet has fascinated audiences and readers for centuries, and the first thing to point out about him is that he is enigmatic. There is always more to him than the other

characters in the play can figure out; even the most careful and clever readers come away with the sense that they don’t know everything there is to know about this character. Hamlet is condemned both for his harshness in repulsing the love of Ophelia, which he himself had cherished, and for his insensibility at her death. But he is too much overwhelmed with his own sorrow to have any compassion to spare for others; besides, his outward indifference gives us by no means the measure of his internal perturbation. On the other hand, we evidently perceive in him a malicious joy, when he has succeeded in getting rid of his enemies, more through necessity and accident, which alone are able to impel him to quick and decisive measures, than by the merit of his own courage, as he himself confesses after the slaying of Polonius. Hamlet has no firm belief either in himself or in anything else. From expressions of religious confidence, he passes over to skeptical doubts; he believes in the ghost of his father as long as he sees it, but as soon as it has disappeared, it appears to him almost in the light of a deception. He has even gone so far as to say "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so;" with him the poet loses himself here in the labyrinths of thought, in which neither end nor beginning is discoverable. The stars themselves, from the course of events, afford no answer to the questions so urgently proposed to them. A voice from another world, commissioned, it would appear, by heaven, demands vengeance for a monstrous enormity, and the demand remains without effect; the criminals are at last punished, but, as it were, by an accidental blow, and not in the solemn way requisite to convey to the world a warning example of justice; irresolution, cunning treachery and impetuous rage hurry on to a common destruction; the less guilty and the innocent are equally involved in the general ruin. The destiny of humanity is here exhibited as a gigantic Sphinx, which threatens to precipitate into the abyss of skepticism all who are unable to solve her dread enigmas.

Claudius: he is the play's antagonist. The King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, and the villain of the play, Claudius is a shrewd, lustful, calculating, and ambitious corrupt politician, driven by his lust for power, but he occasionally shows signs of guilt and human feeling, his love for Gertrude, for instance, seems sincere.

Claudius displays a skilful use of language with which he is able to manipulate the others. Claudius's speech is compared to poison being poured in the ear (the method he used to murder Hamlet's father).

As the play progresses, Claudius's mounting fear of Hamlet's insanity leads him to ever greater self-preoccupation; when Gertrude tells him that Hamlet has killed Polonius, Claudius does not remark that Gertrude might have been in danger, but only that he would have been in danger had he been in the room. He tells Laertes the same thing as he attempts to soothe the young man's anger after his father's death. Claudius is ultimately too crafty for his own good. In Act V, scene ii, rather than allowing Laertes only two methods of killing Hamlet, the sharpened sword and the poison on the blade, Claudius insists on a third, the poisoned goblet. When Gertrude inadvertently drinks the poison and dies, Hamlet is at last able to bring himself to kill Claudius, and the king is felled by his own cowardly machination.

Gertrude: The weak, shallow Queen of Denmark and Hamlet's mother who seeks affection and status more urgently than moral rectitude or truth.

Few Shakespearean characters have caused as much uncertainty as Gertrude, the beautiful Queen of Denmark. The play seems to raise more questions about Gertrude than it answers, including: Was she involved with Claudius before the death of her husband? Did she love her husband? Did she know about Claudius's plan to commit

the murder? Did she love Claudius, or did she marry him simply to keep her high station in Denmark? Does she believe Hamlet when he insists that he is not mad, or does she pretend to believe him simply to protect herself? Does she intentionally betray Hamlet to Claudius, or does she believe that she is protecting her son's secret?

These questions can be answered in numerous ways, depending upon one's reading of the play. The Gertrude who does emerge clearly in *Hamlet* is a woman defined by her desire for station and affection,

Hamlet's most famous comment about Gertrude is his furious condemnation of women in general: "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (I.ii.146). This comment is as much indicative of Hamlet's agonized state of mind as of anything else, but to a great extent Gertrude does seem morally frail. She never exhibits the ability to think critically about her situation, but seems merely to move instinctively toward seemingly safe choices, as when she immediately runs to Claudius after her confrontation with Hamlet. She is at her best in social situations (I.ii and V.ii), when her natural grace and charm seem to indicate a rich, rounded personality. At times it seems that her grace and charm are her *only* characteristics, and her reliance on men appears to be her sole way of capitalizing on her abilities.

Polonius: The Lord Chamberlain of Claudius's court, a pretentious, manipulative old man. Polonius is the father of Laertes and Ophelia.

Ophelia: Polonius's daughter, a beautiful young woman with whom Hamlet has been in love. Ophelia is a sweet and innocent young girl, who obeys her father and her brother, Laertes. Dependent on men to tell her how to behave, she gives in to Polonius's schemes to spy on Hamlet. Even in her lapse into madness and death, she remains

maidenly, singing songs about flowers and finally drowning in the river amid the flower garlands she had gathered.

Horatio: Hamlet's close friend, who studied with the prince at the university in Wittenberg. Horatio is loyal and helpful to Hamlet throughout the play. After Hamlet's death, Horatio remains alive to tell Hamlet's story.

Laertes: Polonius's son and Ophelia's brother, a young man who spends much of the play in France. Passionate and quick to action, Laertes is clearly a foil for the reflective Hamlet.

Fortinbras: The young Prince of Norway, whose father the king (also named Fortinbras) was killed by Hamlet's father (also named Hamlet). Now Fortinbras wishes to attack Denmark to avenge his father's honour, making him another foil for Prince Hamlet.

The Ghost: The spectre of Hamlet's recently deceased father. The ghost, who claims to have been murdered by Claudius, calls upon Hamlet to avenge him. However, it is not entirely certain whether the ghost is what it appears to be, or whether it is something else. Hamlet speculates that the ghost might be a devil sent to deceive him and tempt him into murder, and the question of what the ghost is or where it comes from is never definitively resolved.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: Two slightly bumbling courtiers, former friends of Hamlet from Wittenberg, who are summoned by Claudius and Gertrude to discover the cause of Hamlet's strange behaviour.

Osric: The foolish courtier who summons Hamlet to his duel with Laertes.

Voltimand and Cornelius: Courtiers whom Claudius sends to Norway to persuade the king to prevent Fortinbras from attacking.

Marcellus and Bernardo: The officers who first see the ghost walking the ramparts of Elsinore and who summon Horatio to witness it. Marcellus is present when Hamlet first encounters the ghost.

Francisco: A soldier and guardsman at Elsinore.

Reynaldo: Polonius's servant, who is sent to France by Polonius to check up on and spy on Laertes.

4.3. Major Themes

4.3.1 The Impossibility of Certainty

This play poses many questions that other plays would simply take for granted. What separates *Hamlet* from other revenge plays is that the action we expect to see, particularly from Hamlet himself, is continually postponed while Hamlet tries to obtain more certain knowledge about what he is doing. Maybe it is due to the philosophical nature of the major character that many questions seem unsolved: Can we have certain knowledge about ghosts? Is the ghost what it appears to be, or is it really a misleading fiend? Does the ghost have reliable knowledge about its own death, or is the ghost itself deluded? Moving to more earthly matters: How can we know for certain the facts about a crime that has no witnesses? Can Hamlet know the state of Claudius's soul by watching his behaviour? If so, can he know the facts of what Claudius did by observing the state of his soul? Can Claudius (or the audience) know the state of Hamlet's mind by observing his behaviour and listening to his speech? Can we know whether our

actions will have the consequences we want them to have? Can we know anything about the afterlife?

Many people have seen *Hamlet* as a play about indecisiveness, and thus about Hamlet's failure to act appropriately. It might be more interesting to consider that the play shows us how many uncertainties our lives are built upon how many unknown quantities are taken for granted when people act or when they evaluate one another's actions.

4.3.2. The Complexity of Action

Directly related to the theme of certainty is the theme of action. How is it possible to take reasonable, effective, purposeful action? In *Hamlet*, the question of how to act is affected not only by rational considerations, such as the need for certainty, but also by emotional, ethical, and psychological factors. Hamlet himself appears to distrust the idea that it's even possible to act in a controlled, purposeful way. When he does act, he prefers to do it blindly, recklessly, and violently. The other characters obviously think much less about "action" in the abstract than Hamlet does, and are therefore less troubled about the possibility of acting effectively. They simply act as they feel is appropriate. But in some sense they prove that Hamlet is right, because all of their actions miscarry. Claudius possesses himself of queen and crown through bold action, but his conscience torments him, and he is beset by threats to his authority (and, of course, he dies). Laertes resolves that nothing will distract him from acting out his revenge, but he is easily influenced and manipulated into serving Claudius's ends, and his poisoned rapier is turned back upon himself.

4.3.3. The Mystery of Death

In the aftermath of his father's murder, Hamlet is obsessed with the idea of death, and over the course of the play he considers death from a great many perspectives. He ponders both the spiritual aftermath of death, embodied in the ghost, and the physical remainders of the dead, such as by Yorick's skull and the decaying corpses in the cemetery. Throughout, the idea of death is closely tied to the themes of spirituality, truth, and uncertainty in that death may bring the answers to Hamlet's deepest questions, ending once and for all the problem of trying to determine truth in an ambiguous world. And, since death is both the cause and the consequence of revenge, it is intimately tied to the theme of revenge and justice—Claudius's murder of King Hamlet initiates Hamlet's quest for revenge, and Claudius's death is the end of that quest.

The question of his own death plagues Hamlet as well, as he repeatedly contemplates whether or not suicide is a morally legitimate action in an unbearably painful world. Hamlet's grief and misery is such that he frequently longs for death to end his suffering, but he fears that if he commits suicide, he will be consigned to eternal suffering in hell because of the Christian religion's prohibition of suicide. In his famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy (III.i), Hamlet philosophically concludes that no one would choose to endure the pain of life if he or she were not afraid of what will come after death, and that it is this fear which causes complex moral considerations to interfere with the capacity for action.

4.3.4. The Nation as a Diseased Body

Everything is connected in *Hamlet*, including the welfare of the royal family and the health of the state as a whole. The play's early scenes explore the sense of anxiety and dread that surrounds the transfer of power from one ruler to the next. Throughout the play, characters draw explicit connections between the moral legitimacy of a ruler and the health of the nation. Denmark is frequently described as a physical body made ill by the moral corruption of Claudius and Gertrude, and many observers interpret the presence of the ghost as a supernatural omen indicating that "[s]omething is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I.iv.67). The dead King Hamlet is portrayed as a strong, forthright ruler under whose guard the state was in good health, while Claudius, a wicked politician, has corrupted and compromised Denmark to satisfy his own appetites. At the end of the play, the rise to power of the upright Fortinbras suggests that Denmark will be strengthened once again.

4.4. Motifs

4.4.1. Incest and Incestuous Desire

The motif of incest runs throughout the play and is frequently alluded to by Hamlet and the ghost, most obviously in conversations about Gertrude and Claudius, the former brother-in-law and sister-in-law who are now married. A subtle motif of incestuous desire can be found in the relationship of Laertes and Ophelia, as Laertes sometimes speaks to his sister in suggestively sexual terms and, at her funeral, leaps into her grave to hold her in his arms. However, the strongest overtones of incestuous desire arise in the relationship of Hamlet and Gertrude, in Hamlet's fixation on Gertrude's sex life with Claudius and his preoccupation with her in general.

4.4.2. Misogyny

Shattered by his mother's decision to marry Claudius so soon after her husband's death, Hamlet becomes cynical about women in general, showing a particular obsession with what he perceives to be a connection between female sexuality and moral corruption. This motif of misogyny, or hatred of women, occurs sporadically throughout the play, but it is an important inhibiting factor in Hamlet's relationships with Ophelia and Gertrude. He urges Ophelia to go to a nunnery rather than experience the corruptions of sexuality and exclaims of Gertrude, "Frailty, thy name is woman" (I.ii.146).

4.4.3. Ears and Hearing

One facet of *Hamlet'*s exploration of the difficulty of attaining true knowledge is slipperiness of language. Words are used to communicate ideas, but they can also be used to distort the truth, manipulate other people, and serve as tools in corrupt quests for power. Claudius, the shrewd politician, is the most obvious example of a man who manipulates words to enhance his own power. The sinister uses of words are represented by images of ears and hearing, from Claudius's murder of the king by pouring poison into his ear to Hamlet's claim to Horatio that "I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb" (IV.vi.21). The poison poured in the king's ear by Claudius is used by the ghost to symbolize the corrosive effect of Claudius's dishonesty on the health of Denmark. Declaring that the story that he was killed by a snake is a lie, he says that "the whole ear of Denmark" is "Rankly abused. . . ." (I.v.36–38).

4.5. Symbols

4.5.1. Yorick's Skull

In *Hamlet,* physical objects are rarely used to represent thematic ideas. One important exception is Yorick's skull, which Hamlet discovers in the graveyard in the first scene of Act V. As Hamlet speaks to the skull and about the skull of the king's former jester, he fixates on death's inevitability and the disintegration of the body. He urges the skull to "get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come", no one can avoid death (V.i.178–179). He traces the skull's mouth and says, "Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft," indicating his fascination with the physical consequences of death (V.i.174–175). This latter idea is an important motif throughout the play, as Hamlet frequently makes comments referring to every human body's eventual decay, noting that Polonius will be eaten by worms, that even kings are eaten by worms, and that dust from the decayed body of Alexander the Great might be used to stop a hole in a beer barrel.

4.6. Language and Style

Shakespeare has composed the play in Hamlet altogether in sententious rhymes full of antitheses. But this solemn and measured tone did not suit a speech in which violent emotion ought to prevail, and the poet had no other expedient than the one of which he made choice--overcharging the pathos. Unquestionably the language of the speech in question is falsely emphatical; but this fault is so mixed up with true grandeur that a player practiced in artificially calling forth in himself the emotion he is imitating may certainly be carried away by it. Besides, it will hardly be believed that Shakespeare knew so little of his art as not to be aware that a tragedy, in which there is a lengthy

epic relation of a transaction that happened so long before as the destruction of Troy, could neither be dramatic nor theatrical.

The opening of *Hamlet* is one of the most absorbing scenes in the Shakespearean drama. It produces its effect by the supernatural being brought into the most immediate contact with the real. The sentinels are prepared for the appearance of the ghost, Horatio being incredulous, but they are all surrounded with an atmosphere of common life. "Long live the king," "'Tis bitter cold," "Not a mouse stirring," and the familiar pleasantry of Horatio, exhibit to us minds under the ordinary state of human feeling. At the moment when the recollections of Bernardo arise into that imaginative power which belongs to the tale he is about to tell, the ghost appears. All that was doubtful in the narrative of the supernatural vision--what left upon Horatio's mind the impression only of a “thing”--because as real as the silence, the cold and the midnight. The vision is then “most like the king”--

There is also something altogether indefinable and mysterious in the poet's delineation of this character, something wild and irregular in the circumstances with which the character is associated. We see that Hamlet is propelled rather than propelling. But why is this turn given to the delineation? We cannot exactly tell. Doubtless much of the very charm of the play is its mysteriousness. It awakes not only thoughts of the grand and the beautiful, but of the incomprehensible. Its obscurity constitutes a portion of its sublimity. This is the stage in which most minds are content to rest, and perhaps better so, with regard to the comprehension of *Hamlet*.

One of Shakespeare’s most impressive achievements with *Hamlet* is his ability in writing the soliloquies and dialogues, it sounds as if there’s something important Hamlet is not saying, maybe something even he is not aware of.

As one example of the many details of Shakespeare which have been generally misunderstood, may be mentioned the style in which the player's speech about Hecuba is conceived. It has been the subject of much controversy among commentators whether this was taken by Shakespeare from himself or from another, and whether, in the praise of the piece of which it is supposed to be a part, Hamlet was speaking seriously, or merely meant to ridicule the tragic bombast of his contemporaries. It seems never to have occurred to them that this speech must not be judged by itself, but in connection with the place where it is introduced. To distinguish it in the play itself as dramatic poetry, it was necessary that it should rise above the dignified poetry of the former in the same proportion that theatrical elevation always soars above simple nature.

What makes *Hamlet* of Shakespeare a unique play is the style in which it is written, a style which speaks, above anything else, to the readers' critical faculty. Goethe, Coleridge, Schlegel, Lamb, Hazlitt, and other writers, have brought to the criticism and explanation of this play a most valuable fund of judgment, taste and aesthetical knowledge. To condense what is most deserving of remembrance in these admirable productions within due limits would be impossible.

Conclusion

Hamlet is a tragedy of thought inspired by continual and never-satisfied meditation on human destiny and the dark perplexity of the events of this world, one calculated to call forth the very same meditation in the minds of the spectators. This enigmatical work resembles somewhat those irrational equations in which a fraction of unknown magnitude always remains, that will in no way admit of solution. Much has been said, much written, on this piece, and yet no critic who anew expresses himself on it will entirely coincide with his predecessors. What most astonishes us is the fact that with

such hidden purposes, with a foundation laid in such unfathomable depth, the whole should, at first view, exhibit an extremely popular appearance. The dread appearance of the ghost takes possession of the mind and the imagination almost at the very commencement; then the play within the play, in which, as in a glass, we see reflected the crime whose fruitlessly attempted punishment constitutes the subject-matter of the piece; the alarm with which it fills the king; Hamlet's pretended and Ophelia's real madness; her death and burial; the meeting of Hamlet and Laertes at her grave; their combat and the grand termination; lastly, the appearance of the young hero Fortinbras, who, with warlike pomp, pays the last honours to an extinct family of kings; the interspersion of comic characteristic scenes with Polonius, the courtiers and the grave-diggers, which have each of them their signification, all this fills the stage with and animated and varied movement. The only point of view from which this piece might be judged to be less theatrical than other tragedies of Shakespeare, is that in the last scenes the main action either stands still or appears to be retrograde. This, however, was inevitable, and lay in the nature of the subject. The whole is intended to show that a too close consideration, which exhausts all the relations and possible consequences of a deed, must cripple the power of action.

RENAISSANCE ELEMENTS IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*

***Read the following extracts from Hamlet and discuss the different Renaissance elements in the play*. (See appendix 4).**

Politics: there were big political changes taking place during the time that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet.*

Act I scene v

THE GHOST
But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

Humanism: a rise in humanist philosophy, self-belief, human worth and individual dignity.

Act II scene ii

HAMLET
What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

Act II scene ii

HAMLET
The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Act III scene i

OPHELIA
O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

Religion: characters influenced by religious beliefs.

Act III scene i

HAMLET
To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,

ANALYSING "SONNET 18" BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Read Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" and analyse its themes and style. **(See appendix 5).**

Introduction

The idea that human beings can immortalize themselves in their art is popular among artists and writers and serves as an alternative to notions of immortality rooted in an afterlife or in one's progeny. In antiquity, Horace and Ovid held this belief, just as today many poets do. Shakespeare also subscribed to this idea of creative immortality, and made it the topic of many of his poems. In Sonnet 18, one of a number of sonnets which praise the beauty of his beloved one, the poet desires that the object of his infatuation has everlasting beauty. It deals with love and the admiration of physical beauty. The object of the speaker's affection will not blossom and shine for mere twenty four hours, but forever – or at least as long as this *sonnet* continues to be read.

1. Historical Context

As a literary genre, the sonnet originated in Italy and is associated with the name of Francis Petrarch (1304–1374). The poems Petrarch wrote were describing his hopeless love for a woman he referred to as "Laura,", and they inspired a vogue that lasted for centuries in Western poetry.

The characteristic Petrarchan sonnet consists of an octave (eight lines) in which the subject is described and developed, and a sestet (six lines) in which the thought takes a turn and there is a solution to the problem or an easing of it.

This sonnet form reached England two hundred years after Petrarch. The most famous English sonneteers were (in addition to Shakespeare) Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542) and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517–1547). Many of their sonnets were virtual translations of Petrarch, but eventually a new sonnet form evolved, which became known as the English sonnet. In the English sonnet (also called the Shakespearean sonnet) the argument or thought is presented and developed over three quatrains and then resolved in a concluding couplet.

However, Shakespeare was no slave to the convention. His sonnets differ in important ways from the work of his predecessors and contemporaries. The majority of Shakespeare's sonnets are addressed to a young man, not a woman, and the young man appears to belong to a higher social class than his admirer. Also, the black-eyed, black-haired Dark Lady who is addressed or referred to in over twenty sonnets is very different from the conventional sonnet lady. Shakespeare further departs from tradition when he makes it clear that the Dark Lady is not a paragon of virtue. Even though, almost against his will, he is in love with her, he does not regard her as a woman of sound moral character. On the contrary, he presents her as promiscuous and untrustworthy, unlike the usual chaste and virtuous sonnet lady.

In the descriptions of the range of emotions the poet experiences as a result of his relationships with the friend and the Dark Lady, Shakespeare's sonnets attain a psychological complexity that his contemporaries could not match. Taking themes and a poetic form that already permeated Elizabethan literary culture, Shakespeare's creative and deeply probing mind took them to heights not attained before or since. Ironically, by the time Shakespeare's sonnets were published in 1609, the sonnet craze that had inspired them was over.

2. Poem Text

Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?	*1*	
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:	*2*	
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	*3*	
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:	*4*	
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines	*5*	(Metaphor)
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;	*6*	(Personification)
And every **fair** from fair sometimes declines,	*7*	
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;	*8*	
But thy **eternal** Summer shall not fade,	*9*	(Symbol of beauty)
Nor lose possession of that **fair** thou ow'st;	*10*	
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,	*11*	(Personification)
When in **eternal** lines to time thou grow'st:	*12*	(Symbol: DNA, life, poem)
So long as men **can** breathe, or eyes **can** see,	*13*	
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.	*14*	(Alliteration)

William Shakespeare

3. Structure of the Sonnet

By definition, the Shakespearean sonnet is a fourteen-line poem that follows certain well-established conventions in its rhyme scheme. It is composed of three quatrains (a verse of four lines) which develops the thought or argument, followed by a concluding couplet (two lines), which resolves the issue, often with a witty or unexpected turn in the thought.

The rhyme scheme is **abab cdcd efef gg.** Shakespeare's sonnets are written in iambic pentameter, which means that each line consists of five metrical feet, each foot made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

The rhyme scheme of Shakespearean sonnets affects meaning. The first quatrain of the sonnet starts with a flattering question to the beloved – "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" Shakespeare then argues that summer's days are neither perfect nor everlasting. They are windy (line 3) and short (line 4). Hence, in the first quatrain the

poet sets the problem of whether it is appropriate to compare someone's lover to a summer's day.

The second quatrain further discusses the problem and explains why it may not be a good idea to compare his lover to a summer's day. The speaker lists some negative points about summer. The sun is sometimes too hot (line 5). Moreover, summer's beauty is temporary (7).

The third quatrain concludes that the speaker cannot compare his love to a summer's day because unlike summer, her beauty will not fade. He has immortalized her in this poem (lines 9 and 12).

The concluding couplet (last two lines) resolves the issue. By putting his love's beauty into the form of poetry, the speaker is preserving it forever. As long as there are people around to read this poem, this poem will continue to exist. The poem immortalises the love and beauty of his beloved one (lines 13 and 14).

4. Themes

4.1. Immortality

Although it is likely that Shakespeare himself did not arrange his 154 sonnets into groups, critics have come to recognize patterns or stages of their sequence. They have noticed, for example, that one dominant theme in Sonnets 1-17 is immortality through procreation. In the first seventeen sonnets a young man is urged to marry and have children. This is a very conventional theme for Elizabethan sonnets, but in "Sonnet 18," Shakespeare advocates seeking immortality through poetry rather than through procreation: he wants to immortalize the object of his affection by creating a work of art that will last forever.

“Sonnet 18” is structured as an argumentative monologue delivered in response to the question – “Shall I compare thee to a Summer’s day?” – posed in the first line. The speaker answers the question in the negative, suggesting that the object of his affection is “more lovely and more temperate” than a mere summer’s day. Though summer days are pleasant, they are neither perfect nor everlasting. Their finiteness and propensity for bad weather make them, the speaker argues, a poor comparison with the object of his affection.

In the third quatrain (four-line stanza) the speaker refers to the object of his affection as an “eternal summer,” whose loveliness and temperance are obviously more enduring than a summer’s day. The “eternal lines” mentioned in line twelve, then, not only refer to the poetic lines of the sonnet, but also to the shape and beauty of the beloved. In the sonnet’s couplet (pair of rhyming lines that concludes the poem), the speaker contends that because poetry is immortal, so, too, can his beloved’s beauty remain immortal when preserved in verse: “So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

4.2. Beauty/Aesthetics

In “Sonnet 18” Shakespeare closely relates the theme of beauty with the theme of immortality. The speaker’s main contention, for example, explaining why the object of his affection is not comparable to a summer’s day, revolves around the idea that his beloved is indeed everlastingly beautiful: “Thou art more lovely and temperate: ... / So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” Comparing both the love the speaker feels, and the eternal beauty that his love possesses to a summer’s day, then, is simply inadequate.

In the last two lines of the second quatrain, the speaker maintains that in the physical world, nature dictates that everything, even beauty, slowly decays. In the third quatrain, however, the speaker stops comparing his love with a summer's day, and instead describes the extent of his beloved's beauty: "But thy eternal Summer shall not fade / Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st; / Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade...." The speaker asserts that his beloved possesses a beauty so deep and enduring that it cannot be adversely affected by time and age. This beauty can even conquer death as long as there are people to read the lines of this poem.

THE METAPHYSICAL POETS

1. What is a metaphysical poem?

Metaphysical poetry is concerned with the whole experience of man, but the intelligence, learning and seriousness of the poets mean that the poetry is about the profound areas of experience especially about love, romantic and sensual; about man's relationship with God - the eternal perspective; and, to a less extent, about pleasure, learning and art.

2. Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

- Poets are of high intellect
- Obscurity
- Brevity
- Unified sensibility (thinking + feeling)
- Metaphysical conceits: comparison of two dissimilar things
- Conversational style
- Platonic or spiritual love

3. Metaphysical Poets

- John Donne 1572-1631
- Andrew Marvell 1621-1678
- George Herbert 1593-1633

- Richard Crashaw 1613-1649
- Henry Vaughan 1622-1695

4. Style in Metaphysical Poetry

- Complex extended metaphors called conceits
- There is an intense urge to argue persuade or define what is happening.
- The form is frequently that of an argument with the poet's beloved, with God, or with himself.
- Imagery often drawn from philosophy, theology, science, or the arts.
- Forced readers to think much deeper
- Wrote in a witty plain conversational style

5. Themes of Metaphysical Poetry

- Complex philosophical speculation
- Love and beauty
- The brevity of life
- The individual's relationship with God

Metaphysical Conceit

- A metaphysical conceit is where the objects of comparison have no apparent connection. (fire & ice?)
- For example, in George Herbert's poem Praise, he compares God's generosity to a bottle full of endless tears.

One of the most famous of Donne's conceits is found in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" where he compares two lovers who are separated to the two legs of a compass.

Abstract versus Concrete

Metaphysical poets “constantly connect the abstract with the concrete, the remote with the near, and the sublime with the commonplace” --Joan Bennett in *Four Metaphysical Poets* 3

Paradox

Metaphysical poets used paradox - a statement that seems contradictory but suggests a truth.

- Example: The only thing certain is that nothing is certain.
- Example: Present in absence
- Example: Less is more.

Imagery

The Metaphysicals drew their imagery from all sources of knowledge, and in particular from science, theology, geography, and philosophy.

Examples:

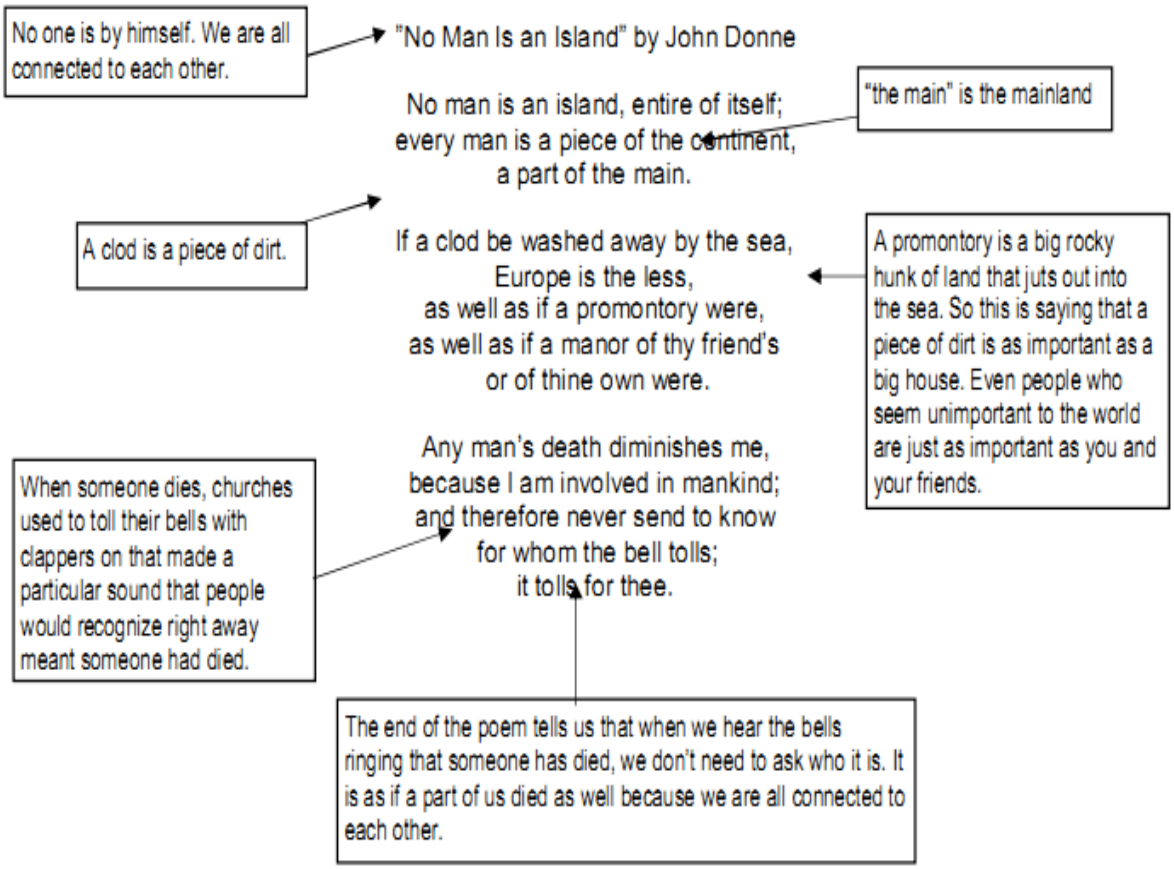
- Suffering is a harvest of thorns or bloodletting.
- Paradise is a garden where winter never comes.
- Go and catch a falling star.

ANALYSING JOHN DONNE'S "NO MAN IS AN ISLAND"

Task: Read John Donne's No Man Is an Island and analyse its style and themes. State why you think it is a metaphysical poem. **(See appendix 6).**

"No Man Is an Island", by John Donne

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.



ANALYSING "HOLY SONNET X," BY JOHN DONNE (1633)

Task: Read John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 10," and analyse its style and themes. State why you think it is a metaphysical poem. **(See appendix 7).**

Introduction

Donne most likely wrote "Holy Sonnet 10" in 1609 but, like most poetry of that time, it did not appear in print during the poet's lifetime. The poem was first published in 1633, two years after Donne's death; during his life, however, his poetry became well known because it circulated privately in manuscript and handwritten copies among literate Londoners. "Holy Sonnet 10" belongs to the latter part of Donne' s output, the religious works known as his "Divine Poems," famous because they dramatically create a feeling of a personal and often agonized relationship between the speaker and God. Before composing his "Divine Poems," Donne had achieved fame for writing skillful and often cynical poetry in celebration of sexual love. But no strict chronological line splits his secular poems from his religious ones; for example, he probably wrote his great love poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" at about the same time as some of his religious works.

Donne apparently loved the intellectual challenges of paradox, one of the key characteristics of metaphysical poetry. He constructs "Holy Sonnet 10" around one of the central paradoxes of Christianity: that Christ's sacrifice will ultimately mean the death of Death. The sonnet addresses Death directly as if it were a person, an example of the devices of apostrophe and personification. Systematically the poem instructs Death to give up its pride, since it will ultimately be defeated. Further, even though

Death has power, its power is severely limited. Death also unknowingly does God's work, since only through Death can humanity achieve the eternal life God promises.

1. Author Biography

Donne was born in London in 1572. His family was of Roman Catholic faith (his mother was a relative of the Catholic martyr Sir Thomas More), and he grew up experiencing the religious discrimination of the Anglican majority in England against Catholics. It has been speculated that it was this very discrimination that prevented Donne from completing his studies at Oxford University. After leaving Oxford, he studied law in London and received his degree in 1596. Seeking adventure, Donne sailed with the English expeditions against the Spanish, and his experiences inspired the poems "The Storm," "The Calm," and "The Burnt Ship." The following year, Donne returned to London and became secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton. In December, 1601, he clandestinely married Egerton's sixteen-year-old niece Ann More. When the news became public, More's father unsuccessfully endeavored to annul the marriage, but did succeed in imprisoning Donne for a short period of time. In 1602 Donne was released and, now unemployed, spent the next thirteen years trying to gain financial security for his family. Eventually, he converted from Roman Catholicism to Anglicism, and was enlisted by Sir Thomas Morton to aid him in writing anti-Catholic pamphlets. In 1610 he published his first work, Pseudo-Martyr, which attempted to induce English Catholics to repudiate their allegiance to Rome (home of the Catholic Church) and take an oath of allegiance to the British crown. From 1611 to 1612 Donne accompanied Sir Robert Drury to France on a long diplomatic mission, during which he composed some of his most acclaimed verse letters, funeral poems, holy sonnets and love poems, in particular "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Returning to England in 1612, Donne considered becoming an Anglican minister, but hesitated because of self-doubt.

He was finally ordained in early 1615 and quickly became one of the most respected clergymen of his time. He was elected dean of St. Paul's in 1621 and devoted the majority of his life to writing sermons and other religious works until his death in 1631.

2. Holy Sonnet X, by John Donne

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

3. Poem Summary

Lines 1-4:

The poem begins by addressing Death dramatically and directly. Such an address to something that we realistically know can't be listening is called an apostrophe. In treating Death as if it were a person, the poem also uses the device of personification. The first quatrain of the sonnet attacks Death for its pride, denying that it is "mighty and dread ful," as some have called it. The poem then introduces a paradox, stating that the people Death "overthrows" do not really die, and that Death is not even strong enough to kill the speaker. In asserting Death's powerlessness, the speaker even goes so far as to express a note of pity, calling it "poor Death." But "poor" also suggests a note of contempt for Death's impotence, its poverty of resources, as much as the ability to be pitied. And if we think of Death as total negation, of the absence of all the richness that we think of as Life, we can imagine how Death might be seen as "poor."

Lines 5-8:

The second quatrain develops the idea that Death is not to be feared. In fact, much the opposite is the case. The speaker draws the conventional analogy between Death, on the one hand, and "rest and sleep," which are Death's "pictures" or likenesses, on the other. We find rest and sleep pleasurable, so by analogy, we should find Death much more so. The speaker introduces evidence of Death's pleasantness, namely, that "our best men" die early. Here, however, the poem argues unconventionally, saying it is no tragedy that the good die young. Rather, they die willingly, eager for rest for their bodies in the grave, and release or freedom for their souls in heaven. Donne's development of the pleasantness of Death appears to be without irony; that is, Donne is not implying that the speaker is naive about Death's terror or power. Instead, the poem seems truly to argue that Death is not powerful, that the terror we traditionally associate with death is unwarranted, and that Death provides the believing Christian a genuine and pleasurable reward.

Lines 9-12:

The ninth line of an Italian sonnet, the form whose rhyme scheme this poem follows, usually marks a turn: a shift in the theme or tone of the sonnet between the eight-line octave and the sixline sestet. However, "Holy Sonnet 10" behaves structurally more like a Shakespearean sonnet. Instead of a strong change in tone or argument, line 9 continues developing the speaker's attack on Death in a similar tone. Death is no one's master, claims the speaker; in fact it is a slave, subject to those who deal death to others, including the forces of fate and chance, here personified, and the real persons of kings. Death also is a slave to "desperate men," that is, people in despair who commit suicide. Further, Death's fellows or family are not the noble companions befitting a proud

monarch, but a horrible and disgusting crew: poison, war, and sickness, all personified. Death's ability to make us sleep—and here again the speaker uses the conventional analogy of sleep and death—can be equaled or bettered by drugs such as opium (the "poppy" being opium's source) or by magic spells or "charms." The speaker ends this third quatrain by asking death why it puffs itself up with pride, in direct defiance of the warning in line 1 to "be not proud."

Lines 13-14:

The sonnet's concluding couplet resolves the poem by offering the ultimate evidence of Death's powerlessness. In lines 5-6 and 11, the speaker has introduced the conventional analogy of sleep to death. In the close of the poem, however, the speaker argues that this analogy is actually an identity: Death really is asleep, from which we will awaken into eternal life. This assertion explains all the paradoxes in the poem: Death is not an ending but a beginning. Further, Death provides the means for its own defeat, since by dying we will overcome Death, and Death will be destroyed. In the ultimate paradox, Death will die.

Donne loved puns, and it is worth noting that he daringly used sexual metaphors and similes in several of his religious poems, such as "Holy Sonnet 14." A favorite pun of Donne's was on the word "die," which in his time carried the slang meaning "to consummate the sexual act." Donne makes extensive use of this pun in his great love poem "The Canonization." In "Holy Sonnet 10," Donne might similarly be punning on the word "die" in the final celebration of the death of Death. The speaker has just asked Death in line 12, "why swell' st thou then?" which, in addition to attacking Death's pride, might be Donne' s playful joking about the sexual swelling of a man's erection. If so, then for Death to die would be for Death to be emptied, to be spent, and for Death's

purpose to be consummated. In Christian terms, this would make sense, since the consummation of Death in the poem really does "father" us into the afterlife, making our eternal rebirth possible.

4. Themes

4.1. Death

The most prominent theme of Holy Sonnet 10 is that one should not fear death. Death is admonished directly to "be not proud"; it is belittled vehemently as a slave whose job—providing rest and sleep for the soul is better done by humble drugs or simple magic charms. The poem asserts the Christian doctrine that Christ transformed death through his own death and resurrection, making it a passageway to the soul's rest and, after the resurrection of all people at the final judgment, the eternal pleasures of heaven.

However, the very forcefulness with which the speaker berates death indicates some doubt on the poet's part. If death were truly vanquished, the speaker would not have to rail so loudly against it. The poem implies an unspoken fear that death can still pack a wallop—only good and faithful Christians will enjoy eternal life, while everyone else will spend eternity suffering the pains of hell, a fate that Christians believe to be much worse than death.

There is evidence in the poem that the speaker feels his faith in Christianity is not very strong, and thus believes he might himself be headed for eternal damnation. The speaker does not put forth a very convincing case, for example, that death is a "slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men, / And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell." It could be said that these things are death's weapons or agents, rather than the other way around.

The poet also downplays the significance and permanence of the change that death brings when he states "poppy or charms can make us sleep as well / And better than thy stroke." One might awake from an opium induced sleep after a short period of time; one might break a sleep-inducing magic charm. When one awakens from either of these, it is to the life one knows already. Though the poet believes that humans will awake from the sleep of death, he cannot say with any certainty whether it will be to the pleasures of heaven or the pains of hell. His uncertainty is underscored by the statement in the second stanza that death "must" bring even more intense pleasures than the rest and sleep we know on earth, because rest and sleep are mere pictures—images that do not reflect the full character of death. If sleep and rest do not reflect death's complete nature, then the poet is forced to guess that it is a doorway to better things. After all, rest can be uneasy, and sleep can be populated with nightmares.

4.2. Appearances and Reality

A major theme of Holy Sonnet 10 is that death seems mighty, but in reality, it is not. Though the stillness death brings seems to be permanent, the poet asserts, we will awake from it on Judgment Day. Though death seems proud and overpowering, it in fact is always attended by the squalor of poison, war, and sickness. Though it appears dreadful, death is but a slave to "fate, chance, kings," and even lowly "desperate men." Despite its apparent ability to strike humans down, the poet claims that humble drugs or magic spells can do death's work much better. Above all, death's permanence is an illusion. According to the poet's Christian faith, death will come to an end at the final judgment day, when the world will end and all people who ever lived will come back to life. On this day, Christians believe, God will bring good people to heaven and send evil people to hell, where they will live for eternity, never to die the death of death itself.

5. Style

In its form, "Holy Sonnet 10" is an Italian sonnet (also known as a Petrarchan sonnet), written, like most sonnets, in iambic pentameter. The Italian sonnet's thematic organization usually has two well-developed movements corresponding to the eight-line octave and the six-line sestet. The the matic organization of "Holy Sonnet 10," however, more closely resembles the structure of a Shakespearean sonnet (also called an English sonnet), with its four shorter movements: three quatrains and a concluding couplet. The octave follows the conventional Petrarchan rhyme scheme of abbaabba, while the sestet rhymes cddcee, one of several conventional patterns. The octave, however, behaves like two quatrains, the first attacking Death

as less powerful than it thinks, and the second arguing that Death is not a horror but a pleasure, the most rewarding sleep of all. The sestet behaves like a quatrain that continues the belittling of Death, and a final couplet, a fitting conclusion proclaiming Death's ultimate defeat.

6. Historical Context

In "Holy Sonnet 10" Donne alludes to the events of his time in the third stanza, telling death that "Thou’rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men, / And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell." Death was a very prominent part of life in the era during which "Holy Sonnet 10" was composed. Though it was not published until 1633, three years after Donne's death, the poem was probably written in 1609, during the period when Donne was working for the English church as an anti-Catholic propagandist.

Life in England at this time was unsettled and violent. One hundred years before, Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic church, sparking religious persecution,

political conflict, and social upheaval that would increase in intensity until the Puritans, under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell, began a civil war and beheaded Charles I. Donne himself was the son of a prominent Catholic family whose members, which included the Catholic martyr Thomas More, suffered at the hands of Protestant persecutors. The poet himself was unable to receive a university degree or a government post until he converted to Anglicanism.

Henry's heirs were divided in their support of the new church. Mary I, known as Bloody Mary, instituted a reign of terror during her short rule in an attempt to restore Catholicism as the religion of the land. Elizabeth I attempted to maintain a tolerant stance toward both Protestant and Catholic faiths, but was forced by a strongly Puritan, virulently anti-Catholic Parliament to consider Catholics traitors and press severe penalties on them, including the drawing and quartering of 200 priests and the torture and execution of other Catholics and Catholic sympathizers. The Puritan government led by Cromwell collapsed after his death, and relative peace did not come to the kingdom until Parliament summoned William of Orange and Mary II to the throne in 1688 and secured a Bill of Rights from the new sovereigns the following year.

The theater of the time was as blood-soaked as political life. Revenge tragedies including Thomas Kyd's Spanish Tragedy (1592) and William Shakespeare's Hamlet (1600) and tragedies of blood, a more violent, horrific type of revenge tragedy that included Richard Webster's The White Devil (1612) and his The Duchess of Malfi (1613), appealed to audiences who were also entertained by such spectacles as cock-fighting, bear-baiting, and the public mutilation, burning, hanging, and beheading of criminals.

The sickness and desperate men that Donne refers to in "Holy Sonnet 10" were not in short supply in the first decade of the seventeenth century. In 1603, London suffered an outbreak of the dreaded bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death. At least 33,000 died in the epidemic. To put the death toll in perspective, one may note that the population living inside the city walls of London in 1605 was 75,000 people. In 1605 Guy Fawkes and three other Catholics conspired to blow up the Houses of Parliament in retaliation for the persecution of their English co-religionists. Fawkes was caught by chance as he entered the gunpowder filled cellar of the parliament houses. Under torture, he revealed the names of his accomplices. Fawkes and one of his co-conspirators were convicted and hanged for their Gunpowder Plot. The other two conspirators were killed resisting capture. In 1607, vagrants demonstrated outside Northampton against the landed gentry's enclosure of common lands; several protestors were killed in the riot, and three were later hanged for inciting the incident, known as Captain Pouch's Revolt.

"Holy Sonnet 10" asserts the idea that death is not an absolute power: "Death be not proud, though some have call'd thee / Mighty and dreadful .... / those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow / Die not.... This antipathy to the idea of absolute power was very much a part of the political landscape of England at the time the poem was written and before.

The political conflicts of Donne's time were symptoms of England's ongoing transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional state, which had begun long before. Absolutism is the tendency of ruling parties and individuals to centralize national power within the small sphere of their personal influence, usually by means of military force, economic and civic subjugation in the form of oppressive taxes and laws, and some form of religious conformity. In England and other parts of pre-industrialized Europe,

the Divine Right of Kings, which claimed such power in the name of God, was usually used to justify absolute rule.

Constitutionalism is an opposing form of government in which rulers wield power in the name of and by the consent of the people. Constitutional rulers are forbidden to use military force against their subjects. They are bound to seek universal religious and civil freedom and to honor a constitution, which is a social contract between rulers and their subjects that usually defines rights, establishes several branches of government, and institutes a system of "checks and balances" designed to keep any one branch from assuming absolute power.

England had an anti-absolutist tradition that dated to 1215, when King John Plantagenet was forced by his barons to sign the Magna Carta (literally "Great Charter"), which granted basic personal rights and civil liberties to the English people. In 1381, farmers and other workers formed mobs in Essex, Kent, and Norfolk, sacked palaces in Norwich and Canterbury, took hostages, and elected a worker named Wat Tyler as their leader. The uprising, known as the Peasants' Revolt or Wat Tyler's Revolt, arose to protest oppressive labor laws, poll taxes, and severe poverty among peasants.

On 14 June 1381, Wat Tyler, who was probably a tile-layer from Essex, affronted custom by presenting a list of demands to 14-year-old King Richard II, who, the beliefs of the time held, ruled by the will of God. Though Tyler was killed the next day, and the reforms that were instituted were repealed in 1382, the people of England grew to distrust the absolute authority of the Crown, expressing their bitterness in ballads celebrating the outlaw Robin Hood.

From the start of the Hundred Years' War in 1453, Parliament's power grew to encompass the ability to initiate legislation and impeach crowned heads. Its pressure on

the monarchy for civil rights and Protestant religious freedom culminated in the beheading of Charles I; though it twice failed to draft a constitution during Oliver Cromwell's rule and was compelled to crown Charles II, Parliament succeeded in ousting James II, Charles' heir, preventing his effort to restore Catholicism to England. In 1688, Parliament solicited William of Orange and his wife Mary, both of whom had rights to the English throne, to assume the Crown jointly at the behest of the English people. In 1689, William III and Mary II signed a Bill of Rights that secured important rights for Parliament and Protestant citizens and set England firmly on the path toward a constitutional government.

BRITISH ROMANTICISM

> Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings:
> it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.
> William Wordsworth

Romanticism as a literary movement lasted from 1798, with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* to sometime between the passage of the first Reform Bill of 1832 and the death of Wordsworth in 1850. During this period, emphasis shifted to the importance of the individual's experience in the world and one's subjective interpretation of that experience, rather than interpretations handed down by the church or tradition.

Romantic literature is characterized by several features. It emphasized the dream, or inner world of the individual and visionary, fantastic, or drug-induced imagery. Romantic literature emphasized the individual self and the value of the individual's experience. The concept of "the sublime" (a thrilling emotional experience that combines awe, magnificence, and horror) was introduced. Feelings and emotions were viewed as superior to logic and analysis.

For the romantics, poetry was believed to be the highest form of literature, and novels were regarded as a lower form, often as sensationalistic, even by those most addicted to reading them. Most novels of the time were written by women and were therefore widely regarded as a threat to serious, intellectual culture. Despite this, some of the most famous British novelists wrote during this period, including Jane Austen (*Sense and Sensibility* 1811, *Pride and Prejudice* 1813, and *Emma* 1816), Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (*Frankenstein* 1818), and Sir Walter Scott (*Ivanhoe* 1820, *Waverley* 1814, *Rob Roy* 1817). In addition, this period saw the flowering of some of the greatest poets in the English language: the first generation of William Blake

("Cradle Song," "The Tyger," "Auguries Of Innocence"), Samuel Taylor Coleridge ("Kubla Khan," "The Suicide's Argument," "The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner), and William Wordsworth ("The Daffodils," "London, 1802," "Desideria"), followed by Lord Byron ("She Walks In Beauty," "When We Two Parted," "The Dream," "The Destruction of Sennacherib), Percy Bysshe Shelley ("Ode To A Skylark," "Ode To The West Wind," "Ozymandias") and John Keats ("O Solitude," "When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be," "Ode To A Nightingale").

1. Characteristics of Literary Romanticism

Romanticism is a strong, pervasive reaction against Neo-Classicism and Enlightenment ideals. As a literary movement, it is always spelled with a capital "R;" however, it has virtually nothing to do with romantic love. Literary Romanticism has the following qualities:

- Emphasis on **imagination and emotion** over reason and logic – emotional displays are a mark of independence and superiority – feelings are seen as a guide to truth and conduct.
- Emphasis on **individual experiences** as centre of life and art – solitude is much sought after.
- Emphasis on **anticipation and remembrance** of an event rather than on the event itself (Romantics were not "living in the moment")
- Emphasis on **nonconformity**, which is highly prized
- Glorification of children and **childhood** – children seen as "wise" in their inexperience, which makes them closer to God
- Emphasis on the **sublime**, which is often symbolized by mountains

- **Nature** and "natural" equated with spontaneity, purity, connection with God – unplanned gardens are the best. Nature is seen as teacher/moral guide. Nature inspires a sense of awe and wonder of the universe.
- Interest in the **past** and the exotic, along with a renewed interest in the Middle Ages and in folklore. Interest in Gothic cathedrals and castles, especially ruins. Interest in monasteries, convents, monks, nuns, pilgrims and hermits as solitary seekers of truth. Interest in **supernatural** subjects.
- Interest in the search for **beauty.**
- Hatred of war, but tendency towards rebellion and **revolution**
- Belief that **poetry** is spontaneous and free, and that it should be written in common, concrete language everyone can understand

2. Themes

2.1. Dreams and Visions

Perhaps the most notable example of the emphasis on dreams and visions in romantic literature is Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan"[2](1816), which he claimed to have written during a dream while deeply asleep. The idea that a person could compose poetry while asleep was commonplace among romantics.

2.2. Pantheism

Pantheism, which is the belief that there is no difference between the creator and creation, holds that God is not separate from the world, but manifested in it.

[2] a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge written in 1797 but not published until 1816 . It was written after the poet dreamed about a palace built by the Mongol ruler Kubla Khan. He was unable to finish the poem, however, because a 'person from Porlock' (a village in Somerset) interrupted him while he was writing, and he forgot the dream.

This sensation of a divine "presence" in all things marked a shift in public perceptions of nature. Until this period, most people were busy struggling to eke out a living, largely through farming, and viewed nature as the resource that could be used and harvested, not as a place of renewal and purity.

The romantics likewise viewed nature as a place of spiritual purity and peace, where people could be redeemed by contact with the divine force immanent in the natural world.

2.3. The Self

During the romantic period, for the first time in history, people became aware that there were parts of each individual's personality beyond the access of ordinary consciousness. This idea was further developed during the twentieth century as part of modern psychological theory, but at the time of the romantics it was a novelty. The romantics were fascinated with self-exploration and with the particulars of the individual's experience in the world. Previous writers had focused on politics, business, trade, and the lives of royalty or other famous people. The lives of ordinary people had been deemed unworthy of general interest. However, the romantics were influenced by the events of the American and French revolutions and their underlying political theories, and like the revolutionaries they believed the ordinary individual had the same rights and worth as any leader. This sociopolitical theory inspired writers to consider the worth of the individual in their work and to focus more on the experiences of ordinary people.

2.4. Emotion and Feeling

In keeping with an emphasis on the individual self, the romantics valued emotion, intuition, and feeling over logic. They sought "the sublime," a state of being in which

a person was simultaneously awed, frightened, and filled with a sense of majesty and wonder. A poet's response to a wild, remote, and grandiose place in nature often invoked the sublime, as did the immense night sky, gigantic geological upheavals, and rivers. They appreciated the ruins of cathedrals and ancient religious sites. Romantics also relied on their intuitive sense of things—as opposed to physical facts—to interpret the world. If a writer sensed the presence of the divine in a natural spot, for example, the reality of this presence was not questioned, but accepted as a given because the person had felt it.

3. Style

3.1. Rejection of Rigid Poetic Forms

In keeping with their glorification of the unlimited freedom and potential of the individual, the romantics rejected old poetic conventions—such as the heroic couplet used by Alexander Pope—and asserted the value of the language spoken by ordinary people. They believed that the form of a verse should be shaped by the subject matter, in contrast to the neoclassicists before them, who used rigid forms and shaped their material to fit them.

3.2. Emphasis on Poetry

An interesting aspect of the romantic period was the emphasis on poetry. Most of the great romantic writers were poets instead of novelists, as novels were widely regarded as inherently inferior to poetry.

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ANALYSING "THE DAFFODILS," BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Task: Read William Wordsworth's "The Daffodils," and analyse its style and themes. State why you think it is a Romantic poem. **(See Appendix 8).**

Introduction

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a short lyric poem by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth. It was written in1804 and first published in his *Poems, in Two Volumes* in 1807. The origin of the poem lies in a walk that Wordsworth took with his sister Dorothy in the Lake District in northwest England, where the Wordsworths lived. This was on April 15, 1802, when the Wordsworths were walking near Gowbarrow Park, near Ullswater, and came upon a large number of daffodils near the water. Dorothy described the scene in her *Grasmere Journals*. William did not write the poem until two years later, making much use of Dorothy's account. The poem has always been one of Wordsworth's most popular. Indeed, it is one of the most famous poems in the English language. Quite simple in style, it shows how Wordsworth, like many of the Romantic poets, was inspired by the beauty of nature. It also gives insight into the way Wordsworth composed his poems.

1. Poem Summary

Stanza 1

In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" the speaker describes what he saw one spring day when he was walking in the English countryside. The first two lines state that he was alone as he walked, and he compares himself to a solitary cloud high in the sky.

Then suddenly he comes upon a splendid sight: a multitude of daffodils. The daffodils are under the trees and next to the lake. The daffodils sway from side to side, appearing to dance in the breeze.

Stanza 2

In this stanza the poet continues to describe the daffodils. There are so many of them that he compares them to the stars in the Milky Way. The Milky Way galaxy contains billions of stars and forms a band of light when seen at night from Earth. As the poet looks at them, the daffodils continue in an unbroken line at the edge of the bay. He estimates that there must be 10,000 of them, and they are all dancing in the breeze.

Stanza 3

In Stanza 3 the poet continues to describe the daffodils. He notes that the breeze is also making the water on the lake move in waves, but the daffodils seem even more joyful than the waves as they dance. In line 3, the poet says that it was impossible for a poet not to be happy when in the presence of such lively and cheerful company as the daffodils. In line 5, he tells how he stood for a long time gazing at the daffodils. But at the time, he adds, he did not fully realize how much the sight had enriched him. That realization would only come later, as the final stanza explains.

Stanza 4

In this stanza the poet reflects on his experience of suddenly coming upon all those daffodils. Some time has passed since he took that walk. Often since then, when he is alone, lying on his couch in a thoughtful mood, or with nothing much going on in his mind, he suddenly sees the daffodils once more in his mind’s eye. The memory of the

daffodils, and his ability to recreate the vision of them in his mind, brings him great pleasure, and he feels that his own heart is dancing along with the daffodils.

2. Themes

2.1. Nature

Perhaps the key term in the poem is “lonely,” which describes the poet’s state of mind as he walks in nature. He does not say merely that he was alone. He refers to a specific lack of a sense of community, or connectedness. He is isolated, and in the poem he uses the image of a solitary cloud to convey his mood. He is walking in nature, but he feels a sense of separation from other living things, whether human or natural. But then he suddenly catches sight of the endless line of daffodils, and this changes his mood completely. What meets his eye is not merely a static scene. The wind is blowing, which makes the daffodils seem more than usually alive as they are blown about in the breeze. In this scene of great natural beauty, the poet feels happy and restored to life in a certain way. Before, he was lonely, but now he feels cheerful, moved by the beauty of the scene. It seems to him as if nature, as represented by the daffodils, is alive with joy, and he is able to share that joy. There is therefore a connection between the poet and the daffodils that puts an end to his sense of separation.

It is perhaps significant that the speaker identifies himself (in line 15) as a poet, when he states that such a sight could not fail to make a poet cheerful. He does not say that just anyone would have been affected by the scene, or affected in the same way. For Wordsworth, a poet was a man of deep sensibilities who was capable of understanding intuitively the connection between man and nature. To be cut off from that feeling could only be experienced by a poet as a painful lack of something vital. The sudden sight of the daffodils in motion, stirred by the wind, jolts the poet into

feeling once more the same life that flows through humans and the natural world. It is a moment of true communion with the spirit of nature, and this is why it restores his spirits.

2.2. Memory and Imagination

It is important to note that Wordsworth did not write the poem immediately after seeing the daffodils. Two years passed between the time he saw the daffodils and the time he wrote the poem. What prompted the poem, then, was not so much the experience of seeing the daffodils but the memory of it, recreated by the poet's imagination at a later date. What this shows is that for Wordsworth, what he calls in the poem the "inward eye" is in a sense more powerful than the outward eye with which he saw the daffodils.

The poet says this quite clearly in the last two lines of stanza 3, which is why the last stanza of the poem focuses not on the daffodils as an immediate sense experience but on the memory of that experience. At the time Wordsworth saw the daffodils, he enjoyed the sight, as anyone would, but he did not realize its true significance until later. In solitude at home, when he is relaxing and in a reflective mood, the sight of the daffodils suddenly comes into his mind again, and once again he experiences a moment of communion with nature; his heart dances with joy just as he remembers the daffodils dancing. The point here is that the really significant moments come not when he is in nature but when he is withdrawn from it. He can recreate the experience for himself without actually going out in nature and seeking a similar sight. The implication is that although nature may, in the poem, be a wonderful sight, the human mind is even more wonderful, since it can summon the experience again when no daffodils are in sight. Indeed, the pleasure afforded by the daffodils, thanks to the power of memory and imagination, has only increased over the intervening two years

3. Style

3.1. Iambic Tetrameter

The poem is written in what is called iambic tetra-meter. An iamb is a poetic foot in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable. (A foot, in English poetic meter, consists of two or three syllables, either one strongly stressed syllable and one lightly stressed syllable, or one strong stress and two lighter ones.) The iamb is the most common foot in English poetry. Almost all the lines in this poem are iambic. However, just for variety, the poet does vary the meter in certain places.

3.2. Rhyme

The poet makes use of a regular rhyme scheme throughout the poem. The first line of each stanza rhymes with the third. The second line rhymes with the fourth, and then the last two lines rhyme with each other to form a concluding couplet to each stanza. The words used in the rhymes are mostly simple, consisting of one syllable. The use of rhyme not only supplies an easily identifiable sense of order and structure to the poem but adds pleasure to the reader's experience of it.

3.3. Figurative Language

The poet states that he is "as lonely as a cloud," which is a simile (a comparison of two apparently unlike things in a way that brings out the similarity between them). The poet compares his own loneliness to the loneliness of a single cloud in the sky. A more extended use of personification occurs in the descriptions of the daffodils. The poet describes them as a "crowd," which is a term usually applied to people. Further, the daffodils are described as dancing, moving their heads around almost as if they were human. Dance, however, is a human invention, proceeding according to measured steps. The fact that the daffodils are presented in this light personifies them by

attributing to them a human activity. The personification continues when the daffodils are described as gleeful. Glee, which means joy, is a human emotion; presumably, daffodils do not experience joy, and certainly not in the sense that humans do, but the poet is prepared to attribute such joy to them because that is how it seems to him. The personification also has the effect of creating a subtle link, through the spirit of joy, between humans and the natural world.

3.4. Alliteration

Alliteration refers to the repetition of initial consonants. Wordsworth does not make much use of alliteration in this poem, but when he does it is with great effect. It occurs in the final line, the repetition of the d sound in *dances* and *daffodils*. The word *dance* is a key one in the poem, since it or a variant appears in every stanza. In the first three stanzas, it refers to the daffodils only: in the final line of the last stanza, it refers both to the daffodils and to the heart of the poet. The alliteration gives a pleasing sense of resolution to the poem, suggesting the connection between man and nature that is the theme of the poem.

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ANALYSING "THE TYGER," BY WILLIAM BLAKE (1794)

Task: Read William Blake's "The Tyger," and analyse its style and themes. State why you think it is a Romantic poem. **(See appendix 9).**

Introduction

Published in 1794 as one of the Songs of Experience, Blake's "The Tyger" is a poem about the nature of creation, much as is his earlier poem from the Songs of Innocence, "The Lamb." However, this poem takes on the darker side of creation, when its benefits are less obvious than simple joys. Blake's simplicity in language and construction contradicts the complexity of his ideas. This poem is meant to be interpreted in comparison and contrast to "The Lamb," showing the "two contrary states of the human soul" with respect to creation. It has been said many times that Blake believed that a person had to pass through an innocent state of being, like that of the lamb, and also absorb the contrasting conditions of experience, like those of the tiger, in order to reach a higher level of consciousness. In any case, Blake's vision of a creative force in the universe making a balance of innocence and experience is at the heart of this poem.

The poem's speaker is never defined, and so may be more closely aligned with Blake himself than in his other poems. One interpretation could be that it is the Bard from the Introduction to the Songs of Experience walking through the ancient forest and encountering the beast within himself, or within the material world. The poem reflects primarily the speaker's response to the tiger, rather than the tiger's response to the world.

It important to remember that Blake lived in a time that had never heard of popular psychology as we understand it today. He wrote the mass of his work before the Romantic movement in English literature. He lived in a world that was in the opening

stages of the Industrial Revolution, and in the midst of political revolutions all over Europe and in America. As we look at his work we must in some way forget many of the ideas about creativity, artists, and human nature that we take for granted today, and reimagine them for the first time as, perhaps, Blake did himself. It is in this way that Blake's poetry has the power to astound us with his insight.

1. Author Biography

Born in London on November 28, 1757, Blake was the second of the five children of James and Catherine Blake. Unlike many well-known writers of his day, Blake was born into a family of moderate means. His father was a seller of stockings, gloves, and other apparel. Though he had no formal schooling as a child, Blake was apprenticed at the age of fourteen to engraver James Basire. In 1779 he began studies at The Royal Academy of Arts, but it was as a journeyman engraver that he was to make his living. In 1782 Blake married Catherine Boucher, the illiterate daughter of a vegetable grower. Blake taught her to read and write, and under his tutoring she also became an accomplished draftsman, helping him with the execution of his designs. Throughout his life, booksellers employed Blake to engrave illustrations for a wide variety of publications. This work brought him into contact with many of the radical thinkers of his day, including bookseller Joseph Johnson and fellow artists John Flaxman and Henry Fuseli. Blake drew literary notice at gatherings in the home of the Reverend and Mrs. A. S. Mathew, where he read his poems and occasionally sang them to his own music. In 1783 Flaxman and Mrs. Mathew funded the printing of Poetical Sketches, Blake's first collection of verse. Around this time Blake also developed his technique of illuminated printing. His method was to produce the text and illustrations for his books on copper plates, which were then used to print on paper. Final copies of the work were individually coloured by hand. This laborious process restricted the number

of copies Blake could produce, thus limiting both his income and the spread of his reputation.

At the time of the French Revolution in 1789 Blake was acquainted with a political circle that included such well-known radicals as William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Paine, and the democratic revolutions in America and France became major themes in much of Blake's poetry. In 1790 Blake and his wife moved to Lambeth, where Blake began developing his own symbolic and literary mythology, which used highly personal images and metaphors to convey his interpretation of history and vision of the universe. This mythology is expressed in such works as The First Book of Urizen (1794) and The Song of Los (1795). During this time Blake also wrote the poems included in Songs of Innocence and of Experience (1794). Very little of Blake's poetry of the 1790s was known to the general public, though he continued to work as an engraver and illustrator.

From 1800 to 1803, Blake and his wife lived at the seaside village of Felpham before moving back to London. Upon his return to London, Blake was met with accusations that he had uttered seditious sentiments while expelling a soldier from his garden at Felpham. He was tried for sedition and acquitted in 1804. In 1809 Blake mounted an exhibition of his paintings which he hoped would publicize his work and help to vindicate his visionary aesthetic. The exhibition caused some interest among the London literati, but was otherwise poorly attended. Blake's later years were distinguished by his completion of Jerusalem, his last and longest prophetic book, and by his work on a series of illustrations for the Book of Job, which is now widely regarded as his greatest artistic achievement. The latter work was commissioned in the early 1820s by John Linnell, one of a group of young artists calling themselves "The

Ancients" who gathered around Blake and helped support him in his old age. Blake died in 1827.

2. Poem Text

“The Tyger”, by William Blake

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright 1
In the forests of the night, 2
What immortal hand or eye 3
Could frame thy fearful symmetry? 4

In what distant deeps or skies 5
Burnt the fire of thine eyes? 6
On what wings dare he aspire? 7
What the hand dare seize the fire? 8

And what shoulder, & what art, 9
Could twist the sinews of thy heart? 10
And when thy heart began to beat, 11
What dread hand? & what dread feet? 12

What the hammer? what the chain? 13
In what furnace was thy brain? 14
What the anvil? what dread grasp 15
Dare its deadly terrors clasp? 16

When the stars threw down their spears, 17
And water’d heaven with their tears, 18
Did he smile his work to see? 19
Did he who made the Lamb make thee? 20

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright 21
In the forests of the night, 22
What immortal hand or eye, 23
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? 24

3. Poem Summary

Lines 1-2:

William Blake's tiger is a passionate, fiery creature. It is a creature, a beast, who lives in the shadows and dark hours of life. Some have considered this tiger representing the dark shadow of the human soul, much as Carl Jung would describe it more than a century later. This is the beastly part of ourselves that we would prefer to keep only in our dreams at night if it has to be anywhere. Night in Blake's poetry often seems to

suggest this sort of dream time. The forests might represent the wild landscape of our imagination under the influence of this beast.

Lines 3-4:

These two lines should be familiar in context to the first two lines in Blake's poem, "The Lamb." Lined up next to each other they even rhyme. Since they appear in the companion text to Experience, we can draw the conclusion that this poem is meant to be understood in comparison and contrast to that earlier power. We are asked not to consider the biological parentage of the tiger, but rather the Divine parentage of the tiger. In doing this we can begin to compare the nature of a lamb to a tiger, and begin to understand Blake's philosophy about creation. The fact that perhaps the same immortal hand created both the domesticated and tame nature of the lamb, and the wild characteristic of the tiger is frightening in a way. There is a balance there, but perhaps not the kind of balance we would choose ourselves given the choice.

Lines 5-6:

In contrast to the pastoral setting of the innocent lamb, the tiger is born out of the depths of consciousness, and our highest flights of fantasy. Again, Blake uses the metaphor of fire to describe the way the tiger sees and is seen. This is not the unpretentious vision of the lamb. The tiger has fury and grounds to believe in its own strength. The tiger could be understood as similar to our psychological view of the ego. It is the part of us that believes in its own power, in its own vision.

Lines 7-8:

It could be debated that Blake argues here that the Fallen Archangel Lucifer is the creator of the tiger, or the beastly part of our own nature. Another fallen God was

Prometheus. He was damned to having his liver picked out by a bird of prey and have it grow back again every day throughout eternity, because he gave the power of fire to humanity. In mystical thought, Lucifer in creating evil and darkness actually fulfills God's plan that humanity may see what is good and light more clearly in contrast and comparison. Since "The Tyger" seems to be meant to be seen in comparison to "The Lamb" one can begin to guess at Blake's intentions for our interpretation of the poem. Fire suggests a hellish beginning, and yet, it is daring that makes this very world possible. God could have imagined this world, but decided to create it. This is the challenge of every artist. What is daring if not courage?

Lines 9-10:

These lines speak to the very power and strength of the tiger, and of its maker. Shoulders and art both carry responsibilities and burdens. Sinews are the very tendons that make the heart work, and they are also known as a source of strength and power. Blake seems to be suggesting that the creator of this powerful creature is awesome in its own right. Here we also get the very image of creativity as it happens. We see the shoulders in action. We see the process of the imagination in blending together the elements that make up a tiger. We see the twisting of the material heart into shape. The heart represents not only the biological engine of the tiger, but perhaps its passion for living.

Lines 11-12:

Now, the creation itself, the tiger, has a life of its own. No longer under the control of the artist, Blake wonders what the artist could have been thinking in creating it. Notice that Blake, or his narrator, speaks directly to the tiger, as did the speaker to the lamb. We perceive the narrator's reaction to speaking directly to the tiger in the

descriptive language, and in these lines "dread" is the main idea. There seems to be an unspoken question implicit here, namely, "Why?" Perhaps, this is an attempt to reconcile the wild beast with a sense of order about the universe and its workings. Can God have created a dreadful creature, and if so does this task make God's hands dreadful? If the artist is an earthly reflection of God's creative nature, what does that say about the artist's hands?

Lines 13-14:

Again, the imagery in these two lines is more infernal than heavenly. Hammers, chains and furnaces sound like an industrial factory more than an artist's workshop. One of the themes throughout Songs of Experience is the condemnation of the Industrial Revolution. These lines could suggest that the encroachment of industry on the pastoral world of Blake's childhood was the tangible hell to which the poet was referring. Again, we must return to the image of a fiery tiger whose very thinking began in a furnace. Here creation doesn't come so much from divine inspiration as divine perspiration.

Lines 15-16:

The anvil is a tool of both industry and art. The artist or God or devil clasps and grasps in passion and with courage. What makes this courage and enthusiasm so deadly and terrifying? The nature of creativity is also a favorite theme of Blake's. In these lines he confronts his worst fears about what it means to create. He never suggests, however, that the tiger shouldn't have been created.

Lines 17-18:

These lines reinforce the idea of defeated and fallen angels. Lucifer's minions, when defeated and condemned to hell, were thought to have created the milky way with their

tears. Their battle had been over making angels superior to humanity in God's eyes, but God refused. The difference, it is said,

between humankind and the angels, is that humans were created with the capacity to improve. Lucifer,

as the Devil, would have us forget this possibility. What does this myth have to do with the tiger? Perhaps, Blake is playing with the idea of perception. It is how we perceive the tiger that makes him terrifying or passionate. Remember, if we continue with the Judeo-Christian-Islamic canon, God created Lucifer and his followers, as well as the lambs. This is a fairly awesome concept. Something beautiful comes out of even the fallen angel's descent—the stars themselves.

Lines 19-20:

Finally, Blake gets down to business, and asks the fateful question. Did the same God who made the lamb also make the tiger? This makes all the more awesome the concept of God, if it is true. It suggests that God knows something that we human beings do not. It suggests that God has the capacity for tenderness and dread, and that neither one or the other is more pleasurable. This also speaks to the romantic view of artists. Artists sometimes create art that is distasteful to the public, but does that mean that they should not smile at their own work, and realize that in time it may be better understood? This must have been something that Blake himself struggled with during his lifetime, as his poetry was not embraced by the public until much later in his career.

Lines 21-22:

Blake uses repetition to reinforce his ideas, and to ask us to take another look at the meaning. If the tiger is not only burning, but it is burning brightly, then isn't it a creature of light? If it is a creature of light, walking through the darkness, then doesn't it serve to illuminate the shadows within ourselves, and out in the world? Finally, if this tiger, with its inner strength and prowess, serves as a guiding light through the darkness then doesn't our fear of it become rather shortsighted? Again, it is highly recommended that a student of Blake's poetry attempt to view his illustrations in concert with interpreting his poetry. There are several different illustrations of the tiger, and in some it does appear to be a ferocious beast, but in some drawings the tiger appears to be more of a guiding light. Blake seems to have enjoyed creating the same ambiguity that he perceived in God's creations.

Line 23:

This is a fearless immortal who made both the docile lamb, and the fiery tiger. To consider the creature, we are asked to consider the creator. In reflection, we must also look at the creativity in the microcosm of this world by the artist. It is significant that Blake chooses the word "dare" in the last line, instead of "could" because once again it emphasizes the concept of courage in relationship to creation. Finally, we must once again compare and contrast the beast with the tamed one, and consider the proper balance of nature framed by the hand of the Divine.

4. Themes

4.1. Religion

"The Tyger" was written to accompany Blake's poem "The Lamb." Both are creation poems, and together they explore the power and grandeur of God. This is especially clear in "The Lamb," in which the speaker asks "Little Lamb, who made thee? / Dost thou know who made thee?"

An answer is soon provided:

> Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
> He is called by thy name,
> For he calls himself a Lamb:
> He is meek and he is mild,
> He became a little child:

The lamb is symbolic of Christ, the Son of God. It is natural to assume, therefore, that Blake's awesome and "fearful" tiger might also be God's creation. In many ways the tiger resembles Christ's opposite, Lucifer:

> In what distant deeps or skies
> Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
> On what wings dare he aspire?
> What the hand dare seize the fire?

The angel Lucifer, like Prometheus who gave divine knowledge of fire to humanity, committed the ultimate insurrection against God, resulting in his fall from divine grace. Evidence of Lucifer also appears in the lines "When the stars threw down their spears, / And water'd heaven with their tears." One of the more difficult portions of the poem, it may be interpreted as referring to the battle between Lucifer and the angels, or "stars," of heaven, who wept after losing their battle to him and all that that loss implied.

Many scholars of Blake have found a profound connection between "The Tyger" and another publication, his The Four Zoas, which was published in 1795. In this mythical work, the repressive god Urizen falls from divinity to create the material

world, an unimaginative universe marked by proportion or "symmetry." The tiger, then, is a product or natural extension of Urizen. Still other reviewers of "The Tyger" have suggested that mankind is responsible for the beast. The forests of the poem have often been compared to the dark, industrial cities of Paris and London; and the fact that the tiger was created through heat and force suggests that he was produced in a blacksmith's shop rather than through divine imagination. Moreover, the line "On what wings dare he aspire?"— which is reminiscent of Icarus, who perished after flying too close to the sun with wings made of wax—suggests that an excessively proud, rebellious, and creative mortal produced the tiger through unnatural means.

While the lamb's creator is revealed, the tiger's engineer remains undefined at the poem's conclusion. However, given the link to Blake's "The Lamb," especially in the cryptic verse "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" it is highly likely that Blake is in fact referring to God. At the very least, the fact that the question is asked at all confirms the existence of a single, powerful, and awe inspiring creator, one who dares to produce both the tiger and the lamb.

4.2. Good and Evil

Blake philosophically rejected socially accepted views of morality. His predilection toward exuberance and the imagination is intelligible in all of his works, especially in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell where he exposes the evils inherent in orthodox conceptions of virtue and the virtues inherent in orthodox conceptions of evil: "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction." Blake's distinctive moral position is likewise evident in "The Tyger," which is perhaps best understood when compared to his "The Lamb":

> Little Lamb, who made thee?
> Dost thou know who made thee?

Gave thee life and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

The meekness of Blake's lamb makes his "fearful" and "deadly" tiger appear all the more horrific, but to conclude that one is decidedly good and the other evil would be incorrect. The innocent portrayal of childhood in "The Lamb," though attractive, lacks imagination. The tiger, conversely, is repeatedly associated with fire or brightness, providing a sharp contrast against the dark forests from which it emerges—"Tyger! Tyger! burning bright / In the forests of the night." While such brightness might symbolize violence, it can also imply insight, energy, and vitality. The tiger's domain is one of unrestrained self-assertion. Far from evil, Blake's poem celebrates the tiger and the sublime excessiveness he represents. "Jesus was all virtue," wrote Blake "and acted from impulse, not from rules."

5. Style

"The Tyger" contains six four-line stanzas, and uses pairs of rhyming couplets to create a sense of rhythm and continuity. The notable exception occurs in lines 3 and 4 and 23 and 24, where "eye" is imperfectly paired, ironically enough, with "symmetry." The majority of lines in this lyric contain exactly seven syllables, alternating between stressed and unstressed syllables:

Tyger! / Tyger! / burning / bright ...

This pattern has sometimes been identified as trochaic tetrameter —four ("tetra") sets of trochees, or pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables—even though the final trochee lacks the unstressed syllable. There are several exceptions to this rhythm, most

notably lines 4, 20, and 24, which are eight syllable lines of iambic tetrameter, or four pairs of syllables that follow the pattern unstress/stress, called an iamb. This addition of an unstressed syllable at the beginning of each of these lines gives them extra emphasis.

6. Historical Context

The French Revolution: On July 14, 1789 a Parisian mob, exasperated by the excesses of the French nobility, stormed the Bastille, resulting in the onset of the French Revolution. In the two years that followed, nobles were stripped of their titles, landowning men were empowered with the right to vote, and unions were abolished to protect individual solidarity. By 1789, more than 100 newspapers had been created, testifying to rising intellectual freedom in France. On September 21, 1792 the French monarchy was officially abolished and France was proclaimed a republic. King Louis XVI was executed in January of the following year for treason. Between September 1793 and July 1794, Jacobin Maximilien Robespierre arrested, tried, and executed more than 17,000 people considered dangerous to the revolutionary cause in what later became known as the Reign of Terror. Robespierre himself was executed in 1794, the same year William Blake published "The Tyger" in Songs of Innocence and of Experience.

In his early poetic work The French Revolution (1791), Blake, a supporter of the Revolution, openly condemns the oppressive authoritarianism of the old regime. As revolutionary activity in France grew increasingly more violent, however, such political views became dangerous. Some scholars of Blake believe that he therefore obscured his ideas behind a veil of mysticism to circumvent government censure. Blake wrote "The Tyger" during the Reign of Terror, the violence of which must have tempered his

enthusiasm somewhat. The unrestrained energy and horrific violence of "The Tyger" most likely reflect Blake's mixed emotions concerning France at the time.

Enlightenment: An intellectual movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Enlightenment upheld rationalism. Authors of this period—especially John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Ben Johnson—believed that knowledge is born of experience rather than from sense perception. Blake's works, including "The Tyger," emphatically assert otherwise. In addition to breaking from traditional poetic form in this poem, he exalted the creative powers of the imagination through the tiger.

Industrial Revolution: The perfection of the steam engine in 1765 by James Watt stimulated the Industrial Revolution. Thousands flocked to England's industrial cities where they labored for starvation wages under poor conditions. Repulsed by the onset of industrialization, Blake often spoke against it in his poetry. The hellish environment of the tiger as depicted in the fourth stanza ("What the hammer? What the chain? / In what furnace was thy brain? / What the anvil? What dread grasp / Dare its deadly terrors clasp?") is reminiscent of a smithy or factory of the time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, "Introduction to Literary Text: A Guide to Second Year Students" serves as an indispensable companion for second-year LMD students of English, specifically tailored for the module of Literary Text. This booklet has been meticulously crafted to empower students with the essential tools and insights needed to navigate the rich tapestry of British literature across various periods.

As we journeyed through the medieval realm, encountering Chaucer's vivid characters in "The Canterbury Tales," we glimpsed the tapestry of society woven with humor and critique. Moving into the Renaissance, Marlowe's enigmatic "Doctor Faustus" and Shakespeare's timeless "Hamlet" and poignant "Sonnet 18" unveiled the profound exploration of human aspirations and the intricate nuances of love and mortality.

Venturing further, the metaphysical poets, led by John Donne, beckoned us to probe the depths of our existence through "No Man Is an Island" and the contemplative "Holy Sonnet X." This exploration of the metaphysical offered a bridge between the spiritual and the tangible, challenging conventional boundaries.

In the throes of British Romanticism, Wordsworth's "The Daffodils" painted a scenic vista of nature's resonance with the human soul, while Blake's "The Tyger" echoed questions of creation and innocence versus experience in a world of dualities.

Throughout this guide, students have been urged not to merely read, but to immerse themselves, interact, and engage with the text. Literature, after all, is a living dialogue between authors, readers, and the ever-evolving context that shapes both.

As you, the students, embark on your academic journey, armed with the insights garnered from this booklet, we hope you'll approach literary texts with newfound confidence and depth. These masterpieces are windows into the human experience, reflecting both the epochs they were birthed in and the timeless truths that continue to resonate.

Remember, the study of literature is an odyssey, an intellectual adventure where each interpretation is a treasure waiting to be unearthed. May this booklet serve as a guiding light, illuminating the path towards a richer understanding of literary works and their intricate relationship with the world around us.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue* (1387-1400)

Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote	*When in April the sweet showers fall*
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote	*That pierce March's drought to the root and all*
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,	*And bathed every vein in liquor that has power*
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;	*To generate therein and sire the flower;*
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth	*When Zephyr also has with his sweet breath,*
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth	*Filled again, in every holt and heath,*
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne	*The tender shoots and leaves, and the young sun*
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,	*His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run,*
And smale foweles maken melodye,	*And many little birds make melody*
That slepen al the nyght with open eye-	*That sleep through all the night with open eye*
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages);	*(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)*
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages	***Then folk do long to go on pilgrimage,***
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes	*And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,*
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;	*To distant shrines well known in distant lands.*
And specially from every shires ende	*And specially from every shire's end*
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,	*Of England they to Canterbury went,*
The hooly blisful martir for to seke	*The holy blessed martyr there to seek*
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.	*Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak*

Appendix 2. Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale" (1387-1400)

The Pardoner's Prologue

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Pardoner's Tale

Our Host began to swear as if he had gone crazy. 'My God!' he shouted. 'By the blood and body of Christ that judge was wicked! And so was the churl! They deserved to die, as do all false judges and plaintiffs. And the beautiful girl was murdered by her own father. Her beauty came at too high a price,that's for sure. I know one thing. I will say it over and over again. The so-called gifts of Fortune, andof Nature, can be fatal. Her beauty led her to the slaughter. It is a most sorrowful story. We are the darlings of Fortune and Nature, as I said just now, at our peril. They cause more harm than good.

'So, my good master, you have told us a sad tale. But let it be. It does not matter, sir Physician. I pray God to keep you alive and well. I pray that your glass vessels and urinals are sparkling clean, that your purges and ointments are efficacious, that your medicine bottles are well corked and that your old books are on the shelf. God bless them all! Then you are properly set up. You are a good- looking man, I must say, more like a bishop than a clerk. Did you notice how I enumerated all the items in your box? I don't know medical terminology, but I know about health and sickness. That storyof yours almost gave me a heart attack. I need some medicine right away or, at least, a draught of strong ale. Then I will have to hear a merry tale, to drive away the sad image of Virginia.' He turnedto the Pardoner. 'My good friend,' he said, 'tell us a funny story. I want some fun.'

'Of course I will,' the Pardoner replied. 'But first of all I need a drink. Isn't that an alehouse over the way? I feel like a pie, too.'

But then others in the company began to remonstrate with the Host. 'We don't want any dirty stories. Let him give us a morality tale. Let him teach us a lesson or two.'

'If that's what you want,' the Pardoner said. 'But I must have a drink first. I need time to come up with something honest.'

When he came out of the alehouse he mounted his horse, and turned to them all. 'Lords and ladies,' he said, 'I am used to preaching in churches, as you all know. I take great pains with my delivery, so that my voice rings out like a bell. I know my theme off by heart, of course. It is always the same. Do you know what it is? Greed is the root of all evil. First I tell them from where I have come. It might be Rome or Jerusalem. They don't know the difference. Then I show them my papal indulgences. Oh. Before that I make sure that they

all see the lord bishop's seal on my papers. That is just to protect myself from interfering clergy, who might try to prevent me doing Christ's holy work. They are so jealous, some of them. Then I really get going. I tell the congregation about the indulgences offered by cardinals and patriarchs and archbishops. I mutter a few words of Latin to spice up my sermon, and beg them to pray on their knees for their salvation. I get out of my sack the glass cases that hold the relics of the holy saints - a collar bone here and a wrist bone there.

'"Here, good sirs and dames," I might say, "is the shoulder bone of one of the sheep led by Jacob in the hills of Beersheba. Listen to my words. Wash this bone in any well, and the water from that well will cure your cattle of any murrain or blight. It will heal snakebites and kill intestinal worms. Bring your sheep to the well. When they drink from it, their scabs and sores will fall away from them. They will be uplifted. Listen to me carefully. If any one of you should drink a draught of the well water, once a week, just before dawn, your stock will thrive and multiply. There will be more lambs than you can count. That is what Genesis in the Holy Book tells us. You can read the passage for yourself. Chapter 39. Verses 37 to 39.

'"And I'll tell you something else. The water will heal suspicion and distrust. If a man should fall into a jealous rage, just let him mix it with his soup. He will feel the difference. He will never accuse his wife again - not even if he sees her in the company of a priest or two. Do you see this glove of knitted wool? If any man puts his hand in this glove, his harvest will be bountiful. It could be wheat or it could be oats. It makes no difference. Just make a small offering of silver to me. The crop will flourish. Mark my words.

'"There is one thing of which I must warn you, good ladies and gentlemen. If there is any man among you who has committed a mortal sin, too horrible to confess - if there is any woman among you, young or old, who has been unfaithful to her husband - such folks cannot come up and make an offering to my relics here. They do not have the grace. They do not have the power. But if the rest of you wish to make an offering, then come forward now. I will absolve you of your sins. I have the bishop's authority to shrive you."

'So by these deceits I have earned at least a hundred pounds as a pardoner. I stand like a priest in the pulpit. I preach to the dolts. I beseech them. I use every trick in the book. I can tell them a hundred lies, and never be found out. I lean forward and stretch out my neck, just like a dove perched on the rafter of a barn. My hands and tongue are working so hard that it is a joy to see me in action. I tell them to forsake the sin of avarice. I tell them to be charitable. Especially to me. I am only interested in their money, you see, not in the state of their souls. I don't care what happens to them once they are dead. They can pick blackberries, as far as I am concerned.

'I will tell you something else. Many sermons, and devotional homilies, spring from bad intentions.

Some preachers just want to flatter or to entertain. Some are motivated by hypocrisy, or vainglory, or hate. If I cannot get at my enemy directly, I will sting him in a sermon. I will wound him in covert ways, so that he cannot fight back. "No," I say, "I will not name the enemies of us pardoners. That would be too low." But of course the congregation know exactly whom I am talking about. They can tell from my looks and gestures. That is how I retaliate against those who defame me. I spit out my venom under the cover of holiness. I seem virtuous, but seeming is not being.

'I will tell you the truth in one sentence. I preach only for money. I want their silver

pence. That is why my theme has always been, and always will be, the same. "Greed is the root of all evil." It is suitable, don't you think? I preach against the very vices I practise! It saves time. And even though I may be guilty of that sin, I persuade other folk to repent with much wailing and lamenting. But that is really not my intention. I will say it one more time. I preach only for the cash. You have probably understood me by now.

'So I tell them tales of old times, taken out of books. The lewd people love a good story. That is the only way they can remember anything. Do you really think that I am going to live like a monk, when I can earn money so easily? I have never even considered the idea. Truly. I can preach and beg in all sorts of places. I never intend to work. I am not going to make baskets, or thresh wheat, for a living. I never beg in vain. I always get my reward. I am not going to imitate the example of the apostles, in other words. I want meat and fine clothes, and bread and cheese, and of course money. I will take it from the meanest servant or the poorest widow in the village, even though she has to deprive her children of food. I like to drink and make merry, too, and I make sure I have a whore in every town. Listen to me, ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion. You want me to recite a tale to you. I have had a draught of the landlord's best ale in that hostelry, and I am ready to tell you a story that will really entertain you. I may be a very wicked man, but I can relate a highly virtuous tale. It is one of the stories I use in my sermons, after all. So be silent. I will begin.'

The Pardoner's Tale

Heere bigynneth the Pardoners Tale

There were in Flanders three young people who loved to play around and amuse themselves. They used to dance and to fight, to haunt taverns and brothels. Everywhere they went came the sound of harps and lutes and guitars. They played dice night and day. They ate and drank to excess. So in the temples of the devil they sacrificed themselves to Satan. They rolled in the sty of abomination. Their oaths and blasphemies were terrible to hear. They swore on the crucified body of Our Lord, saying that the Jews had not tortured Him enough. They encouraged each other in every excess and sin. They paid for dancing girls, slim and shapely, as well as young street-sellers, singers, bawds, confectioners - any occupation designed to stir the fires of lechery and of gluttony. They are the officers in the army of the evil one. This is the first lesson. According to the Bible itself, lechery follows in the wake of wine and drunkenness.

Do you remember the case of Lot, who, in his cups, had intercourse with his two daughters? He was so drunk that he did not know what he was doing. And do you recall Herod? He drank so much wine at the table that he allowed his wife to cut off the head of John the Baptist. If he had been sober, would he have condemned an innocent man to death? Seneca has a word or two to say on the subject. As far as he is concerned, there is no difference at all between a madman and a drunkard. The only difference is that madness lasts longer.

Gluttony is a cursed vice. It is the cause of our confusion on earth. It was the reason for our damnation, until it was paid for by the blood of Christ upon the cross. Yet at what a high price! Gluttony has corrupted the whole world. Adam and Eve were driven out of

Eden as a result of their greed, condemned to a life of labour and of woe. As long as Adam fasted, he was happy in paradise. There is no doubt about it. But as soon as he tasted the forbidden fruit he was cast into the lower world of shame and suffering. We all ought to cry out against gluttony. If you knew how many diseases and complaints afflict the greedy man, you would be more temperate. You would maintain a proper diet, and enjoy good health. Alas the open mouth and the eager appetite! Men must labour, north and west, east and south, on land and sea, and in the air, to satisfy the stomachs of greedy men who crave more meat, more wine, more everything. Saint Paul has summarized the matter very well. 'Meat is for the belly, and the belly is for meat. But in good time God will destroy them both.' No words can tell, no tongue can name, the horrors of gluttony. A man then turns his mouth into a public toilet, a sink into which is poured the filth of alcohol; then he spews it out again.

The apostle has recorded his lament. 'Many are walking on this earth,' he said, 'who are enemies of Christ crucified. I tell you this in sorrow. Their fate is death everlasting. If their belly is their god, they will be condemned.' Belly! Stomach! Words for a stinking bag of flesh, filled with shit and corrupted filth. From either end comes a foul wind. Sustenance is found for you at great cost and hard labour. The cooks have to grind and pound and mince, turning one dish into the likeness of another, just to satisfy you. They have to extract the marrow from the bones, just so that you can swallow the sweetest juices. They have to concoct spices out of herbs and leaves, so that they can make a sauce to stir your appetite. Yet you who live for such delights are as good as dead. Your vices have killed you.

Drunkenness is just as foul a sin. Alcohol provokes violence and creates misery. It sours the breath. It disfigures the features. Who would want to embrace a drunk? He snores loudly, and mutters broken words. Oh you drunkard, you fall down as heavily as a stuck pig. You have lost your tongue, as well as your self-respect. Drunkenness is the graveyard of intelligence and decency. Never trust a man who is lost in drink. Never confide in him. So, good people, keep away from the red and the white wines that are sold in Fish Street and Cheapside. Spanish wine is the cheapest and the worst. It seems to get mixed up with other wines, until it becomes quite overpowering. Its vapours go straight to the head. I do not blame the vintners for this, of course. God forbid. My father was a vintner. It must happen naturally somehow. Two or three glasses are enough. The drunkard may then think he is at home in London, but in fact he has been transported to a vineyard in Spain. He is lying among the grapes, burbling nonsense.

So, lords and ladies, listen to me. All of the great deeds and victories commemorated in the Old Testament were performed by men who practised abstinence. They never touched liquor. They prayed to Almighty God instead. Read all about it in the Holy Book.

In contrast, think of Attila. This great king and conqueror, to his manifest shame and dishonour, died in his sleep from too much drink; he was bleeding at the nose, in fact. A military man should live soberly. Remember what was commanded of Lamuel. Was it Samuel? No. Lamuel. It is in the Book of Proverbs. 'Give not to kings, Oh Lamuel, give not wine to kings. For there is no secret where drunkenness reigns.' There is no need to say more on that subject.

So let me turn to gambling. Next to drunkenness, gaming is the worst vice. Dice are the mothers of lies. They are the cause of deceit, of cursing, of perjury, of blasphemy, and even of manslaughter. They waste time and money. And, furthermore, to be known as a common

gambler is deemed to be a great dishonour. The more exalted a man is in rank, as a gambler, the more infamous he will become. A gambling prince would be unfit to frame a policy. He would be considered incompetent in public life. Once upon a time the philosopher Stilbo was sent from Sparta as an ambassador to form an alliance with Corinth. He travelled in great state but, on his arrival, he happened to find all the greatest in the land grouped around a gaming table. As soon as he could, he returned to his own nation. 'I am not going to lose my reputation,' he said to his rulers, 'or bring shame to my own people, by making an alliance with gamblers. Send otherwise envoys, if you wish, but on my honour I would rather die than negotiate with such wastrels. We Spartans are a glorious people. We cannot allow ourselves to be associated with them. I for one could not sign such a treaty.' So spoke the wise philosopher.

Take the case of King Demetrius. The king of Persia sent him a pair of golden dice to signify his scorn for him as a well-known gambler. Demetrius had no thought for his honour or his glory. As a result he had no reputation in the outside world. The great lords of the earth can surely think of better ways to spend their time than in dicing.

Now, dear pilgrims, I will turn to perjury and the swearing of false oaths. That is another subject treated by the old books. Cursing is a great sin in itself, of course, but perjury is greater still. God Almighty has forbidden swearing of every kind. We know that on the authority of Matthew. Jeremiah also touched upon the subject. 'Thou shalt swear in truth,' he wrote, 'in judgement and in righteousness.' Profanity is a wretched thing. Do you recall the three commandments concerning the duties owed to the Almighty? The third of them is this - 'Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain.' This is more important than the taking of life or any other enormity. In order of significance it lies third. Every schoolboy knows that. I tell you plainly that violence and vengeance will not be strangers in the house of a blasphemer who cries out, 'By Christ's passion!' or 'By the nails on Christ's cross!' When he plays at dice he calls out to his opponent, 'You have five and three. I need seven. By the blood of Christ, give me a seven!' And then he exclaims, 'By the bones of Christ, I will stab you to the heart if you play false with me!' This is the fruit of the cursed dice - curses, anger, perjury and murder. So for the love of Christ, who died for us, forsake all oaths. Now I will get on with my story. These three young scoundrels, whom I mentioned at the beginning, were sitting in a low tavern long before daybreak. They were drinking together when suddenly they heard the chink of the handbell that announces the carriage of a coffin to the grave. One of them turned to his servant. 'Go outside,' he said, 'and find out whose corpse it is. Try to remember the name.'

'Sir,' the boy replied, 'that isn't necessary. I knew about it two hours ago. It is the body of an old comrade of yours. He was murdered last night, very suddenly, as he sat blind drunk upon the bench outside the tavern. A thief called Death sneaked up on him. Death is killing everyone around here. He took up his spear, pierced the drunk through the heart, and silently went on his way. He has killed another thousand during the recent plague. I think, master, that you should be careful not to come too close to him. It is better to beware such an adversary. That's what my mother taught me. Death is the constant enemy.'

'Mother of God!' the landlord said. 'The boy is right. Death has killed thousands of people this year. Why, he has slain an entire village a mile or so away from here, with every man and woman and child gone into the ground. I am sure that he lives there. It would be wise to be wary of him, sirs. Forewarned is forearmed.'

‘By the blood of Jesus,’ one of them exclaimed. ‘Are we all so frightened of him? I will search out this fellow named Death in every street and every quarter. I swear that I will teach him a lesson. What do the two of you say? Are you with me? Let us hold up our hands together, and swear that we will act as brothers in the quest for Death. The slayer will become the slain, this very night, so help us God!’

So the three of them swore an oath to be true to one another, and to live or die in pursuit of their fraternal cause. So these newfound brothers jumped up from the tavern bench, as drunk as skunks, and made their way to the neighbouring village where Death was supposed to dwell. On the road they uttered many oaths, swearing by Christ’s bones and blood, that they would tear Death to pieces once they had got their hands on him. They had walked about half a mile, and were just about to cross over a stile, when they were stopped by a poor old man. He saluted them very humbly. ‘God save you, your reverences,’ he said.

The proudest of the three laughed in his face. ‘Who do you think you are, old man?’ he asked him. ‘Why are you all wrapped up in rags, except for your face? Haven’t you lived long enough? Isn’t it time to die?’

The man looked into his face, and answered him patiently. ‘I have walked all over the world, and still I cannot find the person I seek. I have met no one, in town or city or village, who will exchange his youth for my age. So therefore I grow ever more aged, counting off the years that God has willed to me. Death himself refuses to take away my life. So I walk on, a restless wanderer through the world. With my staff I knock upon the earth, calling out “Dear mother, let me in. Open the gate. See how I grow feeble. I am nothing but skin and bones. Dear mother, let these bones rest within you. I would gladly exchange my box of treasures for the comfort of a winding cloth around my corpse.” Yet mother earth will not help me, sirs. So you see me standing before you with pale and withered face.

‘But, gentlemen, it is not right that you insult me. I have done you no wrong, in word or deed. Have you not read the Holy Book? It is the duty of the young to stand in reverence to the old. White hairs demand respect. Do not injure the old, in case you are harmed when you reach the same age. That is all I have to say to you. God be with you, wherever you may travel. I must go on as before.’

‘You are going nowhere, you old fool,’ one of the three said to him. ‘By Christ’s passion you are not getting off so lightly. You just mentioned that false traitor, Death, who has killed all of our friends in the neighbourhood. You have my word on it. If you are spying for him, you will pay for it. Tell me where he is. Otherwise, expect the worst. I swear it on the body and blood of Jesus. You are in league with Death, aren’t you, in a conspiracy to slay all of us young people!’

‘Young gentlemen,’ the old man said, ‘if you are in such a hurry to find Death, turn up this crooked path here. You will find him sitting under a tree in an oak grove. I left him there only a minute ago. I assure you that, despite your threats, Death will not run away from you. Do you see that tall oak? He waits there. May Christ, who saved the world, save you!’ The old man then went on his way.

So the three wastrels, with loud cries, ran towards the oak tree. And what did they find there? They found piles of gold florins, newly minted, heaped on the ground. They reckoned that there were more than eight bushels of this treasure. They forgot all about Death. He was the last thing on their minds. They thought only of this glittering hoard of coin, so fresh and bright that it dazzled their eyes. The three of them sat down beside it in

amazement.

The worst of them spoke first. ‘Brothers,’ he said, ‘listen carefully to what I have to say. I may joke and play about, but I have a good head on my shoulders. I know what I’m talking about. Fortune has granted us this treasure-trove. It is ours to spend as we like, in joy and festivity all life long. Easy come, easy go. Who would have thought, for God’s sake, that this would be our lucky day! We must find a way of carrying this gold back to my house - or to yours, of course, we are all in this together. Only then can we be sure of it. But we cannot move it in daylight. We will be accused of theft, and hanged straight away from the nearest tree. No. It has got to be done by night. We have to transport the gold carefully and quietly so that we arouse no suspicions. This is what I suggest. We cut sticks and draw. The one who draws the longest will run back into town, and purchase bread and wine for us. The other two will keep watch over the treasure. As long as he comes back quickly with provisions - and says nothing when he is in town - we will be able to carry home the gold tonight to whatever place we think best. Do you agree?’

Then he picked up three sticks and, bidding them to draw in turn, put them tightly within his fist. The youngest of them chose the longest stick and so, according to the plan, he ran off towards the town as quickly as he could. As soon as he was out of sight the one who had conceived the plan turned to his friend. ‘You know that you are my sworn brother,’ he said in a low voice. ‘So I will tell you something to your advantage. We are alone. He has gone into town. You saw him. There is plenty of gold here to share among the three of us. No doubt about it. But what if I arranged it so that only two of us would benefit? Wouldn’t that be a friendly thing to do?’

The other one was puzzled. ‘How are you going to do that? He knows that the two of us are guarding the gold until his return. What are we going to do? What are we going to tell him?’

‘If you swear to keep this secret,’ he whispered, ‘I will tell you in a few words what has to be done.’

‘I swear. I will never betray you.’

‘Listen closely then. Two people are stronger than one. Is that not so? When he comes back, get up as if you were about to play; pretend to wrestle with him, and at the same time I will stab him in the back. You must use your knife on him, too. Then we will be able to share out the gold between us, my dear friend, just you and me. We will be able to indulge ourselves. Why, we will dice all the day long!’ So these two scoundrels agreed to kill their friend and newly sworn brother.

The youngest man, who had gone into town, had also been considering the situation. All he could see, and think of, were those glistening piles of coin. ‘Lord,’ he said to himself, ‘if only I could keep all that treasure for myself! No one in God’s world would be more pleased and happy.’ It was at this point that Satan, the foul enemy of mankind, whispered to him that he should procure poison and feed it to his two friends. When a man is living in such sin as he was, the fiend is permitted to tempt him even further. So he determined, there and then, to purchase poison and do murder without compunction or regret. He went to an apothecary in the town, and told him that he wanted to buy poison to exterminate some rats; he said that he also wanted to get rid of a weasel that killed the chickens in his yard, as well as all the other household vermin that creep out by night.

‘Well, sir,’ the apothecary replied, ‘I have the very thing. I swear to God that this arsenic will kill anything and everything. A creature has only to take a tiny piece, the size of a grain of wheat, and it will die. It begins to work after a few minutes. It is strong and violent. And, as I said, it is always fatal.’

‘Excellent. I will take it.’ So the apothecary made up a box of the poison for him. The young man went out into the street, and walked into a tavern. Here he ordered three bottles of wine. Into two of them he put the poison, while he left the third for his own use. He intended to spend the entire night in carrying the gold back to his own house. After he had finished preparing the poisoned draughts, he returned to his friends beneath the oak tree.

Do I need to state the obvious? The two of them, just as they had planned, stabbed the young man to death. When they had murdered him, they laughed. ‘Let us sit down and drink,’ one of them said. ‘We deserve a rest. After we have got through this wine, we can think about burying him.’ He opened one of the bottles and put it to his lips. ‘Chin chin. Open another one.’ So they refreshed themselves, or so they thought. They were drinking poison, of course, and soon died.

I don’t think any medical expert could describe in detail all of their suffering. It was unutterably horrible. Death had caught them, after all, two murderers and a poisoner.

Oh cursed sinners, filled with malice and wickedness! You have been fattened with gluttony and lapped in luxury. You have thrown the dice for the last time. Blasphemers, your curses against Christ have come back upon you! Your swearing, your pride and folly, have destroyed you. Why is mankind so false to its creator, who purchased its redemption with His own blood?

Now, all you good men and women, learn from me and beware the sin of avarice. Forgive us our trespasses. That is the prayer. So I have come here to pardon you. Just give me your coins, your jewellery and your silver spoons. Here is the papal bull of dispensation. Wives, what will you give me for it? Bales of cloth? Look. I can write down your names now, and ensure that you pass easily into the bliss of paradise. By the high powers granted to me, and for a certain sum, I can absolve you of all your sins. You will be as innocent as the day you were born. The price is worth it. Cash down. And may Christ in His mercy grant you His pardon. May He save your soul. Etcetera. Etcetera.

‘And that, fellow pilgrims, is the way I preach. Oh, I forgot one thing. I have plenty of wonder- working relics in my bag, as well as many pardons given to me personally by the pope. If any of you wish to take advantage of these holy writs, offer me some money and kneel down before me. In return for your devotion, I will give you absolution. I can absolve you now, or at any time during the course of our journey. My pardons are always fresh and always renewed - as long as you are able to pay for them, of course. Isn’t it a blessing that I am among you? I can wipe away your sins at any time, night or day. I am at your service. It is possible that one of you might fall from his horse and break his neck. You have me as a security. I can absolve you before the soul leaves the body.

‘Let me start with our Host here. I am willing to bet that he is the one most enmired in sin. Am I right? Come forth, Harry Bailey, and give me some money. Then I will let you kiss the relics, one by one. Unfasten your purse, sir.’

‘I will do no such thing,’ our Host replied. ‘May Christ curse me if I give you so much as a groat. You would tell me to kiss a pair of your dirty underpants, and swear that the shit

came from a saint! By the holy relic of the true cross, I wish I had your greasy balls in my hand rather than your fake papal bulls. Let's cut them off and enshrine them in a hog's turd. That's where they belong.'

The Pardoner was so angry that he could not say a word. He just glowered in silence.

'I really can't be bothered to make fun of you,' our Host said. 'I will have nothing to do with an angry man.'

The Knight saw that everyone was laughing at the Pardoner, and so he rode to the front of the procession. 'Enough of this,' he said. 'No more. Now, sir Pardoner, recover your temper. Smile. And you, sir Host, make amends to our friend here. Kiss him on the cheek in token of amity. And you, Pardoner, respond in kind with the kiss of peace. This will be a love day. We will go on our way as before with good cheer and laughter.' So the Host and Pardoner were reconciled. And the pilgrims went on their way rejoicing.

Heere is ended the Pardoners Tale

Appendix 3. Excerpts from Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1604)

"Homo fuge!" Latin for "O man, fly!"
****

Enter with Devils, giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus, and dance then depart.
Faustus: Speak, Mephistopheles. What means this show?
Mephistopheles: Nothing, Faustus, but to delight thy mind withal
And to show thee what magic can perform. (DF 2. I. 83-5)

****
I'll have them read me strange philosophy,
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings;
I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
And chase the prince of Parma from our land,
And reign sole king of all the provinces.

****
By him I'll be great emp'ror of the world,
And make a bridge through the moving air
To pass the Ocean with a band of men;
I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore
And make that [country] continent to Spain,
And both contributory to my crown,
The Emperor shall not live but by my leave,
Nor any potentate of Germany.

****
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man
Wouldst thou make man to live eternally?
Or being dead, raise them to life again?
Then this profession were to be esteemed.

****
All things that move between the quiet poles,
Shall be at my command: emperors and kings,
Are obey'd in their sev'ral provinces,
Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds,
But his dominion that exceeds in this,
Stretched as far as doth the mind of man.

****
Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,
That sometime grew in this learned man.

****

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
O, I'll leap up to my God-who pulls me down?....
Earth, gape! O, no, it will not harbour me!.....
O, strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air, …….
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll turn books! – Ah, Mephistophilis!

****

But his domain that exceeds in this
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
A sound magician is a mighty god:

****

Faustus: *Where are you damned?*
Mephostophilis: *In hell.*
Faustus: *How comes it then that thou art out of Hell?*
Mephostophilis: *Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it.*
Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?

****

Stand still, you over-moving spheres of Heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come!
Fear Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

Appendix 4. Excerpts from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601)

Act I scene v
THE GHOST
But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

Act I scene v
THE GHOST
But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

Act II scene ii
HAMLET
The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Act III scene i
OPHELIA
O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

Act III scene i
HAMLET
To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,

Appendix 5. “Sonnet 18” by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day? *1*
Thou art more lovely and more temperate: *2*
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, *3*
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date: *4*

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines *5*
And often is his gold complexion dimmed; *6*
And every fair from fair sometimes declines, *7*
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed; *8*

But thy eternal Summer shall not fade, *9*
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st; *10*
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade, *11*
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st: *12*

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, *13*
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. *14*

William Shakespeare

Appendix 6. "No Man Is an Island," by John Donne

No Man Is an Island
Entire of itself.
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine friend's were.
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore, never send to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

Appendix 7. “Holy Sonnet X,” by John Donne

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

Appendix 8. “The Daffodils,” by William Wordsworth

I wander'd lonely as a cloud 1
That floats on high o'er vales and hills, 2
When all at once I saw a crowd, 3
A host of golden daffodils, 4
Beside the lake, beneath the trees 5
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. 6

Continuous as the stars that shine 7
And twinkle on the milky way, 8
They stretch'd in never-ending line 9
Along the margin of a bay: 10
Ten thousand saw I at a glance 11
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance. 12

The waves beside them danced, but they 13
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee: 14
A poet could not but be gay 15
In such a jocund company! 16
I gazed - and gazed - but little thought 17
What wealth the show to me had brought. 18

For oft, when on my couch I lie 19
In vacant or in pensive mood, 20
They flash upon that inward eye 21
Which is the bliss of solitude; 22
And then my heart with pleasure fills 23
And dances with the daffodils. 24

Appendix 9. "The Tyger," by William Blake

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright	1
In the forests of the night,	2
What immortal hand or eye	3
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?	4
In what distant deeps or skies	5
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?	6
On what wings dare he aspire?	7
What the hand dare seize the fire?	8
And what shoulder, & what art,	9
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?	10
And when thy heart began to beat,	11
What dread hand? & what dread feet?	12
What the hammer? what the chain?	13
In what furnace was thy brain?	14
What the anvil? what dread grasp	15
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?	16
When the stars threw down their spears,	17
And water'd heaven with their tears,	18
Did he smile his work to see?	19
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?	20
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright	21
In the forests of the night,	22
What immortal hand or eye,	23
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?	24