

# **MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**BA ENGLISH**

**VI SEMESTER**

**CORE COURSE**

**(2011 Admission)**



**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

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STUDY MATERIAL

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# MODULE I

## LITERARY MOVEMENTS

### MODERNISM

Modernist literature has its beginning in the late 19th and early 20th century Europe and America. Modernism was a revolt against the conservative values of realism. Arguably the most paradigmatic motive of modernism is the rejection of tradition and its reprise, incorporation, rewriting, recapitulation, revision and parody in new forms. Ezra Pound's maxim to "Make it new" is a tag word of modernism. It rejected the lingering certainty of Enlightenment thinking and also rejected the existence of a compassionate, and the concept of all-powerful creator God. It is an intellectual and artistic movement that developed in conjunction with, and eventually in opposition to, fully developed modernity. Modernist artists and intellectuals were disgusted with the banality and "dehumanized" quality of life in industrial capitalism. They responded to this degradation of the quality of life by retreating into a nostalgia for pre-capitalist organic social order (F. R. Leavis, T. S. Eliot), by embracing fascist leaders and ideologies (Ezra Pound's support of Mussolini, Gertrude Stein's support of Marshal Petain, etc.) by seeking refuge in radical and sometimes anti-social individualism (Hemingway, J. D. Salinger, etc.) or agrarian populism (Faulkner, John Crowe Ransom and the agrarian "fugitives," of the 1930's, etc.). High modernist art often features fragmentation and disruption at the level of form (e.g. James Joyce), though it generally attempts to recuperate a sense of order and faith in universal values at the level of content or overall effect. In this way the modernists attempted to "shore up" (invoking Eliot's phrase from "The Waste Land") the grand narratives, the "absolute" truths and values, of the western tradition.

Modern British literature is the literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many events contributed to the concept of 'modern' which are given below.

1. Charles Darwin and his book 'Origin of Species' published in 1859. It brought out a new world outlook especially among religious communities.
2. Emergence of socialism and later communism by the advent of Karl Max by his book Das Capital.
3. Appearance of Sigmund Freud and the psycho analysis theory influenced the age a lot.
4. Albert Einstein's Theory of Reativity combined with Quantum theory.
5. World War I.

All these events dramatically influenced 20<sup>th</sup> century and the consequence is modernism. New trends emerged in all disciplines, such as Painting, Music, Arts, Science, and Literature. Traditional tools and techniques and notions were rejected, and new approaches and ideas are emerged. The boundary-breaking art, literature, and music of the first decades of the century are the subject of the topic “Modernist Experiment.”

### IMPRESSIONISM

The term impressionism comes from the school of mid-nineteenth century French painting, which was in reaction to the academic style of the day. The name of the style derives from the title of a Claude Monet’s work, *Impression, soleil levant* (Impression, Sunrise). Impressionist painting characteristics include relatively small, thin, yet visible brush strokes, open composition, emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time), ordinary subject matter, inclusion of *movement* as a crucial element of human perception and experience, and unusual visual angles. The literary use of the term ‘impressionism’ is far less precise. Many of the French symbolist poets have at one time or another been called Impressionists. The impressionistic technique is apparently subjective. In the modern novel, ‘impressionism frequently refers to the technique of centering in the mental life of the chief character rather than the reality around him. Writers such as Proust, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf dwell in their characters’ memories, associations, and inner emotional reactions.

### IMAGISM

Imagism, a movement in early 20th-century Anglo-American poetry was formulated in about 1912 by Ezra Pound—in conjunction with fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Richard Aldington, and F.S. Flint--and was inspired by the critical views of T.E. Hulme. It has been described as the most influential movement in English poetry since the activity of the Pre-Raphaelites. The poets who followed the Imagist poetry movement were T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings, and Allen Ginsberg. Imagist poetry favored precision of imagery, and clear language. The Imagists rejected the sentiment and discursiveness typical of much Romantic and Victorian poetry. This was in contrast to their contemporaries, the Georgian poets, who were by and large content to work within that tradition. Group publication of work under the Imagist name appearing between 1914 and 1917 featured writing by many of the most significant figures in Modernist poetry in English, as well as a number of other Modernist figures prominent in fields other than poetry.

Imagist publications appearing between 1914 and 1917 featured works by many of the most prominent modernist figures, both in poetry and in other fields. The Imagist group was centered in London, with members from Great Britain, Ireland and the United States. Somewhat unusually for the time, a number of women writers were major Imagist figures. Major feature of the Imagism is that it makes use the language of common speech, but to employ the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word, and the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms. Another feature of imagist poetry is that it relies on absolute freedom in the choice of subject. Imagists try to produce the poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.

## **STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

The phrase 'stream of consciousness' refers to an uninterrupted and unhindered collection and occurrence of thoughts and ideas in the conscious mind. In literature, the phrase refers to the flow of these thoughts, with reference to a particular character's thinking process. It is first used by William James in *Principles of Psychology*. It is one of the major techniques used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists such as Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. This type of writing is also called as subjective novel or psychological novel.

Stream of consciousness is a method of narrative representation of "random" thoughts which follow in a freely-flowing style. Some writers attempted to capture the total flow of their characters' consciousness, rather than limit themselves to rational thoughts. To represent the full richness, speed, and subtlety of the mind at work, the writer incorporates snatches of incoherent thought, ungrammatical constructions, and free association of ideas, images, and words at the pre-speech level or his or her sensory reactions to external occurrences.

The stream-of-consciousness novel commonly uses the narrative techniques of interior monologue. Probably the most famous example is James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), a complex evocation of the inner states of the characters Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus; Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), a complex novel in which six characters recount their lives from childhood to old age. Toni Morrison also used the stream-of-consciousness technique of writing in many of her novels depicting the life of African-American women, such as *Beloved* (1987).

## **MOVEMENT POETRY**

"The Movement" poetry is a kind of poetry which was written by a few poets during the nineteen-fifties and that found to be very different from the modernist poetry written in the nineteen-thirties and nineteen-forties. "The Movement" is a title first used to the anthology of poets such as Kingsley Amis, John Wain, Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn, Donald Davie, and D.J. Enright that published in 1950s. Soon after, another anthology called "New Lines", containing the work of the same poets, appeared; and in it a number of poems by Larkin were also included. In the introduction to this anthology, its editor (Robert Conquest) wrote that these poems of the nineteen-fifties were vastly different from the poems which had been written in the preceding two decades. This new poetry, he wrote, did not submit to any great systems of theoretical constructs or to any agglomerations of unconscious commands. This new poetry was free from both mystical and logical compulsions, and was empirical in its attitude to all things.

Actually, the poets of the Movement were not an organized group with any well-defined and deliberately formulated aims shared by them all. The poetry of each member of this group differed in several ways from the poetry of every other member. All the same, there were certain features which were identified by critics as being common to the poetry of most of the members of this group. Questioned on this point, Larkin said that the members of this group did not have many artistic aims in common but that they agreed, in general, in things which they found funny or derisible. Larkin did not give any clear

definition of the poetry of the Movement, though he did agree that certain features were common to the work of all the poets of this group. Talking about his own poetry, he emphasized the expository, documentary, empirical, and rational elements in his poems; and these qualities were evident in the work of other members of the group also.

The poetry of the Movement aims at stark realism; it is rational, empirical, and argumentative; it employs traditional syntax, using ordinary diction; and it is most often colloquial in style. The symbolist or Yeatsian poetry, on the other hand, aims at transcendental effects; it employs symbols which tend to make it difficult to understand; it is most often vague in its meaning and it therefore mystifies the reader; it is highly allusive; it is very learned and demands from the reader a high degree of intelligence and vast knowledge; it generally tends to obscurity. The poetry of the Movement seeks to establish a direct relationship between the poet and his audience; and that is why it deals with ordinary and common themes in an ordinary and plain style. The symbolist or modernist poetry, on the other hand, appeals to the elite among the intelligentsia, thus losing touch with the common people. And it so happens that most of Larkin's poems represent the aims of the Movement, and that some of his poems represent the symbolist or the modernist mode of writing. Both sides can claim him for their own; and this is the reason why his work may be regarded as representing the Movement's poetic scene as one of the temperate zone.

### SURREALISM

Surrealism is a movement in literature and the fine arts, founded by the French poet and critic Andre Breton. He published his *Surrealist Manifesto* in Paris in 1924 and consistently dominated the movement. Surrealism grew directly out of the movement known as Dadaism, an art and literary movement reflecting nihilistic protest against all aspects of Western culture. Like Dadaism, surrealism emphasized the role of the unconscious in creative activity, but it employed the psychic unconscious in a more orderly and more serious manner.

The surrealists claimed as their literary forebears a long line of writers, outstanding among whom is the Comte de Lautreamont, author of the lengthy and complicated work *Les chants de Maldoror* (1868-1870). Besides Breton, many of the most distinguished French writers of the early 20th century were at one time connected with the movement; these include Paul eluard, Louis Aragon, Rene Crevel, and Philippe Soupault. Younger writers such as Raymond Queneau were also influenced by its points of view.

Pure surrealist writers used automatism as a literary form—that is, they wrote whatever words came into their conscious mind and regarded these words as inviolable. They did not alter what they wrote, as that would constitute an interference with the pure act of creation. The authors felt that this free flow of thought would establish a rapport with the subconscious mind of their readers.

Like their forerunners, the Dadaists, the surrealists broke accepted rules of work and personal conduct in order to liberate their sense of inner truth. The movement spread all over the world and flourished in America during World War II (1939-1945), when Andre Breton was living in New York City.



## EXPRESSIONISM

In literature, expressionism is often considered a revolt against realism and naturalism, seeking to achieve a psychological or spiritual reality rather than record external events in logical sequence. Expressionism attempts to portray the inner workings of a person's mind by, effectively, turning them 'inside out' and allowing mental states to shape their face, body, and even the world in which they live. In theatre, expressionism results in a drama of social protest, in which representation of the outer world took second place to the inner turmoil experienced by the main character, which is expressed via long monologues. This can be seen as a reaction against a comfortable, unthinking, uncaring and increasingly mechanized society. In the novel, the term is closely allied to the writing of Franz Kafka and James Joyce. In the drama, Strindberg is considered the forefather of the expressionists, though the term is specifically applied to a group of early 20th-century German dramatists, including Kaiser, Toller, and Wedekind. Their work was often characterized by a bizarre distortion of reality. The movement, though short-lived, gave impetus to a free form of writing and of production in modern theater. The objectives of expressionism in literature, notably in the novel and the drama, are similar to those in art. The characters and scenes are presented in a stylized, distorted manner with the intent of producing emotional shock. The early expressionist playwrights, August Strindberg of Sweden and Frank Wedekind of Germany, exerted an international influence on the next generation of playwrights. These included the Germans Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller, the Czech Karel Capek, and the Americans Eugene O'Neill and Elmer Rice. Expressionist drama gave rise to a new approach to staging, scene design, and directing. The object was to create a totally unified stage picture that would increase the emotional impact of the production on the audience. Among prominent directors were the Germans Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator and the Russian Vsevolod Meyerhold. Set designers such as Edward Henry Gordon Craig of Britain and Robert Edmond Jones of the United States used techniques similar to those of expressionist painters to provide visual stimulation consonant with the dramas. Expressionist painting and drama also influenced the cinema, as can be seen in the German films *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), with its nightmarish perspectives and masklike makeup, and *The Last Laugh* (1924), notable for the brilliant use of lighting and camera angles to convey the bitter story.

Central characters, particularly in the work of Austrian novelist Franz Kafka, are trapped inside a distorted vision of the world that either reflects their own psychological conflicts or those of the society in which the original readers lived. German novelists associated with expressionism also include Max Brod, and Karl Kraus. Expressionist literature in Germany was effectively wiped out by the Nazis in the 1930s. In expressionist literature, the physical consequences of a distorted situation are followed through as if it were completely real. Expressionist writers divide over the final consequences of this. Personal tragedies usually end in the destruction of the character. However, when the focus is the state of society a positive ending can result, with the victory of traditional human values over repression and mass production. This is particularly apparent in the theatre. Expressionist drama flourished in Germany, in the work of Reinhard

Johannes Sorge, Georg Kaiser, Ernst Toller, Paul Kornfeld, Reinhard Johannes Sorge, Georg Kaiser, Ernst Toller, Paul Kornfeld, Fritz von Unruh, and Walter Hasenclever.

### **AVANT GARDE MOVEMENT**

Refers to people or works that are experimental or innovative, particularly with respect to art, culture, and politics. Avant-garde represents a pushing of the boundaries of what is accepted as the norm or the status quo, primarily in the cultural realm. The notion of the existence of the avant-garde is considered by some to be a hallmark of modernism, as distinct from postmodernism.

One of the key things about being avant-garde in literature is that it is all about breaking the existing rules about writing, and whether these are in poetry or in fictional writing, pushing the boundary and expressing themselves in a different way that doesn't conform to the existing rules is vital. It is as much about the form as it is about the content. James Joyce is one of the biggest exponents of Avant-garde experimentation in Literature.

### **ANGRY THEATRE**

Angry Theatre refers to various British novelists and playwrights who emerged in the 1950s and expressed scorn and dissatisfaction with the established sociopolitical order of their country. Their impatience and resentment were especially aroused by what they perceived as the hypocrisy and mediocrity of the upper and middle classes.

The Angry Young Men were a new breed of intellectuals who were mostly of working class or of lower middle-class origin. "Look Back in Anger" is the representative work of the movement. When the Royal Court Theatre's press agent described the play's 26-year-old author John Osborne as an "angry young man," the name was extended to all his contemporaries who expressed rage at the persistence of class distinctions, pride in their lower-class mannerisms, and dislike for anything highbrow or "phoney." The major characteristics of the Angry Young Men Movement are revolt against Social Inequality, criticism of mannerism, portrayal of social Status of youth, revolt against conventionality, and unconventional hero.

### **EPIC THEATRE**

Epic theatre refers to a theatrical movement first recognized in the 1920's and 30's. The purpose of this movement was to emphasise more on the meaning of a play rather than the aesthetics of it. Brecht and his fellow epic theatre artists devised a set of staging and acting techniques meant to teach their audience to criticize the injustices and inequalities of modern life. Two keys to their technique are the notion of "theatricalism" and the concept of the "distancing" or "alienation" effect. The first, theatricalism, simply means the audience aware that they are in a theatre watching a play. Brecht believed that "seducing" the audience into believing they were watching "real life" led to an uncritical acceptance of society's values. He thought that by keeping stage sets simple, showing exposed lighting instruments, breaking the action into open-ended episodes, projecting labels or photographs during scenes, or using a narrator or actors to directly address the audience, a production would allow an audience to maintain the emotional objectivity necessary to learn the truth about their society. The second key to epic theatre, the "distancing" or "alienation" effect in

acting style, has these same goals. Brecht wanted actors to strike a balance between "being" their character onstage and "showing the audience that the character is being performed." The use of "quotable gesture," (the employment of a stance, mannerism, or repeated action to sum up a character), the sudden shift from one behavior to another to put the audience off-balance, and the suggestion of the "roads not taken" in each moment of a character's decision-making are all the means to the didactic end of teaching us to criticize the society we see onstage in Epic Theatre.

## **POST MODERNISM**

Postmodernist thought is an intentional departure from modernist approaches that had previously been dominant. The term "postmodernism" comes from its critique of the "modernist" scientific mentality of objectivity and progress associated with the Enlightenment. Developed in the second half of the twentieth century, it is largely influenced by a number of events that marked the period. Genocide that occurred during the Second World War, Soviet gulags, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, mass destruction caused by atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, insecurity of Cold War Era, post colonialism issue, as well as the supremacy of multinational corporations and post-industrialism with new technologies, violence, counter culture and consumer culture shaped the perception of new authors. While postmodernism had a little relevance to poetry and only a limited influence on modern drama (applied only to the Absurd Theatre), it had a huge impact on fiction, especially to the novel. Characterized by an attempt to establish transhistorical or transcultural validity, it claims that search for reality is pointless, as the "real" is conditioned by time, place, race, class, gender, and sexuality. There is no knowledge or experience that is superior or inferior to another.

Literary postmodernism is generally characterized by features such as: a mixing of styles ("high" and "low," for example) in the same text; discontinuity of tone, point of view, register, and logical sequence; apparently random unexpected intrusions and disruptions in the text; a self-consciousness about language and literary technique, especially concerning the use of metaphor and symbol, and the use of self-referential tropes. Even though the writers most often associated with postmodernism may deal with serious themes, their work often has absurd, playful, or comic aspects, and sometimes makes special use of parody and pastiche and of references to other texts and artifacts.

Chief characteristics of post modernism is that it deals with the complex absurdity of contemporary life - moral and philosophical relativism, loss of faith in political and moral authority, alienation etc. It employs black humor, parody, grotesque, absurdity, and travesty. It tries to erase boundaries between "low" and "high" culture. Post modern works lack of a grand narrative. It avoids traditional closure of themes or situation. It condemns commercialism, hedonism, mass production, and economic globalism.

## MODULE II

### POETRY:

## YEATS : EASTER 1916

**Eliot : Journey of the Magi**

Auden : The Unknown Citizen

Larkin : Next Please

Ted Hughes : The Thought Fox

Seamus Heaney : Constable Calls

#### *About the author*

William Butler Yeats, born in Sandymount, Dublin, Ireland on 13 June 1865 into an Irish protestant family, is widely considered to be one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. His father, John Butler Yeats, was a famous painter and intellectual; his mother, Susan Pollexfen, was from a wealthy noble Anglo-Irish family. When Yeats was hardly two years, his family moved to London. Although he lived in London for fourteen years of his childhood, little Yeats had spent a good deal of time with his grandparents at Sligo, a picturesque country side in Ireland. His childhood days at Sligo had affected his poetic sensibilities profoundly. He had a fascination for the hills, valleys and lakes in Sligo. He had a special like for Irish folk songs and fairy tales.

He joined Dublin Metropolitan School of Art after leaving Harcourt High School, Dublin in 1883. He had developed an interest in supernatural things here. His writing as a career actually took a sharp turn from Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. His father, John Butler Yeats, his first mentor and guide, had encouraged him tremendously to read and write poetry. His meeting with George Russel, poet, dramatist and painter, at Metropolitan School of art, who had an interest in mysticism had exerted enormous influence upon Yeats. Yeats had a life-long interest in mysticism, spiritualism, occultism and astrology.

In 1885, Yeats published his first poems in the Dublin University Review. His first significant poetical work *The Wandering of Oisín and Other Poems* was published in 1889 and it dealt with the abundant Irish mythology. He has written a number of plays, and in his earlier period his dramatic production outweighed his poetry.

The poetry and plays of W.B. Yeats often take subject matter from traditional Irish folklore, myth and legends of ancient Celtic traditions . Yeats authored many plays that

relied heavily upon the myths and legends of ancient Ireland, some of them are; "On Baile's Strand", "Deidre", and "The Death of Cuchulain". In his poetry, a sense of nationalism as well as an overriding personal interest in mythology and the oral traditions of folklore can also be seen. During Yeats' early career, there was an ongoing literary revival of interest in Irish legend and folklore and he has embraced the change and worked for it. Yeats creates conspicuously an Irish literature especially with patriotic feeling for Ireland. He moves towards a distinctly Irish sensibility with regard to love of country. For example, the poem, "To Ireland in the Coming Times" Yeats draws upon Irish folklore and mythic symbols and sets them against a backdrop of national identity. By placing importance on the Irish culture in his work, Yeats fulfilled his own sense of national pride to the delight of his readers and audiences.

His introduction to Maud Gonne, an actress of dazzling beauty and Irish revolutionary, about whom he wrote many poems had a telling effect on his life. But she refused to marry him and married 'the vain glorious lout' Major John Macbride in 1903. After the execution of John Macbride, Yeats again proposed Maud Gonne, but she rejected him again. His passionate craving for Maud Gonne can be seen throughout his poetry. Later he married to Goergie Hyde-Lees in 1917 which was a happy relationship and inspired Yeats for a sudden outburst of his poetic craftsmanship.

Yeats was a driving force behind the Irish Literary Revival and together with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and others he founded the Irish Theatre, which was to become the Abbey Theatre, and served as its chief playwright until the movement was joined by John Synge. In 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature as the first Irishman so honoured for what the Nobel Committee described as "inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation." He is regarded as the national poet of the Ireland. Yeats was a very good friend of the American expatriate poet Ezra Pound. Yeats wrote the introduction for *Gitanjali*, which was about to be published by the India Society. After his death, he was buried in Sligo, and he rests under the epitaph "Cast a cold eye on life, on death; horsemen, pass by!" W.H Auden assigned Yeats the high praise of having written "some of the most beautiful poetry" of modern times.

#### Major Works of Yeats

1. The Wind among the Reeds (1899)
2. The Green Helmet and Other Poems
3. Responsibilities
4. The Wild Swans at Coole
5. Michael Robarts and the Dancer
6. The Tower
7. The Winding Star and Other poems
8. New Poems
9. Last poems

Major Thematic Concerns of Yeats

- a) Ireland, its revolutionary history, Irish civil war, culture, mythology, folklore and the contemporary Ireland living
- b) Love and passion for Maud Gonne
- c) Spirituality, mysticism and symbolism

**INTRODUCTION TO EASTER 1916**

Easter 1916 is a poem in which the poet commemorates the Easter rising in Dublin on 24 April 1916. The Irish people stood up in rebellion against the British for independence. The uprising was crushed by the British army. A large number of people were executed; their leaders were arrested and shot dead. Yeats' attitude towards most of the Irish revolutionaries was complex since many of them were his friends and he was skeptical of the violent measures they adopted for political change.

The Irish parliament was abolished in 1800 with the Act of Union; Great Britain now had control over Ireland. Nationalists feared that Ireland would be exploited. In 1885, Parnell started a Parliamentary movement for Irish Home Rule. Ireland had witnessed frequent riots.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was created to counter British rule. The Supreme council of the IRB convened on September 5, 1914, which was the day after Britain had declared war on Germany. They decided to have a rebellion before the end of the war. The IRB smuggled German weapons into Ireland, in 1914. On April 21, 1916, Britain became aware of the impending uprising. The British arrested Sir Roger Casement for arms running for the IRB. The leaders of the Irish Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill, tried to cancel the rebellion, which was to take place on April 24, but Pearse did not get the message in time. The rebels seized Dublin's General Post Office and other strategic sites throughout Dublin. British troops invaded Dublin to squash the insurrection. Fighting lasted for about a week; the rebels surrendered on April 29. Pearse and fourteen other leaders were arrested and later executed. Most Irish had been against the insurrection, but the execution of these men incited a negative attitude towards Britain. The executed men were regarded as martyrs and heroes. The Irish government collapsed, and on December 6, 1921, the Irish Free State was established.

Though Yeats was a committed nationalist he was against violence and as a result he had strained relations with some of the figures who eventually led the uprising. But the event impressed Yeats very much; not for its appropriateness but for the brevity and heroism shown by the revolutionaries. Unlike many other Irish writers, he was not a revolutionary but a true patriot. The deaths of these revolutionary figures at the hands of the British, however, were as much a shock to Yeats and these ordinary people became no more ordinary leaders, and this idea has been expressed in the poem through the refrain " a terrible beauty is born"

## GLOSSARY

### Stanza I

The poem starts with the routine of the poet, lazy and lethargic, before the Easter rebellion. But towards the last of this stanza shows a sudden awakening.

Them ---- Irish people who took part in the Easter Rebellion 1916

Close of the day --- Evening

Vivid faces ---- Happy and lively people

Counter or desk ---- shops and offices

Grey eighteenth century houses---Old marble houses in Ireland

Polite meaningless words--- daily casual remarks like, Hi, How are you? Etc.

Lingered ---- remained

Mocking tale -----humorous story

Gibe ----- Joke, a sarcastic, taunting remark.

The Club----the Arts Club in Dublin, where Yeats meets his friends in the Evening

Motley---the coloured dress , party wares; coloured dress of a jester.

Changed utterly ----- altered completely

Terrible beauty -----an oxymoron used by Yeats, and refrain too. It gives a picture about the martyrs of Easter 1916 uprising.

### Stanza II

That Woman ..... Countess Constance Gore-booth Markievic (1868-1927) s who was a daughter of an Aristocrat from Sligo, who had a great respect from Yeats, wrote two poems about her. But she later became a fanatic.

Ignorant good will ----- She had all opportunities to do good things but she was rather unaware of it becoming a fanatic.

Harriers ----- a small kind of dog belonging to the hound species employed in the hunting the hare. Hunting sport of aristocrats intended here.

This man ----- Patrick Henry Pearce(1879-1916), an enthusiastic leader of Revolt, journalist, pamphleteer, and had started a school at Rathfurnham. Later he was executed on 3rd May, 1916.

Winged horse-----Greek mythological horse, Pegasus, a favourite of Muses, Goddesses of poetry. Poetic inspiration (here)

This other ----- Thomas Macdonagh(1878-1916), a poet and revolutionary, and lecturer in English at Dublin. Later he was executed on 3rd May, 1916.

This other man----- John Macbride(1868-1916), he was a revolutionary, who married Maud Gonne, lover of Yeats. But she was separated from him , and alleged ill-treating her. Yeats had least respect for him.

Vainglorious lout = a rogue, uncivilized fool.

Casual comedy -----life is like a comedy governed by chances

### **Stanza III**

Yeats introduces the stone image in this stanza.

Hearts with one purpose ----- Revolutionaries with a single aim

Enchanted-----attracted

A stone--- a heartless thing; stiff and merciless.

The living stream----the active flow of life

Range----wander

Tumbling----rolling

Horse-hoof----the foot of the horse

Slide---move smoothly

Brim---edge

Plash—water scattering on the strike in the surface of water

Moor-hen---a kind of bird seen in water

Dive---moving into the water deep

Moor-cock----the male partner of the moor hen

### **Stanza IV**

Heaven's part -----God's decree

Murmur name upon name----Call their name softly like an affectionate mom calls her kid even after his mischievous pranks.

Nightfall-----defeat

Dream---a free Ireland.

Bewildered---puzzled

James Connolly---an organizer and leader of Irish transport workers, who formed Citizen Army. A staunch nationalist who had involved in the Easter Rebellion. He has been executed on 12th May 1916.

Green—Irish flag



## ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The poem opens in a casual tone. Yeats recalls his meeting with some of those people who later involved in the 1916 Rising. He has often met them in the evening; he has often exchanged polite meaningless words with them, sometimes he had made fun of them. They seemed so ordinary. They worked all day at 'counter or desk' emerging from the 'eighteenth-century houses' where they resided. Their faces are 'vivid', in contrast to the old grey buildings which were constructed during the British reign, and Yeats may be comparing the quiet elegance and restraint of the aristocratic world of the Anglo-Irish and British to the pompous, gaudy world of these new patriots whom he despised. He believed that they were only playing at being revolutionaries and would never do anything meaningful in their struggle for an Irish republic. Yeats thought little of these people, not considering them worthy of his time. He often laughed at them when at his club, believing them to be fools. The reference to 'motley' means mixed colours, such as were worn by medieval jesters. Even while speaking to the revolutionaries, he would be storing up a 'mocking tale or gibe' to tell his friends at the club. As in 'September 1913', there is a refrain at the end of the opening section which is repeated throughout the poem. The refrain shows Yeats' shock at the incidents of Easter 1916. The people he mocked and considered foolish and powerless rose up against the British, and as a result many of them lost their lives. He must now face the fact that he was completely wrong in scorning the new revolutionaries and thinking they were incapable of any sort of heroism. The men he despised have become like the dead patriots he revered. In this poem, Yeats is reminding us that he expressed his distaste for the new breed of Irishman, but he acknowledges now that he completely misjudged them. Another interesting point is the way the poem is structured: there are 16 lines (for 1916) in the first and third stanzas, 24 lines (for April 24, the date the Rising began) in the second and fourth stanzas, and four stanzas in total (which refers to April, the fourth month of the year).

The 'beauty' of this heroism is not without a cost. The oxymoron 'terrible beauty' is Yeats' attempt to reconcile the heroism and the bravery of the Rising with the brutal death and execution of many of the revolutionaries. Yeats sees the complexity of the Rising, and he does not attempt to portray it as an entirely romantic or glorious event.

### **Section Two**

The second stanza is devoted to a sharp sketch of the chief actors.

The first of these democratic spirits was a woman- Countess Markievicz. His initial description of her is not flattery. He believes that she was well-intentioned but misguided: 'ignorant goodwill'. Her voice is 'shrill' from nights spent 'in argument', and Yeats seems to feel that her political views descended into a sort of hysterical fanaticism. However, he also remembers how she had a sweet voice 'When young and beautiful / She rode to harriers'. It appears that Yeats would have preferred her to stay on her estate in Lissadell, remaining a symbol of beauty and elegance instead of becoming involved in militant nationalism.

The second person Yeats describes is Patrick Pearse, a teacher and poet. The 'winged horse' he rode is a reference to Pegasus, a figure in mythology which represents

poetry. Next, Yeats talks about Pearse's 'helper and friend' Thomas Mac Donagh, who was a poet, English lecturer and dramatist. Yeats feels that Mac Donagh was a man who could have gone on to great things in the literary world: 'He might have won fame in the end'. The description of MacDonagh as 'sensitive' and with thoughts 'so daring and sweet' makes him seem less suited to warfare than to literary pursuits. The final person in this list is the most interesting; John MacBride married Maud Gonne, the woman Yeats loved for many years, despite her repeated refusal to marry him. Yeats despised MacBride, calling him a 'drunken, vainglorious lout' and alluding to his violence towards his wife and her daughter Iseult: 'did most bitter wrong / To some who are near my heart'. However, the word 'dreamed' tells us that Yeats now knows that his view of MacBride was not a complete one and that MacBride too has been 'changed' by his part in the Easter Rising. He has 'resigned his part in the casual comedy' of life and has become a hero.

This reference to the 'casual comedy' reminds us of Yeats' earlier view of men like MacBride; men he laughed at and believed to be a part of society 'where motley is worn'.

### **Section Three**

This section analyses the impact of the Rising and the type of people who played their part in it. He sees in their action a fanaticism not quite desirable. Such men are like stones in a stream, standing firm against the flow of public opinion. The stone symbolizes strength and courage but it is also a symbol of stillness of death. They are devoted to 'one purpose alone' and are somehow under the spell of their dream, or 'Enchanted' by it. The events of 1916 are an unchangeable reality in the middle of an ever changing world. They have transcended time and their deeds will mark as an unremarkable event in Irish history. All the images of nature in this section are connected with movement and change. Birds fly 'from cloud to tumbling cloud' and a horse splashes through the stream while moor hens dive. The repetition of 'minute by minute' reminds us that this change is constant. Nothing stays the same.

(The ancient Greek philosopher used the idea of water – a river – to suggest change. He said that no man can stand in the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man.)

### **Section Four**

The final stanza continues the imagery of hearts of stone. Men who devote themselves entirely to one purpose can become incapable of engaging with the lively, colourful world. They have sacrificed the other aspects of their lives and are totally committed to the cause. Yeats does not judge them for this, saying that it is 'Heaven's part' to decide whether the men were right or wrong. Our only duty is to remember these men and keep their names alive by speaking of them. In a beautiful and gentle image, Yeats compares those who have died to a child falling asleep after great exertion. He continues to explore this idea, wondering if their fate was really like falling asleep at night. He quickly says that it was not, and that we cannot soften the reality of their brutal deaths by cloaking them in metaphor. The stone image becomes rather complex as the stone represents the doggedness and steadfastness of the revolutionaries as well as their hard-heartedness.

## SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1) Who was 'the drunken vainglorious lout' who had "done most bitter wrong to some who are near my heart" according to Yeats?

John McBride, the Irish nationalist who married Maud Gonne, the love of Yeats' life.

2) Who was the woman whose nights were spent in argument until her voice grew shrill?

Constance Markiewicz (nee Gore Booth). She was the second in command during the uprising.

3) Who was the man who "kept a school and rode our winged horse"?

Patrick Pearse, a leader of the uprising and commandant General of the Irish Republican Army. He also founded the St Edna's School. He was also a poet and the winged horse refers to Pegasus, who was the favourite of the Muses in Greek Mythology.

4) To what does Yeats compare the revolutionary?

Yeats compares the revolutionary to a stone in the midst of the stream of life. Too long a sacrifice according to him will make a heart of stone.

5) "We know their dream". What is the dream referred to?

The dream that is referred to by Yeats in Easter 1916 is the Irish nationalist's dream of an Ireland free from the rule of Britain.

## PARAGRAPH QUESTION

### Imagery of the poem

The poem is remarkable for the depth and intensity of symbols which have three characteristic features: "Directness of expression illuminated by sudden unexpected symbols, a tone of tragic solemnity and thirdly a professional quality"(Dr.B.Chaterjee). In the first stanza, 'the close of the day' conveys the image of an evening sky, of a pale dusk and is thus linked to 'grey eighteenth century houses', then follows a stream of images telescoped into one another. The whole poem is really focused on a single phrase- 'terrible beauty'. According to Dr.B.Chaterjee "the two images are mixed up and reconciled, anew beauty is evoked, something like a red rose emerging out of a blood saturated ground". Like this the stream which represents change and the stone, immobility are antithetical symbols which grasps the ambivalence of the poet regarding the act of the heroes. "In the final process hearts are changed utterly, the petrified stone dissolves and a new beauty is born", observes Dr.B.Chaterjee.

### Yeats' attitude towards revolutionaries.

Although earlier Yeats had disapproved of many of the actions of the revolutionaries, this uprising impressed him and this poem is a sincere if ambiguous tribute to the leaders of the movement. This event moved him deeply not for its appropriateness but for the brevity and heroism shown by the people participated in it. The poem begins with a

note of self-criticism for Yeats had been guilty of complacent detachment from his fellow Irishmen. But now he recognizes that through the events of Easter week, his fellow countrymen have achieved admirable heroic intensity. Constance Markiewing, Padriac, the poet, Thomas Macdonagh, a poet and critic who shared Pearse's fate; and John Macbride who had hurt Yeats by marrying Maud Gonne, the great love of his life have been changed utterly and have become part of the terrible beauty of Ireland after uprising. These people were obsessed with one purpose alone – the liberation of Ireland. This obsession made them unchanging objects in a world of change and flux. Yeats was not quite persuaded to believe that all that bloodshed was wise. It was possible that England might keep her promise and give freedom to Ireland but for the Irish, it was enough to know that they dreamed of the liberation of their country and died because of their dreams. Yeats celebrates in his poetry, the heroic intensity that Macdonagh and Macbride and Conneley and Pearse had achieved.

## LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

### An Appreciation of "Easter 1916".

William Butler Yeats is one of the prominent British Poets of the twentieth century. An Irish poet, he was closely associated with the Irish Literary Revival and the Abbey theatre. But unlike many other Irish writers like Sean O'Casey, Yeats was not revolutionary in his attitudes. He was not quite persuaded to believe that all that bloodshed was wise and he did not think of patriotism as a very good or suitable subject of poetry. On 24th of April, 1916 an Easter Sunday the Irish revolutionary leaders occupied the General Post Office in Dublin and proclaimed Ireland a free republic. However their forces were defeated by the British army within a week. Sixteen of the leaders were court-martialed and shot dead. Although militarily, the uprising was insignificant, it captured the imagination of the Irish People.

The literal meaning of the poem is easy enough to grasp. The poem possesses a remarkable lyrical intensity. It has no metaphysical level and the poet is seen devoted to the expression of his vision of abstract reality. Even though Yeats had much in opposite with many of the actions of the revolutionaries, this uprising moved him deeply and this poem is a sincere ambiguous tribute to the leaders of the movement. The poem begins with a note of self-criticism for Yeats had been guilty of complacent detachment from his fellow Irishmen. But now he recognizes that through the events of Easter week, his fellow countrymen have achieved admirable heroic intensity; they have achieved a permanence, he recognizes and confirms by including them in his song. He contrasts "the polite meaningless words" which constituted the "Casual Comedy" of pre-revolutionary Ireland. The Ireland had been mortally warned with the tragic "terrible beauty" that was born of the Easter rising.

Yeats goes on to catalogue the men and women whom he had previously undervalued; Constance Markiewing acknowledged to be the loveliest girl in country Sligo and an expert rider and hunter, whose voice had grown shrill in political argument; Padriac, the poet and founder of St. Edna's school who was shot by the British; Thomas Macdonagh,

a poet and critic who shared Pearse's fate; and John Macbride who had hurt Yeats by marrying Maud Gonne, the great love of his life. Yeats bitterly refers to him as a drunken vainglorious lout; but all of them even Macbride have been changed utterly and have become part of the terrible beauty of Ireland after uprising.

However after paying tributes to these leaders, Yeats, the poet of mixed emotions, goes on to ruminate on the nature of revolutionary heroism. These people were obsessed with one purpose alone – the liberation of Ireland. This obsession made them unchanging objects in a world of change and flux. Rock like in this unchanging determination, they also become stone like impeding the flow of life. Yeats brings in images of change-horses splashing in water, moor hens calling to moor cocks, the clouds that cast shadows on the stream but the stone in the middle of the stream remains unchanging. The revolutionaries although heroic are also like the unfeeling hard stones in the river of life.

A prolonged sacrifice can harden the heart. At what stage can we say that the sacrifice already made will suffice. Yeats opines that it is not for the human beings to decide this but for the God. All we can do is mutter the names of those who have sacrificed themselves just as a mother utters a child's name when the child is lulled to sleep.

But then Yeats realizes that these people are not asleep but dead and he wonders if the sacrifices of the martyrs are necessary. It was possible that England might keep her promise and give freedom to Ireland but for the Irish, it was enough to know that they dreamed of the liberation of their country and died because of their dreams. Yeats celebrates in his poetry, the heroic intensity that Macdonagh and MacBride and Conneley and Pierse had achieved. The poem is an ambivalent celebration of the heroism of Easter, 1916. The doubts and misgivings in the poem are characteristically Yeatism. He is, in a sense, the poet of mixed feelings. It is this uncertainty that gives the poem its intension and complexity and makes it one of the finest of all political poems.

# JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

T.S.ELIOT

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on 26 September 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri in the United States. Eliot, an advocate of modernism, considered as one of the twentieth century's major poets, was an essayist, publisher, playwright, literary and social critic. At the age of 25 he moved to the United Kingdom in 1914.

Eliot achieved widespread attention for his poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915), which is seen as a masterpiece of the Modernist movement. It was followed by some of the best-known poems in the English language, including *The Waste Land* (1922), *The Hollow Men* (1925), *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Four Quartets* (1945).[2] He is also known for his seven plays, particularly *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948, "for his outstanding, pioneer contribution to present-day poetry".

His father Henry Ware Eliot (1843–1919) was a successful businessman; his mother Charlotte Champe Stearns (1843–1929) wrote poetry and was a social worker; his parents were both 44 years old when he was born. Because of ailments during his childhood days, he was isolated and easily attracted to books, and literature became an infatuation for him. From 1898 to 1905, Eliot attended Smith Academy, where he studied Latin, Ancient Greek, French, and German. He began to write poetry when he was fourteen under the influence of Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, a translation of the poetry of Omar Khayyam. His first published poem, "A Fable For Feasters", was written as a school exercise and was published in the *Smith Academy Record* in February 1905. Following graduation, Eliot attended Milton Academy in Massachusetts for a preparatory year, where he met Scofield Thayer, who would later publish his most famous poem *The Waste Land*. He studied philosophy at Harvard College from 1906 to 1909, earning his bachelor's degree after three years, instead of the usual four. From 1911 to 1914, he was back at Harvard studying Indian philosophy and Sanskrit. Eliot actually spent much of his time in London. This city had a monumental and life-altering impact on Eliot for multiple reasons, the most significant of which was his introduction to the influential literary figure Ezra Pound. In 1915, Eliot married Vivienne Haigh-Wood. The marriage was markedly unhappy. He took several teaching jobs, such as lecturing at Birkbeck College, University of London. On 29 June 1927, Eliot converted to Anglicanism from Unitarianism, and in November that year he took British citizenship. He died of emphysema in London on 4 January 1965, and was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium.

## INTRODUCTION

"Journey of the Magi, was composed right around the time that Eliot converted from Unitarianism to Anglicanism, in 1927. It is a significant poem that it reflects a major transformation in the poet's career. Therefore "Journey of the Magi," contains elements of Eliot's feelings about conversion, even though the poem itself isn't about Eliot at all. Instead, the piece details the thoughts of one particular Magus (the singular of Magi)—one of the Three Wise Men who were actually bringing frankincense, gold, and myrrh to the newborn Jesus.

This poem takes place just before the wise men get to the stable. It details the hardships of the journey, the skepticism of the Magus and the landscape of Bethlehem. In the end, the narrator is shaken to his very core by what he sees, because change, it is a-comin'.

His masterpieces namely, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Waste Land"—had already been published, and had put T.S. Eliot on the map as one of the greatest poetic minds of his time. But this poem is much more than just a Christmas poem. Even though the story at first seems simple, the piece teems with intricate symbols, obscure references, and layers of subtext.

### SHORT SUMMARY

"Journey of the Magi" unfolds with a quote about a cold and troublesome journey. The poem portrays the pain involved in accepting the spiritual change. From the very title of the poem, it is suggestive that this is the journey of the Three Wise Men, or Magi to the birthplace of Jesus. After the opening quote, the poem elaborates on the difficulties of travel, including grumpy camels, wishing for home (home being warm, palatial, and full of girls and servants), fires going out, unfriendly and expensive towns, and a distinct lack of places to sleep. The speaker notes that the Magi preferred to just travel all night for these reasons, and that through their travels, a little voice in their heads kept suggesting that maybe this whole thing was all for nothing.

Then, the narrator goes on to tell of the Magi's arrival in Bethlehem, a place he describes as "a temperate valley". They still can't find any information about where they were supposed to go from the villagers, however, so they eventually have to find the stable in which they were to witness the birth of the baby Jesus. The trio arrives just in time.

The last part of the poem is more blatantly the Magus reminiscing about the story ("all this was a long time ago, I remember"), and in his recollection he seems to be doubtful about whether or not the birth was a good or bad, replacing as it would his own religion and culture. In fact, at the end of the poem he seems to regard it as a bad thing indeed, with the Magus wishing for his own death alongside the death of his peoples' conventional beliefs.

#### Stanza I

"A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter."

### GLOSSARY AND NOTES

A cold coming we had of it – these are the words of the Elizabethan theologian Bishop Lancelot Andrews spoken on the Christians day.

Magi – the three wise men from the East who undertook the journey to Bethlehem to witness the baby Christ.

### EXPLANATION

These opening lines are taken from an old Nativity sermon by Lancelot Andrewes, who was a prominent scholar and clergyman in the Church of England during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, delivered in 1622. These lines, along with the title, provides a hint about the content of the poem—that is, the Magi trek to Bethlehem, where Jesus is about to be born. The implication is that they're coming from a faraway place, probably from around Persia, pretty far east of present-day Israel, and that the weather is particularly turbulent because they're making this important journey in the extreme winter. An anachronism has been pointed out in the poem The New

Testament, which is written way after the Magi die, is referred a few times, as is Christ's death. It is perceived that there's also something beyond the Magus in the poem that is also telling the story, this notion expands the narrative possibilities of the poem further.

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.

### GLOSSARY AND NOTES

galled - afflicted by sores  
refractory - disobedient

There were times we regretted – since the journey/pilgrimage turned out to be arduous and hazardous, they felt regret on their decision.

Silken girls - girls wearing silk cloths or soft-skinned girls.

### EXPLANATION

These lines reflect the voice of the Magus, telling us more specifically about the hardships of their grumpy journey. The camels are "galled," which can mean annoyed or provoked, or it can mean that they're chafing under their saddles. They're so grumpily uncomfortable that they're "refractory" which means they just do the camel-equivalent of raising a white flag. They sit down in the snow (remember, it's Christmas Eve) and refuse to go any farther. The narrator goes on to tell us about where they've come from—"summer palaces," on (presumably lush and green) hillsides, with servant girls "bringing sherbet." The gist here is that the Magi lead pretty cushy lives when they're not busy trekking through the countryside in the middle of winter looking for a baby who might be everyone's savior. Not that the Magi knew that they were going to be called upon to find the birthplace of Christ and could "train" accordingly. But all the same, they're suffering in the cold, and looking back on it, maybe all that luxury was a little excessive. They might have been a little more prepared for this kind of thing.

### Stanza II

Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty, and charging high prices:

### GLOSSARY

grumbling - express discomfort  
wanting - lacking  
in snatches - for a short while  
hostile - unfriendly



## EXPLANATION

The hardships of the Magi are intensified in these lines. The pilgrims who were supposed to be handling the camels are getting grumpy, too, to the point where in some cases they're just abandoning the Magi altogether. The camel men who remain are complaining that they'd really like a drink and a girl. Moreover the night is so cold and damp that they can't even keep a fire going, and they're really only trying to keep a fire going because there's no room at the inn. And even if there were room at the inn, it would probably be awful, because the cities nearby are downright "hostile" (think mean on steroids), and the villages are just filthy and everyone charges too much.

A hard time we had of it.

At the end we preferred to travel all night,

Sleeping in snatches,

With the voices singing in our ears, saying

That this was all folly

## EXPLANATION

As mentioned in the very opening the narrator says that things were not easy for them at all. At the end of the day, the Magi and their crew decided just to travel the whole night and to sleep when absolutely necessary. In the meantime, throughout all of this hardship, there's the Magi-equivalent of "the little voice inside my head" whisper contradictory things while the character is trying to make a decision. A voice that's trying to tell them "that this was all folly," meaning a giant mistake, or a stupid idea. The word "this," though, seems a little vague at first look, it refers to the journey itself, that traveling all this way was a mistake. The voice at the end of this stanza is like the little devil, it contradicts the voice of an angel that had, days prior, told them to go and follow a star in the sky and bring gifts to a baby saviour who would be born in a barn in Bethlehem.

### Stanza III

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,

Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;

With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,

And three trees on the low sky,

## GLOSSARY

temperate - of mild temperature

the three trees on the low sky - it has a Biblical reference. The three trees refer to the three crosses on the Calvary hills where Jesus Christ was crucified along with the two thieves. (New Testament of the Bible)

'an old white horse' - it has a biblical reference. It suggests the white horse mentioned in the Book of Revelations. (Revelation XIX. It says that when the world ends, a white horse with a crowned rider will come to conquer the world. This refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

## EXPLANATION

After the Magi travelled miserably all night, they reached at "a temperate valley." The word temperate in this case means mild, climate-wise. It's a welcome contrast to the wintry weather that

the Magi have just plodded through last night and before. The whole "smelling of vegetation" further enhances the decidedly non-winter atmosphere. It's like the seasons have suddenly changed. This could be symbolic for something—the coming of the baby Jesus, that could certainly be depicted as a sudden movement from winter to spring. The passage continues to elaborate upon the mild surroundings of the area (presumably Bethlehem's general vicinity) before them. It's got a running stream with the water mill nearby. Three trees can be symbolic of trinity of Christian belief.

And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

## GLOSSARY

'Six hands .... Pieces of silver' – the reference is again biblical. It suggests how the soldiers who crucified Jesus Christ gambled for his clothes. It also suggests the betrayal of Jesus Christ by one of his twelve disciples named Judas Iscariot for thirty pieces of silver.

Dicing - playing with dice.

Wine-skins - bags made of animal skin for holding wine.

## EXPLANATION

The last observation of the valley that we get before the Magi head down into the town itself is this "old white horse." The adjectives "old" and "white" sound a little like they might symbolize the conventional Christian God. The "horse" can be the most famous horses in the Bible, probably the four horses of the Apocalypse, that come down to cleanse the Earth of sinners in Revelation. The Magi come to a tavern where they see a few men gambling over some dice. There's mention of "empty wine-skins" which is a bag used to hold wine made of the skin of a goat or cow. The six pieces of silver might be an allusion to the Gospel of Matthew, in which Judas is paid thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus.

“But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.”

The Magi might have asked whether they knew of the location of the stable where Jesus was to be born. They had not get any clue. It takes them all day to get to the stable. Finally they've found the place, they've arrived at evening. And then the Magus-narrator says something incredibly peculiar: "it was (you may say) satisfactory."

## Stanza IV

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for

Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,

The beginning of this stanza suddenly wakes us up to the fact that this story is being told way after the actual journey took place, as if the narrator is sitting by a fire in his old age, recalling the events. Now, in the present, he notes that he "would do it again." So even through the hardship and the grumpy camels and the uncertainty, he views the journey as worthwhile in retrospect.

Magus has an important question that's still bugging him: "were we led all the way for / Birth or Death?". He begins to answer his own question by saying that there was indeed a birth, referring to the birth of Jesus. But what about the Death thing?.It's an ominous question with a couple of implications. One can be "led to one's death," and it is now plausible (though, given the life spans of people at that time, not entirely probable) that the Magus is speaking from a time after Jesus' death.

We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

The whole passage devoted to the explanation of what the Magus means when he asks whether they had come so far to witness a birth or a death.The narrator reiterates that they had, in fact, seen a literal birth. He seems to be indicating, then, that he's speaking metaphorically about the whole death thing. He goes on to say that he has "seen birth and death" also he "had thought they were different. The Magus says that the Birth (notice the capitalization, a la, Jesus, Lord and Savior, etc.) was actually "hard and bitter agony" for all of the Magi. In fact, it was so agonizing that the Magus compares it to Death

“We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.”

## GLOSSARY

Set down - written down  
Evidence - proof  
No longer at ease - spiritually restless  
Dispensation - religious faith.

‘old dispensation ... their gods’ – the old faith that prevailed till the advent of Jesus Christ. The people who did not know Jesus Christ still believed in their faiths and worshipped their pagan gods.

Clutching - holding tightly.

## EXPLANATION

In these lines, the Magus goes back to telling the story, saying that after the birth of Jesus, the Magi packed up all their stuff and headed back to their respective palaces. Their return, however, was far from celebratory – instead of bringing back awesome news, it seems as though they came back intensely uncomfortable. The middle part of this passage elaborates upon that a little bit, as the Magus details more about "the old dispensation"—which basically means the old

ways, and specifically in this case, the old religion—and his subjects, who now seem to him like "an alien people" clutching false idols. So the Magi come back to their same kingdoms, but in their eyes, the whole place has changed. They've seen the coming of a new kind of power, and it's not their power. Suddenly, their entire culture seems poised on the brink of utter irrelevance. Magus will be happy for a literal death now.

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS.

1. What do the dirty village and high prices stand for?

The dirty village and the high prices are symbolic; the dirty village stands for the entire sinful world and the high price stands for corruption and immorality

2. Why was the journey called arduous and hazardous?

The journey was called arduous and hazardous because it was extreme cold, ways were very deep, camels became disobedient, and the camel-men deserted them on the way. The cities and towns were hostile and unfriendly and they charged high prices for ordinary things.

3. How did the camel-men show their displeasure?

By cursing and grumbling the camel men expressed their displeasure and they even deserted the travelers almost in the middle of their journey.

4. Where did the Magi reach after the dirty village?

The Magi reached a temperate valley which was full of vegetation. There was a running stream and a water-mill to beat the darkness. They saw three trees standing on the low sky and also an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

5. What did the Magi see in the tavern?

The Magi saw three men dicing for pieces of silver at an open door. They saw certain desperate men kicking the empty wine-skins.

6. How did the quest of the Magi end?

The quest of the Magi ended, not in joy, but in faith, accompanied with weariness and disillusion.

7. A cold coming we had of it". Explain the source of the line?

These words are quoted by Eliot from the sermon of the Elizabethan theologian Bishop Lancelot Andrews who spoke them on Christmas day.

8. Who are the Magi? What is the purpose of their journey?

The Magi are the three wise men from the East who travelled to Bethlehem to pay homage to the baby Christ with gold, frankincense and myrrh, following the star which indicated his birth.

### ANNOTATE THE FOLLOWING

1. "And the Villages .....

.....

A hard time we had of it"

These lines are taken from the poem 'Journey of the Magi' written by T.S. Eliot. He portrays the pain involved in accepting the spiritual change.

The Magi undertook the long journey to Bethlehem to see the infant Jesus and to pay the due respects. Though they were guided by the star, they have to undertake a long journey which was very tiring and hazardous. The weather was very sharp and the ways were very deep. Their camels became refractory and the camel-men deserted them on the way. The cities and towns were hostile to them. The villages were very dirty and they charged high prices.

The journey of the Magi symbolizes the spiritual journey. The hardships they experienced are the trials and tribulations of the spiritual journey. The dirty village represents the sinful world and charging high price signified corruption and immorality.

2. "With running stream ....  
.....  
..... pieces of silver"

The lines quoted from the poem 'Journey of the Magi' by T. S. Eliot, gives us an account of the rigorous journey that the Magi undertook to visit the new born baby, Jesus.

The Magi undertook the journey to witness the birth of Jesus Christ – their Saviour, in Bethlehem and to pay him their due respects. Their journey was very hazardous. It was actually a spiritual journey.

After passing the dirty villages, they came to a temperate valley which was full of vegetation. There was a running stream and a water-mill for beating the darkness. They saw three trees on the low sky. They had also seen an old white horse galloped away in the meadow. Then they came into a tavern. They saw six hands dicing for the pieces of silver at an open door.

The images shown in these lines are highly symbolic. The temperate valley with vegetation symbolizes the kingdom of love and peace. The three trees suggest the crucifixion of Jesus Christ along with the two thieves. The white horse symbolizes the second coming of Jesus Christ. The six hands dicing for the pieces of silver represent the two soldiers who gambled for the dress of Jesus Christ after the crucifixion and the betrayal of Jesus Christ by his own disciple Judas Iscariot.

3. "I had seen birth ....  
.....  
..... like Death, our death"

These lines are taken from the concluding stanza of the poem 'Journey of the Magi' written by T. S. Eliot.

The visual of the infant Jesus Christ, the son of God and the Saviour, made them aware of their sins. This realization marked a death in them-the death of their old belief and faith. This spiritual death of old faith gave way to the birth of new faith, the new religion, Christianity. The Magi were regenerated or spiritually re-born after they had seen the infant Jesus Christ. Even though the death was painful; their re-birth gave them immense pleasure. This was because their re-birth was a complete one.

But, when they came back to their country, they thought that they were in a foreign land. Their transformation was so complete that they could not agree with the old faith of their fellow-men. Their country men were following the conventional order of things and code of morality. As

the Magi had accepted the new religion of love, they could not accept the old dispensation of people.

## ESSAY

T. S. Eliot was one of the most famous poets of the Twentieth Century. He was a poet, a dramatist, an essayist and a critic. The poem 'The Waste Land' brought him fame and popularity. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948.

The story of the 'Journey of the Magi' is taken from the Gospel according to the St. Matthew in the New Testament of the Bible. When the three Wise Men of the East (The Magi) noticed a new star in the sky, they surmised that it had announced the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of Mankind. They set out immediately to see the infant Jesus in order to pay him their due respects. They reached Bethlehem safely saw the baby Christ and paid him their respects.

Interpreting in a new way T. S. Eliot has transformed this bare Biblical episode into a poem of high significance. He has made it a journey of spiritual quest. Hence, the journey which signifies the trials and tribulations of the spiritual journey becomes arduous and hazardous. It has resulted in the death of their old faith and birth of a new faith.

The poem is written in the form of a dramatic monologue. The speaker is one of the Magi and the poet never expresses his own feelings or thoughts. The Magus speaks with colloquial ease as in the line "it was (as you may say) satisfactory". The narration is made more plain and effective by using simple modern words. Like other dramatic monologues, this poem begins at the critical stage of their journey.

The Magus said that their journey to Bethlehem was both tiring and hazardous. The weather was sharp and the ways were deep. It was the time of dead winter. Their camels were not accustomed with snow and cold. So, they became sore-footed and refractory. The camel men were also dissatisfied with the extreme cold and the difficulties of the journey. They grumbled and cursed the Magi. Later, they deserted the Magi on their way saying that they were not provided with liquor and women.

The Magi didn't get proper shelter during their journey. The cities were hostile and the towns were unfriendly to them. The villages were dirty and charged high prices. Then they came to a temperate valley which was abundant with vegetation. There were a running stream and a water-mill for beating the darkness. They saw three trees standing on the low hill. They saw an old white horse galloping in the meadows. Then they came to a tavern. They saw three men dicing for the pieces of silver at an open door. They reached their destination in the evening. They saw the infant Jesus and paid him their due respect. But, the Magus remarked that it was not spiritually ideal but satisfactory.

Eliot employs so many symbols in the poem to suggest meanings in deeper level. The dead winter suggests the general immorality. The Magi represent the people who desire for spiritual fertility and peace. The camel men and the Magi are in good contract. The camel men stand for the worldly pleasures and the Magi for spiritual glory. The pictures of the cities, towns and villages show that the world is unholy and full of vices. They stand for the trials and tribulations of the spiritual journey. They are in good contrast with the temperate valley. It suggests the spiritual glory or the spiritual fertility.

While describing the temperate valley, Eliot uses certain symbols showing the painful death of Jesus Christ. The suggestion of the things happened in the later years are rather misleading. But, the Magi are highly prophetic. We can assume that they might have got such premonitions during their journey. The three trees symbolize the three crosses on the Calvary where Jesus Christ was crucified along with two thieves. The white horse symbolizes the second coming of Jesus Christ. The six hands dicing for the pieces of silver suggest the gambling of soldiers for Christ's clothes and the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot.

When the Magi saw the baby Christ, they became aware of their own sins and the futility of their faith. It was a great revelation for them. This self-revelation marked the death of their old faith and the birth of a new faith, the new religion – Christianity.

But, when they came back to their own country, it appeared that it was a foreign land. This was because they were spiritually enlightened and were the believers of new faith or religion. The conventional beliefs of the country men made the Magi think for another journey to regenerate completely or to have an ideal re-birth.

# THE UNKNOWN CITIZEN

W. H. Auden

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907 – 1973) was born on February 21, 1907 in York in England. His father, a doctor by profession, initiated him into psychology, classical literature and Icelandic folklore. He proved to be a major source of inspiration for his son. Educated at Gresham's School, Holt, and Christ Church College in Oxford, Auden worked for a short while as a school master. While at school and at university, he became friends with Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis. Though they were all too young to take part in the First World War, their early lives were marked by the horrible influences of the war. Subsequently they came to be known as revolutionary writers, almost Communists in their outlook. We get a vivid account of young Auden in Isherwood's "Lions and Shadows" and in Spender's "World within World".

Auden's first volume of poems came out in 1930. It was followed by "The Orators" (1932), "The Dance of Death" (1933) and "Look Stranger" (1936). In 1937 he was awarded the King's Poetry Medal. Meanwhile in 1935 he had married Eriks Mann, the talented daughter of Thomas Mann, the German novelist. He had also taken part in the Spanish Civil War as an ambulance driver on the side of the Republicans. In 1939, he migrated to the United States and became an American citizen.

In collaboration with Christopher Isherwood, Auden produced three plays: "The Dog Beneath the Skin" (1935), "The Ascent of F6" (1936) and "On the Frontier" (1938). His volume of poems, "Another Time" came out in 1940. "New Year Letter" which showed was as a symptom of spiritual maladjustment in 1941. "For the Time Being" in 1944, "The Age of Anxiety" in 1947, "Nones" in 1951, "The Shield of Achilles" in 1955, "Homage to Clio" in 1960, "Mountain" in 1954, "The Old Man's Road" in 1956, and "About the House" in 1965. He has also written a travelogue about China. By the time he died at Oxford in 1973, he had won several awards like the Pulitzer Prize, the Bollingen Prize and the National Book Award. He was professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford between 1956 and 1961. At the time of his death in 1973, he was recognized as the finest poet in England and America after T. S. Eliot.

Auden's poetry has gone through several stages. The early verses show the influence of Marxian ideas and Freudian Theory. The poems of the forties are influenced by the thoughts of Kierkegaard and Niebuhr. Even as an undergraduate he had digested Eliot and Stein. He was aware of contemporary social and political reality which made him a social prophet, a religious synthesizer and an aphoristic critic. As a critic has remarked, "he has been his own kind of Lawrentian, his own kind of Marxist and his own kind of Anglican". His readers are often perplexed by his conversions but he is always greater than the ideas he played with. He tried to relate the crucial problems of war to the fallible nature of man.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES:

JA/07/M/378 :the number on the identity card of the citizen. The poet implied that the citizen is reduced to a mere number.

Monument                :tomb  
Erect                     :build



State :Government

Line 1. He was found :the passive voice suggests the citizen's lack of personal initiative and insignificance as an individual.

Bureau of Statistics :The department keeping the necessary details about all the citizens.

4. an old-fashioned word :the word "saint".

Modern sense ... :modern meaning. In olden days a saint meant one who was free from human weaknesses. He identified himself with God. But today, the word means one who does all that his state wants him to do. He identified himself with his State. Saintliness which was a positive virtue has thus become a negative one. Note the irony in Auden's words.

5. The greater Community :the state or the people in power. The capital letters endow a dignity of sorts on the term.

6. Except for the war: Except the period during which the war was going on, and he had to fight for his country.

7. Fired :Dismissed.

8. Satisfied his employers: Conformed to the demands of his employers.

Fudge Motors Inc: The name of an imaginary automobile manufacturing company. It reminds one of companies like Form Motors. The word "fudge" means nonsense or humbug and is deliberately used here to highlight the fact that in the modern society gods are replaced by big firms.

9. Scab:Blackleg who refuses to join a union or take part in a strike

Odd : Strange; not conforming to the general opinion.

Views : Opinions.

10. Union ... : The Trade Union of which he was a member.

Dues : Money to be paid.

11. Our report : the report received by the Government.

Sound : well managed.

12. Social psychology

workers :Social workers employed by the Government to collect details about the social behavior of people. A satiric reference to them.

13. Mates : Companions.

Liked a drink ... an indication that he was sociable according to modern standards.

14. The Press : the news papers.

Are convinced : believe

15. Reaction to Advertisements ... :the newspapers depend on advertisements and assess the reactions of readers to advertisements by means of questionnaires.

16. Policies : Insurance policies which have become a part of life now. Policy is the document containing the contract between the individual and the company.

17. health card .... : card containing details of illness treated in hospitals.

18. Producers Research: : concerns that prepare statistics on the things bought and used by people.

High-Grade Living : Men go from house to house to collect the details about the modern amenities used by people. They grade their standard of living from these details.

19. was sensible to : was aware of

Installment Plan : Scheme by which one pays in installments for the thing purchased. This is common in the modern society. It is a trap for the low-income group.

### **NOTES/EXPLANATIONS/PARAPHRASES:**

Lines from 1 to 8 – “He was .... Motors Inc”.

Bureau of Statistics - the government agency engaged in collecting the statistics of the people.

Fired - dismissed/punished/scolded

Fudge Motors Inc - Name of an imaginary factory

The Bureau of statistics found that the unknown citizen who was regarded as the old saint was the only man against whom the government could not raise any complaints. So, it could not be used to describe him. He is called a saint because he served the society or the government just like a saint served God. The unknown citizen was working in a factory called Fudge Motors Inc. until his retirement. He always satisfied his employers. He hadn't raised any complaints against them. During his service in the factory, he hadn't got punished or dismissed. He left his service only once to join the army at the time of war to defend his country.

Lines from 9 to 13 – “Yet he .... A drink”.

Scab - a ‘blackleg’ who works against his union.

Odd - Strange

Our report on the union – it means that the government is keeping a watch on the citizens and also on the unions in the different institutions.

Social psychology - a science that studies how a man behaves with other people.

Mates - co-workers or friends.

The attitude of the unknown citizen was pleasing and normal. In the factory, he took membership in a workers' union. He paid his dues to the union regularly. The government had agencies to watch the unions in factories. The agencies revealed that the union of the unknown citizen was a moderate one. The social psychology workers found that the unknown citizen was popular among his fellow-workers. He enjoyed their company and sometimes had a drink with them.

Lines from 14 to 18 – ‘The Press ..... it cured’.

The press - news paper

Paper - news paper

The reactions of the unknown citizen to the advertisement are described in these lines. The poet says ironically that the newspaper in the modern society gives more importance to advertisement than the news.

The press remarked that the unknown citizen was quite normal and healthy in his habits. He bought a newspaper every day and read the advertisements promptly. The unknown citizen was quite conscious of his life. The insurance policies taken by him showed that he was fully insured. His Health card proved that he was hospitalized only once in his life-time. He left the hospital after getting his disease cured completely. Everything proved that he was wise and a healthy man.

Lines from 19 to 25. – ‘both producers ... he went’.

Producers Research and High Grade Living – they are the two imaginary institutions devoted to commercial research.

The installments plan - the hire – purchase system.

Phonograph - gramophone.

Frigidaire - fridge/refrigerator

Proper opinions - it shows that it was the government that considered public opinion for the people (the Govt. tried to control public opinion).

The research institutions like Producers Research and High Grade Living reported that the unknown citizen took advantage of the installment plan and bought all the things he needed at home like phonograph, radio, car, fridge etc. It showed that he was leading a modern life just as the government wanted him to do. It was the government’s machinery which held the public opinion of the government. This machinery or agency reported that he held the proper opinion in accordance with the circumstances or the time of year. This meant that the unknown citizen did not have any opinion of his own. He simply accepted the public opinion made by the government. He supported peace when it was a ‘peacetime’ and supported war when the government had declared a war.

Lines from 26 to 29. “He was married ... certainly have heard’.

Eugenist – A scientist who studies how healthy and intelligent children can improve the General characteristic of the human race.

The unknown citizen was married. He had five children. The Eugenist said that he had the right number of children. He added the right number of children to the total population as the government wanted from the parents of his generation. His children were given education exactly as the government wanted them to be. The teachers reported that he had never interfered with the education of his five children. As a parent, he didn’t bother about the education of his children. It was absurd to ask whether he was free or happy. He might be happy because he hadn’t raised any complaints and had led a straight forward life.

## SHORT ANSWERS

1. What does the title of the poem 'unknown citizen' signify?

The title of the poem 'unknown citizen' signifies that the citizen is thoroughly unknown because he doesn't have any personality or individuality of his own. His name doesn't bear any importance and it has reduced to a mere identity number.

2. What does the sub-title of the poem 'Unknown Citizen' suggest?

The sub-title of the poem suggests that the citizen doesn't possess any individuality of his own. He has reduced himself to be a mere number – the number of his identity card.

3. What according to Auden does the word 'Saint' mean in the modern age?

According to Auden, the word 'Saint' in the modern age means any man who is subservient to the wishes and aspirations of the government.

4. Where was the unknown citizen working? When did he leave his job?

The unknown citizen was working in a factory named Fudge Motors Inc. He left his job only once. It was to join the army to fight for his country. (Fudge Motors Inc.)

5. What did the social psychology workers find about the Unknown citizen?

The social psychology workers found that the Unknown citizen was popular among his fellow-workers and enjoyed the company of friends

6. What did the press say about the Unknown citizen?

The press said that the unknown citizen bought a newspaper everyday and responded to the advertisements properly.

7. What did the health card of the unknown citizen show?

The Health card of the unknown citizen showed that he was hospitalized only once in his life-time. He had left the hospital after getting his disease cured completely.

8. What did Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare about the unknown citizen?

Producers Research and High-Grade Living declared that the unknown citizen was fully aware of the advantages of the instalment plan. They said that he had bought phonograph, radio, car, fridge etc on instalment basis.

9. What did the Eugenist say about the unknown citizen?

The Eugenist said that the unknown citizen had begot five children and it was the right number of children the government needed then.

10. What did the teachers say about the Unknown Citizen as a parent?

The teacher said that the children of the Unknown Citizen were getting the proper education that the government had insisted. As a father, the Unknown Citizen never interfered with their education.

11. Who is being attacked in this satire?

The bureaucratic society where the individual is reduced to a cipher; where conformity is promoted instead of individuality.

## PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. Short note on the unknown citizen.

As far as the modern dictatorial government is concerned, the unknown citizen is the ideal citizen. The government wants all the citizens to be like him. He has surrendered his own individuality in order to conform himself to the wishes of the government. He hasn't ever created any problems to the government. He has performed everything that the government wanted from every citizen. He has worked in a factory until his retirement. He has been a member in the trade union and paid all his dues properly. He has availed himself of the instalment system and purchased the essential amenities for the house-hold. He has five children and he hasn't interfered with their education as the government desired. The Unknown Citizen has been healthy, free and happy. The government has erected a monument for the Unknown Citizen for being an ideal citizen.

2. Irony in the poem 'The Unknown Citizen'.

The poem 'The Unknown Citizen' is a satire. W. H. Auden employs irony in the poem which is reflected even in the title. It is about the unknown citizen who is hard to find in the society. It is the wish of the dictatorial government to have such a citizen. The sub-title of the poem says ironically that the unknown citizen doesn't have any individuality. He has lost even his name. He has reduced himself to an inanimate thing. The dictatorial government has made a number of agencies to maintain their policies. We hear about the citizen not through his individuality but through the Bureau of Statistics. The citizens are being controlled by the secret agencies of the government. These agencies hold the public opinion of the government. The government dictates what a citizen should do and what he should not. It is very ironically said that the unknown citizen is free and happy. It means that if any citizen conforms to the wishes of the government by sacrificing his individuality, he will be free and happy. The government will erect marble monument for him as a token of its gratitude.

## ESSAY:

1. Critical appreciation of the poem 'The Unknown Citizen'

W. H. Auden was one of the famous poets of the Twentieth Century. He had written a large number of poems and won many prizes. He had been a professor of poetry at Oxford. He is remarkable for his versatility and fluency. He explores the social and political problems and makes the people to think in a rational and moral way.

The poem 'The Unknown Citizen' is a satire. It ridicules the average citizen who surrenders his own individuality and accepts the wishes or the policies of a dictatorial government. It is about the ideal citizen as seen by the government. The dictatorial government has erected a marble monument for the unknown citizen for conforming the views and policies of the government promptly and completely. This poem is written on the marble in the form of a valuable inscription. It is abundant with irony or ironical statements.

In large cities, monuments are erected for the memory of the unknown soldiers who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country. These monuments are the pride of the nation. The poet says very ironically that the government has erected a marble monument in the memory of an unknown citizen. The name of the citizen is not written on the marble. But, the number of his identity card is used instead of his name. This shows that the unknown citizen doesn't possess any

individuality of his own. But, as far as the government is concerned, the unknown citizen is their ideal hero. Hence, his life history is inscribed on the marble for others to imitate.

The Bureau of Statistics says that the unknown citizen is like a saint. They do not like to call him a saint because they think that the word saint has lost its significance in the modern age. It says also that the conduct of the unknown citizen is agreed by all agencies of the government. It is also agreed that the government can never raise any complaint against him as a citizen.

The unknown citizen was working in a factory named fudge Motors Inc. until his retirement. He left his job only once to join the army to fight for his country. As a worker, he made all his employers satisfied and he had never got punished or dismissed. He was a member in a trade union. He paid all his dues promptly and never worked against his union. He was perfectly normal in his attitude to people and was popular among his friends and enjoyed their company.

The press remarked that the unknown citizen had good habits. He bought a newspaper everyday and read the advertisements. His health card showed that he had insured his life fully. He had fallen ill only once in his life-time and left the hospital after curing the disease. This showed that he was a healthy person. The commercial institution remarked that he was aware of the instalment system and bought essential things through hire-purchase system as the government wanted. In addition to that the unknown citizen was satisfied with the public-opinion held by the government agencies. He simply accepted peace when it was a peace-time and joined the army for the country when a war was declared. This shows that he was not at all self-reliant.

The unknown citizen had five children. He added his share to the population of the country as the government wanted. Even the education of his children were left to the government's decision or policies.

Auden ends the poem sarcastically. He says that he does not know whether the unknown citizen has been free or happy. The government is of the opinion that the citizen who conforms the ideas or the policies of the government without any question will always be happy and remarked that if he had complaints, they would have known it earlier through their different spies or agencies.

The qualities prescribed by the government for becoming an ideal citizen is quite ironic. They want their citizens to be passive or conforming so that the government can last for a long time.

### **ANALYTICAL PARAPHRASE**

“The Unknown Citizen” is a poem belonging to Auden's middle period of creation. He has had a honeymoon with political ideologies and learnt that poetry could not be a “midwife to society”. He essays an exploration of the social and political problems and ‘leads the people to make a rational and moral choice without telling them what to do’, which he professed as the aim of poetry. Many nations in Europe had resorted to dictatorship of some sort and the individual citizen was, therefore, vanishing as a man of independent views. The average citizen had become a conformist. Obeying the orders of the powers without a demur, he created no problem for the authority. He considered it as his duty to perform whatever he was asked or expected to do. Thus he had become a cent per cent harmless mechanism. Even his response to advertisements and political propaganda was predictable. Having surrendered his individuality he was often identified by a number rather than personality features. The sub-title of the poem shows that it is written as a memorial poem. A national monument has been erected by the State for the ideal citizen. The irony lies in the fact that this ideal citizen is a worthless, colourless entity, nothing more than the

mechanical part of a highly mechanized society. He represents the mass society and has no distinctive qualities by which one can identify him.

This bitterly satirical poem was written after Auden became an American citizen. The title echoes the name on the grave of "The Unknown Soldier" buried ceremonially after the First World War. The picture is that of an average citizen who has been analyzed by computer and statistics but whose individuality is unknown. The poem begins in passive voice suggesting the citizen's lack of personal initiative and his insignificance as an individual. The Bureau of Statistics has evaluated the data collected about him and found that he was an ideal citizen. Unlike the old saint who identified himself with God, the modern saint identifies himself with the State and in this sense the "The Unknown Citizen" was a saint. He lived for the welfare of his state.

During the war, like all other patriotic citizens, he fought for his nation. When peace reigned, he worked in a factory and was an ideal employee, but at the same time loyal to his trade union and popular with his fellows. He was properly insured and his health card records no serious incident of illness. Research reports of field workers in social psychology and similar other social sciences indicate that he was aware of the advantages of the instalment plan and bought a car, Frigidaire and other amenities of modern living on the instalment basis. By listing them as necessary for Modern Man, the poet shows the narrow materialistic outlook of modern men and their dependence on mechanical gadgets.

The Opinion Polls show that politically the "The Unknown Citizen" held the proper opinions of the time. He was a pacifist, but was ready to fight when necessary. In a nutshell, he had no free will of his own and believed in whatever he was asked to believe in he was an opportunist. He had the proper number of five children whose education he entrusted entirely to the State.

The most important question in life is whether such a man is free and happy. But in the case of a man who is reduced to measurable quantities and who is a slave to statistics, trade unionism, social psychology and opinion polls, this question is irrelevant. The State is omniscient like God and claims to know all about the citizens. A citizen is what he is reported to be.

"The Unknown Citizen" is typical of Auden's poems, expressing his concern for the state of an individual in the modern mass society. Authoritarian governments were rising to power in his days, and they promoted fascism of sorts. A complete loss of identify, a total submission to the dictates of the state, absolute conformism, readiness to accept all forms of propaganda without questioning.... these are the virtues expected of an ideal citizen in those nations. The individual loses himself in the crowd and becomes a mere cog in the machine of modern society. We have to conform to the rules and regulations set up by the State for its welfare. The well-being of the individual is not great cause for its concern. Auden here raises his voice against such meek submission to the call to conform. By making an effective use of satire, humour, irony, colloquial tone, unemotional language and awkward rhyming he presents the predicament of modern man.

# NEXT PLEASE

PHILIP LARKIN

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip Arthur Larkin, ( 1922 - 1985) an English poet and novelist was born on 9, August, 1922 in Coventry, Warwickshire. He was educated at a local grammar school of his home town and later at St John's College, Oxford. Larkin emerged as a writer in the 1950s, in the Movement called "angry young men". His first book of poetry, *The North Ship*, was published in 1945, followed by two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), and he came to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second collection of poems, *The Less Deceived*, followed by *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). He contributed to *The Daily Telegraph* as its jazz critic from 1961 to 1971, articles gathered together in *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961-71* (1985), and he edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (1973). He was the recipient of many honours, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was offered, but declined, the position of poet laureate in 1984, following the death of John Betjeman.

After graduating from Oxford in 1943 with a first in English language and literature, Larkin became a librarian. It was during the thirty years he served as university librarian at the Brynmor Jones Library at the University of Hull that he produced the greater part of his published work. His poems are marked by what Andrew Motion calls a very English, glum accuracy about emotions, places, and relationships, and what Donald Davie described as lowered sights and diminished expectations. Eric Homberger called him "the saddest heart in the post-war supermarket"—Larkin himself said that deprivation for him was what daffodils were for Wordsworth. Influenced by W. H. Auden, W. B. Yeats, and Thomas Hardy, his poems are highly structured but flexible verse forms. They were described by Jean Hartley, the ex-wife of Larkin's publisher George Hartley (The Marvell Press), as a "piquant mixture of lyricism and discontent", though anthologist Keith Tuma writes that there is more to Larkin's work than its reputation for dour pessimism suggests.

Larkin's poetry is a reaction against the Neo-Romanticism and the surrealistic abstractions of poets like Dylan Thomas. He has also no link with the politically oriented poetry of the Auden group. He wanted poetry to make sense, and therefore he aimed at clarity and verbal precision. Although his total output of poems is remarkably small, he is one of the major poets after World War II.

## THE POEM

Philip Larkin's poem, "Next, Please", is a direct look at the folly of expectancy. A light beginning develops into dark gallows-humor and a parable begins, the poet grasping the arm of the reader on a rocky headland, looking out to sea. Life's events are seen as a line of approaching ships, long awaited, ready to unload their cargoes into the lives of poet and reader. (Larkin uses the words 'we' and 'our' throughout.) The description of the incoming vessels is side-splittingly funny. This is a parable, consciously overblown and made ridiculous, description replacing purpose, but it is done, for a purpose of the poet's own. But, however distinct, these vessels and their cargoes are illusory. Yet we deserve all that they do not bring, the poet says. They owe us because we have waited, we should be rewarded for our patience. In the event, of course, there is no such thing as reward. At its root is the unspoken assertion that what is desired takes on the form of a metaphor, shimmering but unreal, while that which happens is intellectually ungraspable, real, and inescapable.



And it is here that the work emotionally and metaphysically diverge. In Larkin's poem, comedy is dropped like a mask to reveal what he sees as the future truth. A kind of portal becomes apparent. Death itself comes, at the end, in the form of a metaphor. There is a delicate craftsmanship in this poem. All aspects of meaning and ornament are carefully counterpoised. Under the humor is an emotion that is saved from being terror only by its orderliness; and, beneath that, the fear of the end of order cannot be spoken, because it is mute. If we were to remove the craftsmanship, the elegant rime, the humor, to look at the philosophy beneath, what should we find? Human existence inevitably depends on expectation. People spend their lives in waiting in hope. Surely patience must count for something. It does not. Death comes (it is the only expectation which actually happens) and for us the world is over. The only time we ever experience is the present. The future and the past contaminate the present with anticipation and reminiscence which are the reasons for our absentmindedness. If we lived in the present then we'd remember where we left our keys. Some people are perpetual optimists, living in a state of hopeful expectation - "something will turn up" as Mr. Micawber said in David Copperfield. It has been said that the normal state of mind is one of a mild and unrealistic optimism. The future didn't look so rosy to Philip Larkin.

In this poem Philip Larkin is criticizing the tendency of people to always look to the future by neglecting the present. Larkin points out that we have a multiplicity of hopes, that spring eternal, many of which change to expectation and even anticipation. The hopes are all promises made by no-one, merely assumed by ourselves, so approach like ships towards a harbor. But then they do not dock, they keep going past for they were not promised to us but thinking made it so and the facts burst on us and leave us just the stalks without the expected flowers.

The only thing certain in life is death. Whatever your hopes may be, the only thing you can really expect is death. Religions may offer you other well-delineated ("every rope") hopes for after death, but these are promises just as airy as the ones we made for ourselves, and only death can be guaranteed actually to come, and with nothing in its wake.

In the first two lines he sets a critical tone, saying that we are 'too eager' and 'pick up bad habits'. He takes on this persona and describes our wishes as 'always approaching'; this implies that they never actually arrive.

The poem is dominated by the image introduced in the second stanza, that of our hopes as 'a sparkling armada of promises' that approaches the 'bluff' we all stand on. We ironically reflect on 'how much time they waste' when it is us wasting our lives by not living in the present. These ships 'never anchor', leaving us 'holding wretched stalks of disappointment'. Larkin chooses this metaphor because a stalk represents the potential of a flower, just as we are left with only potential and no time to fulfil it. The poet says that 'right to the last' we think that each ship will 'heave to and unload/ all good into our lives'. This means that right up to our death, we do not learn from our mistakes.

In the last stanza Larkin describes the only ship we have not been searching for, 'a black sailed unfamiliar' is death. He describes this ship as 'towing at her back/ a huge and birdless silence' making it seem eerie and sinister. These qualities are particularly emphasized by the brevity of the last sentence, 'In her wake/ No waters breed or break.'

## SHORT QUESTIONS

1. Theme of the poem "Next Please".

In this poem the poet is criticizing the tendency of people to always look to the future by neglecting the present.

2. What is the only expectation which only happens in life according to the poet?

Death is the only expectation which only happens.

3. "A Sparkling armada of promises". Explain.

In the poem our hopes are introduced as "sparkling armada of promises" that approaches the bluff we all stand on.

4. Which is the only ship that we have not been searching for ?

Death is the only ship that we have not been searching for.

## PARAGRAPH

### POETIC STYLE

Larkin's poetry has been characterized as combining "an ordinary, colloquial style", "clarity", a "quiet, reflective tone", "ironic understatement" and a "direct" engagement with "commonplace experiences", while Jean Hartley summed his style up as a "piquant mixture of lyricism and discontent". Larkin's earliest work showed the influence of Eliot, Auden and Yeats, and the development of his mature poetic identity in the early 1950s coincided with the growing influence on him of Thomas Hardy.

Larkin's style is bound up with his recurring themes and subjects, which include death and fatalism, as in his final major poem "Aubade". Poet Andrew Motion observes of Larkin's poems that "their rage or contempt is always checked by the ... energy of their language and the satisfactions of their articulate formal control", and contrasts two aspects of his poetic personality—on the one hand an enthusiasm for "symbolist moments" and "freely imaginative narratives", and on the other a "remorseless factuality" and "crudity of language". Motion defines this as a "life-enhancing struggle between opposites", and concludes that his poetry is typically "ambivalent": "His three mature collections have developed attitudes and styles of ... imaginative daring: in their prolonged debates with despair, they testify to wide sympathies, contain passages of frequently transcendent beauty, and demonstrate a poetic inclusiveness which is of immense consequence for his literary heirs."

### Theme of the poem

The poem seems like an irrefutable comment on life. How many times haven't we felt that we are waiting (oh so long) for the good things to happen and when they do they are never as fulfilling in the realization as they are in the promise. And yes, the greatest certainty is death, the one thing that we are not waiting for but which is inevitably seeking us, after which there is nothing - not even disappointment. While the poem seems to speak of inevitability, it doesn't have to be that way:

"Always too eager for the future, we

Pick up bad habits of expectancy."

The poet speaks for the 'bad habits' of expectancy. To break the inevitability of the poem, we have to break the bad habit of living for the next wonderful thing in our lives. We must live in the present, enjoying our lives as we live them. It is no use pinning our lives on some future event, which only disappoints us when it comes and sets us hoping for the next future event.

So we can take the poem as a warning not to live our life pining for the future. If we live our life taking each moment as it comes, the richness of a well-lived life will leave us psychologically prepared for the inevitable time of death, when the black-sailed ship comes seeking us.

Life is meaningless and death terrifying – if we live our life that way. This is the lesson of the poem.

## ESSAY

### Theme and style of Larkin's poetry

In a time when popular reception of poetry was perhaps more tenuous than in any period since the Wordsworthian revolution, Philip Larkin (1922-1985) managed to capture a loyal, wide, and growing audience of readers. He has been acclaimed the "unofficial poet laureate" of England and the "laureate of the common man," as a representative spokesman for the British sensibility since World War II. He emerged as the center, if not the starting point, of most critical debate over postwar British verse. He is the best known and most acclaimed, critically and popularly of the figures who made up the so-called Movement in the early 1950s and as an avowed enemy of the literary modernism scorned by The Movement. His scant four collections of poems, written over thirty years, as well as the two novels he brought out shortly after the war, continue to go into new printings, hardcover and paperback, on both sides of the Atlantic. While he denied being a "Great Poet," only Ted Hughes among his English contemporaries rivals him in terms of international recognition. For all of his self-proclaimed insularity, Larkin is known and responded to as no other British poet since Dylan Thomas.

Larkin's poetry is a reaction against the Neo-Romanticism and the surrealistic abstractions of poets like Dylan Thomas. He has also no link with the politically oriented poetry of the Auden group. He wanted poetry to make sense, and therefore he aimed at clarity and verbal precision.

The premise of this poem is that we focus our attention on the future instead of living in the here and now. Notice the inclusive use of "we" and "our" throughout the poem. Larkin suggests we spend our entire lives waiting for the rewards the future will apparently endow to those who patiently wait for them. The irony is, of course, that from our vantage point think we are looking at our well-deserved rewards in life when in fact we are only seeing The Grim Reaper's vessel getting closer.

The rhyme scheme is aabb and the first three lines of each are mostly in iambic pentameter, while the last line of each is much shorter and is either four or six syllables in length. Lexis such as "eager" and "expectancy" have rather positive connotations, yet there is a tension when we see the phrase "bad habits".

The second stanza is rather cinematic in nature. This technique is rather typical of much of Larkin's work. He often provides us with vivid mental images. We are taken to a cliff by the seaside. From here we see an approaching metaphorical "armada of promises". It brings to mind the phrase that "one day our ship will come in." He uses a three-part list to pre modify this image; it is "tiny, clear" and "Sparkling". This "armada" is laden with alluring "promises" and seems a very

attractive proposition to the onlooker. However, we have a hint of caution when we note the time-reference lexis in the second half of this stanza: “slow”, “time” and “haste”. He seems to be suggesting that much of life is spent waiting for rewards rather than having them.

The third stanza shows us Larkin’s pivot word “Yet”. He will often set up a scene then interject a “yet” or “but” or “however” to turn the conversation round. The naval semantic field is extended with lexis like “balk”, “brasswork” and “rope”. Note the poet’s effective use of post modification too, here: brass work is “prinked” and ropes are “distinct”, but the first line has given us a very clear negative land-based metaphor in the lines:

“holding wretched stalks  
Of disappointment”

We have been tantalized but are destined to be let down. Such is Larkin’s pessimistic view of life. The agony of lost opportunity is further extended in the fourth stanza. It starts with alliteration of the repeating “f” sounds and if we had originally thought the “promises” on board had been material wealth, now, the highly sexual figurehead metaphor suggests our love life is equally doomed to failure. The naval lexis is obvious in the penultimate stanza. Apparently, the ships will dock and deliver their alluring cargo; however in the last line we are met with another of Larkin’s pivot words as we are told categorically that: “we are wrong”. We will not get this delivery, whether material or sexual. It has all been in vain.

Our supposed rewards are depicted as a line of approaching ships that will unload their precious cargoes into our lives. In this nihilistic poem, Larkin describes vividly the void and nothingness that comes after death. The clear references to death are startling in the final section. If the first five verses have been about life, then this final stanza is about death. It is the only thing that we can be certain of in life.

He seizes the naval image of a ship and sets out a morbid message. The sails are “black”. The connotations are clear. The ship itself is eerily called an “unfamiliar” and astern; we witness a “huge and birdless silence”. This is a very emotive line. The simple and moving alliterative last line rams home the point with “w” and “b” to pound out the beat. We have a nihilistic, cheerless end to life. No celebration; it is just silent and motionless.

The extensive use of a naval semantic field produces a vivid, graphic and moving view of life... and death.

Much of the mature art of Philip Larkin turns on telling metaphors, particularly as the credible “I” uses them to define a feeling or problem. In one poem he calls his work a toad and wonders why he does not “drive the brute off” with his wits, as others seem to do. Elsewhere he labels his skin an “Obedient daily dress” and thinks of the old age as a sort of “white swaddling.” Then, in “Whatever Happened?” he combines two metaphorical patterns--the passage of a ship through a dangerous latitude and the developing of a photograph--to suggest a traumatic experience and the later attempt to make sense of it. For Larkin, continuity and clarity rather than violent discontinuity or obscurity were the proper aims of human art, in keeping with the aims of human life. Modernism in most of its manifestations he rejected as elitist, pretentious, and anti humanist.

# A CONSTABLE CALLS

Seamus Heaney

## INTRODUCTION

Seamus Heaney was born on April 13, 1939 at Castledawson, Northern Ireland. He was the first of nine children. He was one of the most significant Irish poets since W B Yeats. He was also a playwright, translator and lecturer, and a Nobel laureate. He writes about Irish culture, politics and the continuities that exist between the past, and the present.

In 1957, Heaney travelled to Belfast to study English Language and Literature at Queen's University Belfast. During his time in Belfast, he found a copy of Ted Hughes's *Lupercal*, which spurred him to write poetry. "Suddenly, the matter of contemporary poetry was the material of my own life," he said. He earned a teacher's certificate in English at St. Joseph's College in Belfast and in 1963 took a position as a lecturer in English at that school.

His poetry shows the marked influence of Catholicism especially the aspect of Mariolatry that distinguishes catholic thought from other forms of Christianity. There is an abundant use of myths specific to Ireland and Northern Europe. He is well-known for the bog poems which can be seen as an attempt to understand history, writing, sectarian strife in the light of recurring cycles of the fertility myths of the Iron age. In 1966 he published *Death of a Naturalist*, his first collection of poems. *Door in to the Dark*, *Wintering Out*, *North*, *Seeing Things* and *Spirit level* are some of his important works. He has written a number of volumes of criticism which include *The Redress of Poetry* and *The Government of the Tongue*. Heaney received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995.

## SUMMARY

The poem is written from a boy's perspective. It describes an official visit made by a constable to his father's farm to record agricultural statistics for tax purpose. The boy recalls that the constable arrives at the house on a bicycle which is kept leaning against the window sill. The poet describes its mudguard, its handlebars, dynamo and pedals. Even the policeman's cap lying on the floor does not miss his eye. The constable is seated sweating on the chair, and the poet notices the line formed on his forehead by the cap.

The little boy observed how the constable interrogates his father. Opening a heavy ledger, the constable begins to interrogate the poet's father, who gives an account of his returns. Meanwhile the poet's eyes turn to the constable's revolver in the holster. Ensuring the records collected, the constable ties it around his belt and places the cap on his head and bids farewell.

While interrogating his father, the boy noticed that his father has not mentioned a line of turnips in the potato field. The boy feels a sense of guilt and fears the worst for his father. The boy's conscience pricks him, for he imagines his father being thrown into jail. As he listens to the ticking sound of the constable's bicycle, he misses a few beats.

## New Words

Cowl	=	a cap
Spud	=	a straight narrow spade with a long handle for digging up land.
Bevel	=	sloping edge

Roods	=	1210 square yards
Perches	=	5 ½ yards
Braid cord	=	threads of silk woven together in a narrow band for decorating clothes.
Barracks	=	any large ugly building for workers.

### SHORT QUESTIONS:

1. What is the theme of A Constable Calls?

The poem is about a constable coming to a house in Ireland to assess tillage returns. Presented from the point of view of a boy, the poem discusses how the visit as well as the props of the policeman evokes fear and a sense of guilt in the boy.

2. What does the poet say about the hair of the constable?

The poem says that the constable's hair was slightly seating and because of the pressure of the cap there was a bevel on it.

3. What does the heavy ledger contain?

The heavy ledger contains details of tillage.

4. What is the impact of father's lie on the child?

The child assumes small guilt and sits imagining the black hole in the barracks.

5. How does the poem end?

There is a note of relief to those who are at home but the ending suggests that there is still potential violence and this is suggested in the word 'ticked' which is repeated.

6. Explain "doomsday book".

It is the record of ownership value of lands in England made in 1086 by order of William the Conqueror.

7. Why does the boy describe the bicycle in detail?

The detailed description shows his dislike for the policeman who represents the oppressive power of law.

### PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the child's attitude to the visit of the constable.

The poem is in the form of a conversation between the child's father and the constable. The child is a silent witness to the drama between his father and the official. The child is fascinated by the sight of the slightly seating hair of the constable, and the cap placed on the floor. While the questioning progresses the child stands staring at the polished holster and the braid cord looped into the revolver butt. When the child's father answers negatively to a question raised by the constable, child thinks of the line of turnips in the potato field. The child assumes small guilt and sits imagining the black hole in the barracks. The boy feels a sense of guilt and fears the worst of his father while his father adopts an unfriendly, almost hostile attitude towards the policeman.

## ESSAY

### 1. Critically appreciate the poem “Constable Calls”.

Heaney is one of those poets interested in writing about childhood. In his verses, poetry appears to be a means to understand and analyse the experiences of childhood, the events that take place around a child in Ireland. He found around him people killed arbitrarily merely because they believed in some religion different from those of the murderers. In such a world a man of letters is naturally tempted to find sense of the world around him, and Heaney chooses poetry as a medium for it.

“A Constable Calls” is a poem of deceptive simplicity. It is based on a childhood experience of the poet, mainly about taxes. The Irish peasant is bound to pay tillage returns. A constable comes home with the intention of collecting taxes. The poem is in the form of a conversation between the child’s father and the constable. Presented from the point of view of a boy, the poem discusses how the visit as well as the props of the policeman evokes fear and a sense of guilt in the boy. The child is a silent witness to the drama between his father and the official. The child’s father hides from the official the information regarding his acreage. Based on the area of land the Irish farmer is supposed to pay tax to the government. The poem is often seen as a confrontation between the protestant government and Irish farmer. It is a response to the all-Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary and the political and cultural conflicts that existed in Northern Ireland. His lie is read as a form of resistance. There is an element of violence but this is understated. Though not a directly political poem, it is one the most powerful indictments of the political situation in Ireland.

The poem begins with the graphic and precise description of the bicycle of the constable and ends with the image of the bicycle. Like a photographer, the poet examines the constable from different angles. There is mounting tension as the narration progresses. The poet talks of the rubber cowl of the mud splasher and the fat black handle grips. The bicycle is placed at the window sill. The eye of the child falls on the gleaming dynamo and the cocked back and since the constable is off the bicycle, the pedal treads appear relieved of the boot of the law. After the keen observation of the cycle the poet turns to observe the figure of the constable. The action shifts to the interior of the house and the child is fascinated by the sight of the slightly sweating hair of the constable, and the cap placed on the floor. The constable turns his attention to the purpose of his visit and looking into his heavy ledger he asks the child’s father about the tillage area. Heaney captures the central concern of the poem when he brings together arithmetic and fear. While the questioning progresses the child stands staring at the polished holster and the braid cord looped into the revolver butt. When the child’s father answers negatively to a question raised by the constable, child thinks of the line of turnips in the potato field. The child assumes small guilt and sits imagining the black hole in the barracks. The constable prepares to leave, fits his cap on his head, looks at the child and says good-bye. The child looks at the shadow on the window. The constable snaps the carrier spring over the ledger and as he moves on his bicycle the bicycle ticks and ticks suggesting some bomb attached to a timing device.

The poem has a visual effect, for Heaney lets the words speak for themselves. They conjure up a series of images as in a motion picture. The poet or rather the child, is a mute witness to the action. A detailed description of the constable and his bicycle is given. The words spoken by him, and the poet’s father are rather few.

The only emotion displayed in the poem is the poet’s love for his family, his home and his country. He is deeply aware of the acute suffering of the Irish people. The words in the poem record events and raise a volley of questions in the mind of the reader. “Doomsday book” is the term applied to the ledger within the possession of the constable. We are left to imagine how the constable’s record can fix the fate of the poet’s father.

# THE THOUGHT FOX

Ted Hughes

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

One of the giants of 20th century British poetry, Ted Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire in 1930. After serving as in the Royal Air Force, Hughes attended Cambridge, where he studied archeology and anthropology, taking a special interest in myths and legends. In 1956 he met and married the American poet Sylvia Plath, who encouraged him to submit his manuscript to a first book contest run by The Poetry Center. *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) secured Hughes's reputation as a poet of international stature. According to poet and critic Robert B. Shaw, "Hughes's poetry signaled a dramatic departure from the prevailing modes of the period. The stereotypical poem of the time was determined not to risk too much: politely domestic in its subject matter, understated and mildly ironic in style. By contrast, Hughes marshaled a language of nearly Shakespearean resonance to explore themes which were mythic and elemental." Hughes's long career included unprecedented best-selling volumes such as *Lupercal* (1960), *Crow* (1970), *Selected Poems 1957-1981* (1982), and *The Birthday Letters* (1998), as well as many beloved children's books, including *The Iron Man* (1968). With Seamus Heaney, he edited the popular anthologies *The Rattle Bag* (1982) and *The School Bag* (1997). Named executor of Plath's literary estate, he edited several volumes of her work. Hughes also translated works from Classical authors, including Ovid and Aeschylus. An incredibly prolific poet, translator, editor, and children's book author, Hughes was appointed Poet Laureate in 1984, a post he held until his death. Among his many awards, he was appointed to the Order of Merit, one of Britain's highest honors.

Hughes was a British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death on 28 October 1998. He was a multitalented poet and he is best acknowledged for creating influential poems that feature bold metaphors, echoing language, imagery and speech rhythms. He is essentially the poet of leaping blood, of brute energy in nature and of life lived at the primitive level of impulses and instincts. His response to experience is refreshingly direct. Landscape, weather, animals, working life; it is in these that Hughes discovers his distinctive voice. What one notices first in Hughes is comparatively violent sensuous experience. His motto appears to be that it is better to fight than to die. It is not only birds and animals that are violent in Hughes' world; even the wind, rain, plants like thistles and even flowers take on a kind of brutality and tenacity in their struggle for survival.

## INTRODUCTION

"The Thought-Fox" is a poem about writing a poem, it explicates the nature of literary inspiration and literary creation. The action of the poem takes place at midnight where the poet is sitting alone at his desk accompanied only by the ticking of the clock. The image evoked is one of quiet and solitude where the poet is cut off from the world ready to be transported by his literary imagination. The poet's imagination is like a presence which disturbs the stillness of the night, the stillness of things yet unknown, and is depicted as if creeping silently upon the poet evoking a sense of stealth: The night itself is of course a metaphor for the more intimate darkness of the poet's imagination and creative inspiration that creeps silently and without warning upon the poet, "cold, delicately as the dark snow". The mysterious nature of the stirrings of imagination is compared to the indistinct shadow of a fox that moves stealthily in the darkness of the night. The shadow in the night suggests the amorphousness and abstract nature of literary inspiration that sneaks in like a fox



mysteriously and without warning. The fox seems to materialise out of the formlessness of the snow, it is a faint shadow against the snow that will take the form "of a body that is bold to come". The image of the fox taking shape is thus equivalent to the process of creative imagination, which slowly forms itself in the dark recesses of the poet's mind to produce a work of art. The fox penetrates the deep and intimate darkness of the poet's mind to evoke the moment when the desirable vision is attained. The poem ends as it has begun, turning in full circle.

The midnight is chosen as the time. The time is unmarked and yet mature. The clock is alone as it is devoid of minutes and seconds, it being midnight. Further, the clock is alive as it is lonely. And there is something else that accompanies the loneliness of the clock-that is the poet's creative consciousness. The metaphor for the poet's fresh poetic perception is the "blank paper" where his fingers move.

In the third stanza the poet says that he cannot observe any star but can comprehend something that holds more promise for him. He cannot apprehend it through the senses but experience it through instinct. The image is first formless and can only be a professed feeling formless as the poetic vision of the poet itself, until it assumes concrete shape. It does not enter in a strained and enforced manner but as delicately as snow falls in. The fox's nose touches deftly against the twig, leaf. The nose feels its way through the darkness. At once the fox transforms itself to the concrete and persistent image of the poet's creative working progress. By utilizing an animal as the reflection for his thought process, one wonders whether Ted Hughes writes primarily through instinct. These eyes look to the readers like both the fox's eyes and also the poet's 'studied' eye movements. The fox goes on to set neat prints' on the snow, the writing comes across coherently and clearly on the paper. The soft snow brushing against the trees falls in dark flakes to the ground, as the words on the blank paper, and in a lovely manner fall into place. The words: "now/And again now, and now, and now" point to the continuity that has been picked up by the poet. The continuity is accompanied by "punctuation"-therefore it is a staggering continuity; the idea being reinforced by the word 'lame'. The predictable rhyme scheme is also departed from, reflecting urgency on the part of the poet and the fox to reach their destination disregarding rhythm for the time being. The movement of the lines voice the movement of the fox. Alliteration is utilized to mime coherence. Though at first, the fox is agile, it staggers occasionally.

At times, it appears like "a lame shadow' endeavoring to pick up speed and accelerate towards the final goal. The term stump' refers to the base of the tree that is incomplete without the tree-top. The stump' at once functions as a invasive metaphor for the writer's block. The poet has to make his creativity go beyond the stump' and not leave his poetic capabilities stunted'. It' is in the hollow of a body that is "bold to come", yet to flourish and blossom. Across the clearings and the undergrowth, there is indeed "an eye". The "eye" standing for insight here. This insight is coupled with a widening and deepening "greenness". The greenness symbolizing fertility and creation at once. Its business is that of its own, not one of after-thought, but that of impulse.

In the last stanza the poet conveys the idea that the poet's thought process is filled with hot stink" of the fox, the heat of its passion. The thought-process is saturated now, and hence hot and humid. As the poem comes into place, the window is starless still. The poet had first set eyes outside the window, for inspiration. Nevertheless, towards the end of the poem he comes to recognize that inspiration comes from within, and not outside. The window is starless still, yet-"the page is printed" Intuition reigns over inspiration here, and instinct over reason.

## SHORT QUESTIONS

1. "Across clearings, an eye". Explain 'eye' in this line.

'Eye' is referred to the insight which is coupled with a widening and deepening greenness which symbolizes fertility and creation.

2. Theme of the poem.

The poem is about writing a poem, it explicates the nature of literary inspiration and literary creation.

3. "Something else is alive". What is alive?

The poet's imagination which is likened to a fox is alive.

## PARAGRAPH

### Theme of Hughes' poetry.

Ted Hughes has been accepted as a classic of his time. Many of his best poems have a significant amount of shock and violence attached to them. He is best known for his poems about animals. It is not because he portrays the beasts and insects in a sympathetic way, but because he presents the animals with all their ferocious nature, violence and surplus energy. He wrote frequently of the mixture of beauty and violence in the natural world. Animals serve as a metaphor for his view on life: animals live out a struggle for the survival of the fittest in the same way that humans strive for ascendancy and success. Examples can be seen in the poems "Hawk Roosting" and "Jaguar". His poems reveal that Hughes is deeply committed to a vision of our troubled relationship with nature. He brings out the relationship mostly in terms of animal imagery and symbols drawn out from the vast storehouse of mythology and folklore. Hughes is rather preoccupied with the problems of man's relationship with the elements of non-human cosmos. In most of his works Hughes seems to move towards the very root and sources of myths and legends in the depths of human psyche. He is essentially the poet of the leaping blood, of brute energy in nature and of life lived at the primitive level of impulses and instincts.

## ESSAY

### Critical Analysis of the poem

"The Thought Fox" has often been acknowledged as one of the most completely realised and artistically satisfying of the poems in Ted Hughes's first collection, *The Hawk in the Rain*. At the same time it is one of the most frequently anthologised of all Hughes's poems. It is a poem about writing a poem. Its external action takes place in a room late at night where the poet is sitting alone at his desk. Outside the night is starless, silent, and totally black. But the poet senses a presence which disturbs him:

"Through the window I see no star  
Something more near  
Though deeper within darkness  
Is entering the loneliness."

The disturbance is not in the external darkness of the night, for the night is itself a metaphor for the deeper and more intimate darkness of the poet's imagination in whose depths an idea is mysteriously stirring. At first the idea has no clear outlines; it is not seen but felt – frail and intensely vulnerable. The poet's task is to coax it out of formlessness and into fuller consciousness by the sensitivity of his language. The remote stirrings of the poem are compared to the stirrings of an animal – a fox, whose body is invisible, but which feels its way forward nervously through the dark undergrowth. The idea of the delicate dark snow evokes the physical reality of the fox's nose which is itself cold, dark and damp, twitching moistly and gently against twig and leaf. In this way the first feature of the fox is mysteriously defined and its wet black nose is nervously alive in the darkness, feeling its way towards us. But by inverting the natural order of the simile, and withholding the subject of the sentence, the poet succeeds in blurring its distinctness so that the fox emerges only slowly out of the formlessness of the snow. Gradually the fox's eyes appear out of the same formlessness, leading the shadowy movement of its body as it comes closer:

“Two eyes serve a movement, that now  
And again now, and now, and now  
Sets neat prints into the snow  
Between trees, and warily lame  
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow. .. “

In the first two lines of this passage the rhythm of the verse is broken by the punctuation and the line-endings, while at the same time what seemed the predictable course of the rhyme-scheme is deliberately departed from. Both rhythmically and phonetically the verse thus mimes the nervous, unpredictable movement of the fox as it delicately steps forward, then stops suddenly to check the terrain before it runs on only to stop again. The tracks which the fox leaves in the snow are themselves duplicated by the sounds and rhythm of the line ‘Sets neat prints into the snow’. The first three short words of this line are internal half-rhymes, as neat, as identical and as sharply outlined as the fox's paw-marks, and these words press down gently but distinctly into the soft open vowel of ‘snow’. The fox's body remains indistinct, a silhouette against the snow. But the phrase ‘lame shadow’ itself evokes a more precise image of the fox, as it freezes alertly in its tracks, holding one front-paw in mid-air, and then moves off again like a limping animal. At the end of the stanza the words ‘bold to come’ are left suspended – as though the fox is pausing at the outer edge of some trees. The gap between the stanzas is itself the clearing which the fox, after hesitating warily, suddenly shoots across: ‘Of a body that is bold to come / Across clearings. ..’

At this point in the poem the hesitant rhythm of that single sentence which is prolonged over five stanzas breaks into a final and deliberate run. The fox has scented safety. After its dash across the clearing of the stanza-break, it has come suddenly closer, bearing down upon the poet and upon the reader:

“ Across clearings an eye,  
A widening deepening greenness,  
Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
Coming about its own business. ..”

It is so close now that its two eyes have merged into a single green glare which grows wider and wider as the fox comes nearer, its eyes heading directly towards ours: ‘Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox / It enters the dark hole of the head’. If we follow the ‘visual logic’ of the poem we

are compelled to imagine the fox actually jumping through the eyes of the poet – with whom the reader of the poem is inevitably drawn into identification. The fox enters the lair of the head as it would enter its own lair, bringing with it the hot, sensual, animal reek of its body and all the excitement and power of the achieved vision.

The fox is no longer a formless stirring somewhere in the dark depths of the bodily imagination; it has been coaxed out of the darkness and into full consciousness. It is no longer nervous and vulnerable, but at home in the lair of the head, safe from extinction, perfectly created, its being caught for ever on the page. And all this has been done purely by the imagination. For in reality there is no fox at all, and outside, in the external darkness, nothing has changed: 'The window is starless still; the clock ticks, / The page is printed.' The fox is the poem, and the poem is the fox.

The very sublimity and God-like nature of Hughes's vision can engender uneasiness. For Hughes's fox has none of the freedom of an animal. It cannot get up from the page and walk off to nuzzle its young cubs or do foxy things behind the poet's back. It cannot even die in its own mortal, animal way. For it is the poet's creature, wholly owned and possessed by him, fashioned almost egotistically in order to proclaim not its own reality but that of its imaginatively omnipotent creator. This feeling of uneasiness is heightened by the last stanza of the poem. For although this stanza clearly communicates the excitement of poetic creation, it seems at the same time to express an almost predatory thrill; it is as though the fox has successfully been lured into a hunter's trap. The bleak matter-of-factness of the final line – 'The page is printed' – only reinforces the curious deadness of the thought-fox.

The conflict of sensibility which Hughes unconsciously dramatises in 'The thought-fox' runs through all his poetry. On the one hand there is in his work an extraordinary sensuous and sensual generosity which coexists with a sense of abundance and a capacity for expressing tenderness which are unusual in contemporary poetry. These qualities are particularly in evidence in some of the most mysteriously powerful of all his poems – poems such as 'Crow's undersong', 'Littleblood', 'Full moon and little Frieda' and 'Bride and groom lie hidden for three days'. On the other hand his poetry – and above all his poetry in *Crow* – is notorious for the raging intensity of its violence, a violence which, by some critics at least, has been seen as destructive of all artistic and human values. Hughes himself seems consistently to see his own poetic sensitivity as 'feminine' and his poetry frequently gives the impression that he can allow himself to indulge this sensitivity only within a protective shell of hard, steely 'masculine' violence.

# ARABY

James Joyce

## INTRODUCTION

### James Augustine Aloysius Joyce

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (2 February 1882 – 13 January 1941), one of the most influential writers in the modernist avant-garde literature of the early 20th century, was an Irish novelist and poet. Joyce is best known for *Ulysses* (1922), a landmark work noted for his skilful application of an array of contrasting literary styles, especially the stream of consciousness technique that he perfected. He is known for his literary innovations such as a strictly focused narrative and indirect style.

Joyce was born on 2 February 1882 to John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane Murray in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar. He was the eldest of ten surviving children. In 1887, his father was appointed tax collector by Dublin Corporation. By 1893, Joyce's father had lost his position.

In 1898, Joyce began studying Italian, English and French at University College Dublin. His literary reviews appeared in *Fortnightly Review*. Joyce matriculated from University College of Dublin in 1903. After moving to Paris, Joyce planned on studying medicine. When his mother was diagnosed with cancer, Joyce returned to Ireland.

Though most of his adult life was spent abroad, Joyce's fictional universe does not extend far beyond Dublin, and is populated largely by characters who closely resemble family members, enemies and friends from his time there; *Ulysses* in particular is set with precision in the streets and alleyways of the city. Shortly after the publication of *Ulysses* he elucidated this preoccupation somewhat, saying, "For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal."

In 1904 Joyce eloped with Nora Barnacle. The young couple moved to Zurich, where he acquired a post to teach English at the Berlitz Language School. The director of the school later sent him on to Trieste. With the help of Almidano Artifoni, director of the Trieste Berlitz School, he finally secured a teaching position in Pola, then a part of Austria-Hungary. He stayed there, teaching English, from October 1904 until March 1905. In 1905 he moved back to Trieste. The same year Nora gave birth to their first child.

In 1914, *Dubliners* was published. However, the language and atmosphere that Joyce used in this collection presaged his later more innovated works. 1914 was also the year that Joyce began the writing process for *Ulysses*. By 1915 he was granted a visa and he relocated to Zurich. In Zurich, Joyce made the acquaintance with Ezra Pound. He also met Harriet Shaw Weaver, a publisher. Weaver became Joyce's patron, allowing him to focus on his writing.

The novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was published in 1916. In 1920, Ezra Pound invited Joyce to Paris. Joyce stayed in the city for twenty years. During this period, Joyce wrote *Finnegan's Wake*, a work that tried to capture the sleeping life of those who lived in Dublin. In 1940, Joyce fled to Zurich escaping the Nazi invasion and occupation of the city. He died there on 13th January 1941 after complications from a surgery on a perforated ulcer.

The writings of James Joyce include Chamber Music, Dubliners, The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses, Exiles, Finnegans Wake.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY**

Araby is the third story of the collection Dubliners, which was published in 1914. It is an emotional short story of a nameless boy in Dublin who is infatuated with the sister of his friend, Mangan, and because of it, journeys to a bazaar or world fair called Araby, where he finally comes to a realization about his immature actions. The story shows how the boy reacts to these feelings and the love he has, and ultimately how he realizes his tragedy.

## **SUMMARY OF THE STORY**

Araby is a complex short story taking place in Joyce's home town of Dublin, Ireland. The narrator is an unnamed boy. He is raised by his aunt and uncle. The boy describes the North Richmond Street of Dublin on which his house is located. He thinks about the priest who died in the house before his family moved in and the games that he and his friends played in the street. He recalls how they would run through the back lanes of the houses and hide in the shadows when they reached the street again, hoping to avoid people in the neighborhood.

The narrator develops a passionate love towards his friend Mangan's sister. However he fails to express his love towards her. He and Mangan's sister talk little, but she is always in his thoughts. He thinks about her when he accompanies his aunt to do food shopping on Saturday evening in the busy marketplace and when he sits in the back room of his house alone. The narrator's infatuation is so intense that he fears he will never gather the courage to speak with the girl and express his feelings.

One day, the girl finally speaks to him, to ask if he will go to Araby. Araby is the name of an upcoming bazaar with an Arabian theme. She can't go, because she is going on a religious retreat that weekend. The narrator, full of romantic notions, says that he will go and find some kind of gift for her. This brief meeting launches the narrator into a period of eager, restless waiting and fidgety tension in anticipation of the bazaar. The boy can think of nothing but the girl, the Orientalist bazaar, and the gift he will get for her. He gets permission to go, and for days he cannot concentrate. The day finally arrives, and the boy reminds his uncle that he wishes to go to the bazaar that night. His uncle will have to get home on time to give him the money for a ride to the bazaar, as well as some money.

Yet dinner passes and a guest visits, but the uncle does not return. The narrator impatiently endures the time passing, until at 9 p.m. the uncle finally returns; unbothered that he has forgotten about the narrator's plans. Reciting the epigram "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," the uncle gives the narrator the money and asks him if he knows the poem "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed." The narrator leaves just as his uncle begins to recite the lines. He arrives at the bazaar just as it is closing. Only a few stalls are open. He examines the goods, but they are far too expensive for him. The young woman minding the stall is engaged in a conversation with two young men. Though he is potentially a customer, she only grudgingly and briefly waits on him before returning to her frivolous conversation. His idealized vision of Araby is destroyed, along with his idealized vision of Mangan's sister--and of love.

The lights are being shut off, and the narrator despairs: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger."

## GLOSSARY

imperturbable	: calm and collected even under pressure, not excited
tenant	: a person who rents land or property from a landlord
musty	: having a stale odour
litter	: items discarded on the ground
damp	: being in a state between dry and wet

Walter Scot : Sir Walter Scot (1771-1832) English historical novelist, famous for his novels like Ivanhoe, Waverly, and Lady of the Lake

The Abbot : a novel written by Walter Scott in 1820 about Mary, Queen of Scots.

'The Devout Communicant' : an 18th century Catholic book by the English Franciscan Friar Pacificus Baker (1695-1774)

The Memoirs of Vidocq : a popular 19th century novel written by Francois-Jules Vidocq and published in 1829, about a Parisian Police Commissioner.

straggling : wandering, rambling

sombre : melancholy, unhappy

run the gauntlet : a form of physical punishment where a captive is to run between two rows-a gauntlet-of soldiers who repeatedly strike them.

peer : to look with difficulty or as if searching for something.

summons : an authoritative call to appear before a judge or a magistrate

jostle : to move through by pushing and shoving

litany : a prolonged or tedious recital

O'Donovan Rossa : Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa (1831-1915) was an Irish revolutionary who advocated the use of violence in the struggle against British rule.

chalice : a large drinking cup used in religious ceremonies.

throng of foes : a group of enemies.

harp : a stringed musical instrument.

impinge upon : make a physical impact

sodden : soaked, drenched

annihilate : to destroy completely

tedious : tiresomely long

chafe : get angry

freemason : a member of an international fraternity and fellowship with elaborate secret rituals

fuss : excessive activity, worry, bother or talk about something

curt : rudely brief

garrulous : excessively talkative

The Arab's Farewell to his Steed : a popular poem by Caroline Norton (1808-1877) where an Arab boy sells his beloved horse, but changes his mind later and gets it back.

Florin : a pre-decimal British coin worth two Shillings or ten new pence.

Turnstile : a gate for admission or exit with revolving arms allowing people through singly.

gird : to bind with a flexible rope or cord

salver : a tray

fib : a trivial lie

deride : laugh scornfully at; ridicule.

## REVISIONARY EXERCISES

### SHORT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Where does the story take place?

The story takes place in the North Richmond Street of Dublin, Ireland

2. How does the narrator describe the street?

The narrator describes the street as blind and drab; it is a dead end, yet its inhabitants are smugly complacent; the houses reflect the attitudes of their inhabitants. The houses are "imperturbable" in the quiet, cold, dark muddy lanes and the dark dripping gardens.

3. Who is the narrator in the story?

The narrator in the story is an unnamed school boy.

4. With whom does the boy fall in love?

The boy falls in love with the sister of his friend Mangan

5. What does the girl ask to the boy?

The girl asks the boy if he will go to Araby. She further tells that she can't go there, because she is going on a religious retreat that weekend.

6. What is Araby?

Araby is an upcoming bazaar with an Arabian theme.

7. What does the narrator promise to the girl?

The boy promises the girl that he will go to Araby and find some kind of gift for her from there.

8. When does the boy reach the bazaar and what does he find there?

The boy reaches Araby at 10.00 pm. Only a few stalls are open. He examines the goods, but they are far too expensive for him. His dreams about Araby and love get shattered and he stands there angry and dejected.



## PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. With reference to “Araby”, discuss the intensity of the schoolboy’s love.

Or

Describe narrator’s attitude towards Mangan’s sister

Or

James Joyce shows the effect of love on its victims.

The writer has described the intensity of the schoolboy’s love at various places in the story. From his description, the schoolboy appears to be a passionate lover. We also come to know the effect of love on its victims. The schoolboy is a teenager. He loves Mangan’s sister very passionately, but he cannot express it. Therefore, he looks at her from a distance without saying anything. He wants to be around her. At school time as soon as she comes out of her house, he takes his books, rushes out and follows her without letting her know. The narrator says, “I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.” He keeps on thinking about her even in the classroom. Her image comes between him and the pages he tries to read. He keeps on thinking about her even in the market. He is so intense in his love that he cannot understand his prayers and praises for her. He cannot understand why his eyes are full of tears. He says about his condition: “But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.” Sometimes he wants to get rid of his senses too. He usually murmurs “O love! O love!” Sometimes through the window of his house he looks at her house. He had become so much intense in his love that now her image is always before his eyes. Therefore, we see the intensity of the schoolboy’s love. His love had become his whole business.

2. Write a note on the mental condition of the schoolboy after his talk with Mangan’s sister.

Or

Why were the schoolboy’s teachers annoyed with the schoolboy?

After his talk with Mangan’s sister, he started thinking about Araby all the time. He thought about that not only during daytime but also in his dreams. He was so impatient that he could not wait. He wanted to go to Araby at once. He was to go on the next Saturday and a few days were left. He wanted to destroy these few days to go to Araby. He lost interest in everything else. Now he was annoyed with his schoolwork. Even in the classroom, he thought about her. Her image came between him and the pages he tried to read. He answered a few questions in the classroom. Before that, his teacher used to like him. Now he was very strict with him and thought that he was becoming idle. He remained so absorbed in his thoughts that he could not concentrate on his studies. He had no patience for his work because he could not go to Araby because of this work. Now his class work seemed to be a child’s play. When he was, alone he recalled the syllable of the word Araby. As Araby was an eastern word, he thought he was under eastern enchantment. He asked for leave to go to Araby on Saturday.

3. How did the schoolboy behave on Saturday when he was to go to Araby? Describe his feelings.

The writer has described the feelings of the narrator before leaving for Araby very beautifully. On Saturday, he was very restless and impatient. He wanted to go at once. Nevertheless, he had to wait the whole day. He had to go to school and he had to wait for his uncle’s return. Before leaving for school, he reminded his uncle that he wished to go to Araby that day. He was not in a good mood when he left. His uncle did not return until dinnertime. He wanted

money from him. Therefore, he had to wait. First, he sat staring at the clock. When its ticking began to irritate him, he left the room. He went upstairs. He was feeling cold and gloomy. He went from one room to another singing. From the front window, he saw his companions playing. He looked at the dark house of the girl. He started imagining that the girl was standing before him. He saw light touching her neck, her hand, and her dress. He stood there for an hour. Then he came down. At nine O'clock, his uncle returned home. At the dinner table, he asked for money. His aunt asked his uncle to give him the money and let him go. His uncle gave him one florin and started reciting a poem, but he did not listen to it and started for Araby.

4. Describe the schoolboy's departure, feelings and visit to Araby.

The narrator's visit to Araby proved useless because he could not buy anything for the girl. Therefore, he was very disappointed and angry and his eyes burned with anguish. He got one florin from his uncle and went to the station. He was in a state of absent-mindedness. He got a seat in a third class carriage. The train was deserted because there were no passengers. He wanted to reach Araby very soon but the train left very late. It was a special train for Araby so the porters did not let the crowd of people get into the train. He remained alone in the carriage. When he reached Araby it was ten minutes to ten. Therefore, he was too late. He entered the bazaar by handing a shilling to a weary looking man. Most of the shops and stalls were close. The boy went to an open stall and looked at vases and tea sets. Three shop assistants were arguing. A young lady came over to him and asked what he wanted to buy. Perhaps he had read the prices written on the vases. He had come to know that he did not have enough money, so he told her that he did not want to buy anything. He was very much disappointed now. He stayed at the stall for some time and then turned away. Now the upper part of the hall was completely dark. He touched the money in his pocket. He had realized his foolishness. He should not have promised the girl to bring something for her. Therefore, his eyes burnt with anger and anguish.

5. Why is the protagonist angry at the end of the story and why do his eyes burn with anguish?

Or

“Araby” describes a conflict between the subjective feeling of the protagonist and the objective world. Discuss.

Conflict is a state of disagreement between opposing ideas. When we read the story “Araby” carefully, we find that two opposing ideas have been presented. The first idea is schoolboy's subjective feelings and the second idea is his objective or real world. There is a conflict between the personal feelings of a person and the real world. The boy falls in love with his friend's sister. To him his subjective feeling of love is the only reality. All the other things have no importance for him. To him the serious work of life is a child's play. He keeps on thinking about her all the time. Even when he goes to market, he thinks about her. In the classroom, he cannot pay attention to his studies. Nothing is important for him now. He usually weeps without knowing why he is weeping. He promises to buy a gift for the girl. These are the subjective feelings of the boy. This is his illusion. His objective world is that he is just a schoolboy. Perhaps he is an orphan too. His uncle is his patron. He should not have promised the girls to bring something for her. He cannot buy anything for her because he himself is dependent on his uncle. Therefore, we see that there is a big disagreement between his subjective feelings and objective world.

It is only at the end of the story that he comes to know what he is and what he should not have done. He is disillusioned. With his little money, he cannot buy anything for her. It was his vanity when he promised to bring something for her. It is the sense of reality that makes his eyes burn with anguish and anger.

6. What is the theme of the story “Araby”?

The theme of the story “Araby” is that the subjective feelings of a person and the objective world are two opposing things. There is no agreement between them. First, we do not understand this disagreement, but later we come to understand that, and we are disillusioned. Then we are sad and dejected.

When we read the story carefully, we see the subjective feelings of a schoolboy. He is in love with his friend’s sister. To him his subjective feeling of love is the only reality. All other things have no importance for him. He keeps on thinking about her all the time. Even when he goes to market, he thinks about her. In the classroom, he cannot pay attention to his studies.

His objective world is that he is just a schoolboy. Perhaps he is an orphan too. His uncle is his patron. He should not have promised the girl that he would bring something for her. He cannot bring anything for her, because he is himself dependent on his uncle.

We see that there is a great disagreement between his subjective feelings and the objective world. First, he does not understand this disagreement, but later he comes to understand that and he is disillusioned. Then he is sad and dejected.

7. What are the symbolic meanings of the deserted train and dark bazaar in the story “Araby”?

The deserted train and the dark bazaar have great symbolic meanings in the story “Araby”.

The deserted train is one of the means that can take him to his most serious place ‘Araby’. It also symbolizes gloom and a kind of disappointment that the schoolboy is going to face.

Writers always set the situation for the end of the story. The setting of story always foretells the end of the story. If the end is pleasant, the writer always talks about light, day, and good things. If the end is tragic, the writer always talks about night, darkness, cold, gloom, death and other bad things. Therefore, the desertedness of the train, its delay, and slowness all symbolize the tragic end and the disappointment that the boy is going to face.

The dark bazaar symbolizes the narrator’s ignorance. He promises to the girl that he will bring something for her from “Araby”. He does not know that he cannot buy a gift for the girl with his little money. Therefore, the darkness of the bazaar shows his ignorance. The darkness of bazaar also symbolizes the bitter realities of life. It is a reality that he is immature and inexperienced and does not know anything about the power of money. Therefore, by looking into the darkness, he realizes his foolishness. This darkness also symbolizes that we cannot fulfil all wishes.

### ESSAY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Consider frustration as the central theme of 'Araby'

Or

The Dublin experiences as being reflected in 'Araby'

“Araby”, the short story by James Joyce was released in a collection of short stories by Joyce called “Dubliners”, which focuses on the early years of 20th century Dublin, Ireland. Convinced that the Dublin of the 1900's was a center of spiritual paralysis, James Joyce loosely but thematically tied together histories in Dubliners by means of their common setting. Each of the stories consists of a portrait in which Dublin contributes in some way to the dehumanizing experience of modern life. The boy in the story "Araby" is intensely subject to the

city's dark, hopeless conformity, and his tragic yearning toward the exotic in the face of drab, ugly reality forms the center of the story.

Araby is the third story of the collection, and is centered on the theme of frustration. As with the second story "The Encounter," this story deals with longing for adventure and escape, though here this longing finds a focus in the object of the narrator's desire. The title, "Araby," itself suggests escape. To the nineteenth-century European mind, the Islamic lands of North Africa, the Near East, and the Middle East symbolized decadence, exotic delights, escapism, and a luxurious sensuality. The boy's erotic desires for the girl become joined to his fantasies about the wonders that will be offered in the Orientalist bazaar. He dreams of buying her a suitably romantic gift.

The third story of the collection, it is the last story with a first-person narrator. It continues with the ages-of-life structure. As the boy is becoming a man, the bazaar becomes emblematic for the difficulty of the adult world, in which the boy proves unable to navigate. Boyish fantasies are dashed by the realities of life in Dublin. The first three stories in *Dubliners* are all narrated in the first-person, and they all have nameless boys as their narrators. All three narrators seem sensitive and intelligent, with keen interests in learning and a propensity for fantasy. Joyce, still in his early twenties when he wrote *Dubliners*, clearly drew on his own personal experiences more directly in writing these three tales. The namelessness of all three boys also encourages interpreters to identify them with Joyce, although from an interpretive point of view this move does little to illuminate the stories.

"Araby" s key theme is frustration, as the boy deals with the limits imposed on him by his situation. The protagonist has a series of romantic ideas, about the girl and the wondrous event that he will attend on her behalf. But on the night when he awaits his uncle's return to go to the bazaar, we feel the boy's frustration mounting. For a time, the boy fears he may not be able to go at all. When he finally does arrive, the bazaar is more or less over. His fantasies about the bazaar and buying a great gift for the girl are revealed as ridiculous. For one thing, the bazaar is a rather tawdry shadow of the boy's dreams. He overhears the conversation of some of the vendors, who are ordinary English women, and the mundane nature of the talk drives home that there is no escape: bazaar or not, the boy is still in Dublin, and the accents of the vendors remind the reader that Dublin is a colonized city.

The boy has arrived too late to do any serious shopping, but quickly we see that his tardiness does not matter. Any nice gift is well beyond the protagonist's price range. We know, from the description of the boy's housing situation and the small sum his uncle gives him, that their financial situation is tight. Though his anticipation of the event has provided him with pleasant daydreams, reality is much harsher. He remains a prisoner of his modest means and his city.

## 2. How does the narrator's visit to Araby culminate in his epiphany?

The term 'epiphany' is used in literary criticism to refer 'a sudden realization – a flash of recognition - in which someone or something is seen in a new light'. In Stephen Hero James Joyce used the term for the first time in literature. Novelist Joseph Conrad described Epiphany as "one of those rare moments of awakening".

Each of the fifteen stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners* presents a flat, rather spatial portrait. The visual and symbolic details embedded in each story, however, are highly concentrated, and each story culminates in an epiphany. In Joycean terms, an epiphany is a moment when the essence of a character is revealed, when all the forces that bear on his life converge, and we can, in that instant, understand him. Each story in the collection is centered in an epiphany, and each story is concerned with some failure or deception, which results in realization and disillusionment. "Araby" follows this pattern. The meaning is revealed in a young boy's psychic journey from first love to

despair and disappointment, and the theme is found in the boy's discovery of the discrepancy between the real and the ideal in life.

The story opens with a description of North Richmond Street, a "blind," "cold ... .. silent" street where the houses "gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." It is a street of fixed, decaying conformity and false piety. The boy's house contains the same sense of a dead present and a lost past. The former tenant, a priest, died in the back room of the house, and his legacy—several old yellowed books, which the boy enjoys leafing through because they are old, and a bicycle pump rusting in the back yard—become symbols of the intellectual and religious vitality of the past. The boy, in the midst of such decay and spiritual paralysis, experiences the confused idealism and dreams of first love and his awakening becomes incompatible with and in ironic contrast to the staid world about him.

Every morning before school the boy lies on the floor in the front parlour peeping out through a crack in the blind of the door, watching and waiting for the girl next door to emerge from her house and walk to school. He is shy and still boyish. He follows her, walks silently past, not daring to speak, overcome with a confused sense of sensual desire and religious adoration. In his mind she is both a saint to be worshipped and a woman to be desired. His eyes are "often full of tears," and one evening he goes to the back room where the priest had died. Claspings the palms of his hands together, he murmurs, "O love! O love!" in a prayer not to God, but to the concept of love and perhaps even to the girl, his love. Walking with his aunt to shop on Saturday evenings he imagines that the girl's image accompanies him, and that he protects her in "places the most hostile to romance." In the mixed symbolism of the Christian and the Romantic or Oriental myths Joyce reveals the epiphany in the story: "These noises con-verged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes." He is unable to talk to the girl. Drifting away from his schoolmates' boyish games, the boy has fantasies in his isolation, in the ecstasy and pain of first love.

Finally the girl speaks to the boy. She asks him if he is going to Araby. He replies that if he does he will bring her a gift, and from that moment, his thoughts upon the mixed imagery of the saintly light upon her hair and the potential sensuality of "the white border of a petticoat," the boy cannot sleep or study. The word Araby "cast an Eastern enchantment" over him, and then on the night he is to go to the bazaar his uncle neglects to return home. Both his aunt and uncle fail to understand the boy's need and anguish, and thus his isolation is deepened. We begin to see that the story is not so much a story of love as it is a rendition of the world in which the boy lives.

The second part of the story depicts the boy's inevitable disappointment and realization. In such an atmosphere of "blindness"—the aunt and uncle unaware of the boy's anguish, the girl not conscious of the boy's love, and the boy himself blind to the true nature of his love—the words "hostile to romance" take on ironic overtones. These overtones deepen when the boy arrives too late at the bazaar. It is closing and the hall is "in darkness." He recognizes "a silence like that which pervades a church after a service" but the bazaar is dirty and disappointing. Two men are "counting money on a salver" and he listens "to the fall of the coins." A young lady, bored with him and interested in two men who are flirting with her, destroys the boy's sense of an "Eastern enchantment." His love, like his quest for a gift to draw the girl to him in an unfriendly world, ends with his realizing that his love existed only in his mind.

Thus the theme of the story—the discrepancy between the real and the ideal—is made final in the bazaar, a place of tawdry make-believe. The epiphany in which the boy lives a dream in spite of the ugly and the worldly is brought to its inevitable conclusion: the single sensation of life disintegrates. The boy senses the falsity of his dreams and his eyes burn "with anguish and anger."

# HOW SHOULD ONE READ A BOOK?

- VIRGINIA WOOLF

## INTRODUCTION

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adeline Virginia Woolf, better known as Virginia Woolf, was born on the 25th of January 1882 in London, England. She was an essayist, novelist, publisher and critique, famous for her novels and feminist writings. She is considered to be one of the leading figures of modernist literature of the twentieth century. Her most notable works are the novels *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* and the feminist essay *A Room of One's own*. She was an active figure in the London literary society in the interwar period and was a member of the Bloomsbury Group. Virginia Woolf died on the 28th of March 1941 in East Sussex, England, at the age of 59.

Virginia Woolf was educated by her parents. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was an author himself as well as a historian and mountaineer, and her mother, renowned for her beauty, modeled for many painters including Edward Burne-Jones. Both her parents were widows and therefore the house was full of children from their previous marriages, adding up to eight children. The house grew under the influence of the Victorian literary society with guests such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Henry James, and James Russell Lowell, who became Virginia Woolf's honorary grandfather.

When Virginia Woolf was only 13, her mother died. Woolf had many nervous breakdowns throughout the course of her life. She nevertheless managed to study at the Ladies Department of the King's College London, which got her acquainted with some of the first reformers of women's higher education. Her father's death in 1904 brought to Virginia Woolf her biggest nervous collapse and she was institutionalized.

Virginia Woolf became acquainted with the intellectual circle of artists and writers that formed the Bloomsbury Group. In the Bloomsbury group she met Leonard Woolf and they married in 1912. The couple is known to have led a happy married life and also collaborated professionally, most notably founding the Hogarth Press, which published works by Virginia Woolf herself, by T.S. Eliot, and commissioned contemporary art works.

Virginia Woolf began her professional literary career in 1910 working for the Times Literary Supplement and released her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, in 1915. Her next novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) examines feminist issues like sexual and economical repression. *To the Lighthouse* (1927) explores the everyday life of people in times of war and the unbalanced relationship between men and women. *Orlando* (1928) is considered as one of Woolf's lightest novels.

In 1929 Woolf published her best known non-fiction work *A Room of One's Own*. After completing the manuscript of her last (posthumously published) novel, *Between the Acts*, Woolf fell into a deep depression which ended with her suicide in the River Ouse, close to her home, on the 28th of March, 1941.

## ABOUT THE ESSAY

'How should one read a book?' is an essay written by Virginia Woolf. It was first published in Yale Review in October 1926. It is actually a printed form of Woolf's own lecture which was delivered on January 30th 1926. The essay is an intellectual piece of work in which Woolf talks about how she views reading a book as a personal experience for everyone.

### SUMMARY

In the first paragraph of her essay 'How should one read a book?', Woolf says, "the only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusion". Woolf believed that the best advice always originated within the reader's instincts. She cautions against bringing baggage and pre-conceived notions to one's reading.

Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices.

According to Woolf, Novelists achieve their goal in bringing a reader into a state of mind in which they are taken into the world of that novel. Interpretations of readers derive from their personal history. The ethnicity, gender, age, and life experiences are few of the innumerable characteristics that contribute to the overall interpretations of a reader. This is another concept Virginia Woolf placed into her essay. When one manages to read after banishing all such "preconceptions", he receives the fullest possible value from literature.

If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning. Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. If you hang back, and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, then signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of the first sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other.

In modern day culture, people judge books upon their appearance and not the value contained within the covers. We should not "refuse to read books because they are not 'art'" on the contrary, we should "read them in a different way, with a different aim" This is Virginia Woolf's emphasis on how one should expand their repertoire, be curious and "satisfy that curiosity which possesses" them. Essentially, Virginia Woolf is saying, "you should not judge a book by its cover".

Virginia Woolf spoke about many essential components to aid a reader into extracting the fullest value from literature. Reading is a lifelong process. One shouldn't read for the sake reading, but they should read for the love of reading.

Woolf also reminds us of the osmotic skills of reading and writing:

Perhaps the quickest way to understand the elements of what a novelist is doing is not to read, but to write; to make your own experiment with the dangers and difficulties with words.

After mentioning that the fastest way to appreciate the task a novelist faces is to try and write about some event in your life, Woolf says:

But also we can read such books with another aim, not to throw light on literature, not to become familiar with famous people, but to refresh and exercise our own creative powers.

To exercise the imagination, she argues, is itself a special skill:

To read a novel is a difficult and complex art. You must be capable not only of great fineness of perception, but of great boldness of imagination if you are going to make use of all that the novelist — the great artist — gives you.

Woolf moves on to the intricacies of poetry, adding to other famous meditations on what a poem is and what makes it good:

The impact of poetry is so hard and direct that for the moment there is no other sensation except that of the poem itself. What profound depths we visit then — how sudden and complete is our immersion! There is nothing here to catch hold of; nothing to stay us in our flight. ... The poet is always our contemporary. Our being for the moment is centered and constricted, as in any violent shock of personal emotion. Afterwards, it is true, the sensation begins to spread in wider rings through our minds; remoter senses are reached; these begin to sound and to comment and we are aware of echoes and reflections. The intensity of poetry covers an immense range of emotion.

Woolf then outlines the two processes in reading: reading as closely as possible, then comparing with other works.

The second part of reading, to judge, to compare, is not as simple as the first. Woolf says that it means to continue reading without the book.

To continue reading without the book before you, to hold one shadow-shape against another, to have read widely enough and with enough understanding to make such comparisons alive and illumination – that is difficult; it is still more difficult to press further and to say, “Not only is the book of this sort, but it is of this value; here it fails; here it succeeds; this is bad; this is good”. To carry out this part of a reader’s duty needs such imagination, insight, and learning that it is hard to conceive any one mind sufficiently endowed; impossible for the most self-confident to find more than the seed of such powers in himself.

Woolf expresses the conception that when one begins to read literature he begins to enter different stages of interpretation that will ultimately improve his pleasure and satisfaction.

Each individual is different in respect to forms of interpretation based on their past experiences and knowledge. It can be true to say that every man is only made up of his memories. Every person in this world is raised and educated differently and it is this difference that makes literature so enigmatic and complex.

Woolf stresses the importance of how each individual creates different visions and reactions to literature that lead to a conclusion brought upon their own methods of interpretation. After all, this is what Virginia Woolf was so willing to express in her own literature on the rewards of reading book without discriminating or creating standards for something that involves freedom, imagination and judgment.

In this essay Virginia Woolf talks about how she views reading a book as a personal experience for everyone. She views reading as a thing of liberty and freedom, where you can escape and not be bothered by what everyone else thinks. She describes poetry and biography extensively and uses examples from other writers. She believes that even if we read something a hundred times we will never be able to truly criticize or understand it, because literature is so deep and profound.

Ultimately, Woolf — an eloquent champion of the joy of reading — considers reading not a means to some intellectual end, but an intellectual and creative reward in itself:



I have sometimes dreamt, at least, that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesmen come to receive their rewards — their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble — the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when He sees us coming with our books under our arms, ‘Look, those need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading.’

## GLOSSARY

Fetter : shackle

The Battle of Waterloo : the Battle of Waterloo was fought on 18th June 1815. Napoleon was defeated and it put an end to his rule in France

Sanctuary : a holy place.

Platitude : a common place remark, especially one solemnly delivered

Squander : spend lavishly

Squirt : eject liquid in a jet as from a syringe.

Conglomeration : a number of things or parts forming a heterogeneous mass

Jostle : push against

Accomplice : a partner or helper

Imperceptible : very slight, gradual, or subtle

Impalpable : not easily grasped by the mind.

Defoe : Daniel Defoe, the novelist

Hardy : Thomas Hardy, the novelist

Grope : feel about or search blindly or uncertainly with the hands.

Disentangle : unravel

Decipher : de-code, determine the meaning of

Garrick : David Garrick was an English actor, playwright and theatre manager

Diderot : Denis Diderot was a French philosopher.

Trudge : go on foot

Peacock : Thomas Love Peacock, was an English satirist and author

Stand cheek by jowl : close together, intimate

Malodorous : evil-smelling

Ramble : walk for pleasure

Heron : a large bird with long legs and long neck

Acrid : irritating.

Antipathy : a strong or deep-seated aversion or dislike.

Moulder : decay to dust

Vista : a mental view of a long succession of remembered or anticipated events.

Enmesh	: entangle in
Immersion	: the process of being involved deeply
Insidious	: treacherous, crafty
Idiosyncrasy	: a view of feeling peculiar to a person
Incongruity	: absurdity
Stultify	: cause to appear foolish or absurd.
Vanquish	: conquer or overcome
Abeyance	: a state of temporary disuse or suspension

## REVISIONARY EXERCISES

### SHORT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What is the advice that one person can give another about reading?

According to Virginia Woolf, the only advice that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow his own instincts, to use his own reason and to come to his own conclusion.

2. How can a reader get the fullest possible meaning from literature?

According to Woolf, when one manages to read after banishing all "preconceptions", he receives the fullest possible value from literature.

3. Which are the two processes in reading, according to Woolf?

In her essay Woolf outlines the two processes in reading:

1) Reading as closely as possible and 2) comparing with other works.

4. What is the fastest way to appreciate the task a novelist?

Woolf mentions that the fastest way to appreciate the task a novelist is to try to write about some event in our life.

5. How should we approach a book, in Woolf's opinion?

In Woolf's opinion we should approach a book like a judge, without having any personal affinity or dislike towards the author or the text.

### PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Discuss the two processes in reading, as detailed by Woolf in her essay

In her essay Woolf outlines the two processes in reading:

a) Reading as closely as possible and b) comparing the text with other works.

The first process is comparatively simpler than the second one. , Woolf says, "the only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusion". Woolf believed that the best advice always originated within the reader's instincts. According to Woolf, Novelists achieve

their goal in bringing a reader into a state of mind in which they are taken into the world of that novel. Interpretations of readers derive from their personal history. The ethnicity, gender, age, and life experiences are few of the innumerable characteristics that contribute to the overall interpretations of a reader. When one manages to read after banishing all such “preconceptions”, he receives the fullest possible value from literature.

The second part of reading, to judge, to compare, is not as simple as the first. Woolf says that it means to continue reading without the book. To carry out this part of a reader’s duty needs such imagination, insight, and learning that it is hard to conceive any one mind sufficiently endowed; impossible for the most self-confident to find more than the seed of such powers in himself. It is in this stage that a reader becomes able to say, “Not only is the book of this sort, but it is of this value; here it fails; here it succeeds; this is bad; this is good” etc.

2. What does Virginia Woolf tell us about the readers being the judges of the writer?

Virginia Woolf compares the task of reading a book to the task of a Judge, who impartially decides over the cases after hearing both arguments. Woolf says, “We are no longer the friends of the writer, but his judges; and just as we cannot be too sympathetic as friends, so as judges we cannot be too severe.” Just like the judges decide over cases, the readers should evaluate the books without any preconceptions or prejudices. They should differentiate between good books and bad books. They should find out the real value of a book they have read, should find out what sort of a book it is, where it fails; where it succeeds and what themes the book deals with etc. Woolf considers the writers of false books and faked books as corrupters and defilers. Such books only waste the time and sympathy of readers as the most insidious enemies of society, which fill the air with decay and disease. She asks the reader-judges to be severe in their judgments towards such books;

“Let us compare each book with the greatest of its kind..... even the latest and least of novels has a right to be judged with the best.”

## ESSAY

1. Analyse the opinions put forward by Virginia Woolf in connection with reading.

(reproduce the summary of the essay as the answer)

# THE ROCKING HORSE WINNER

-D H Lawrence

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### D. H. LAWRENCE

David Herbert Lawrence, novelist, short-story writer, poet and essayist, was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England, in 1885 as the fourth child of Arthur John Lawrence, a barely literate miner, and Lydia (née Beardsall), a former pupil teacher who, owing to her family's financial difficulties, had to do manual work in a lace factory. Lawrence spent his formative years in the coal mining town of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. His working-class background and the tensions between his parents provided the raw material for a number of his early works.

The young Lawrence attended Beauvale Board School (now renamed GreasleyBeauvale D. H. Lawrence Primary School in his honour) from 1891 until 1898. He left in 1901, working for three months as a junior clerk at Haywood's surgical appliances factory, but a severe bout of pneumonia, ended this career. In the years 1902 to 1906 Lawrence served as a pupil teacher at the British School, Eastwood. He went on to become a full-time student and received a teaching certificate from University College, Nottingham, in 1908. At the end of 1907 he won a short story competition in the Nottingham Guardian, the first time that he had gained any wider recognition for his literary talents. Though better known as a novelist, Lawrence's first-published works (in 1909) were poems, and his poetry, especially his evocations of the natural world, have since had a significant influence on many poets on both sides of the Atlantic. His early poems reflect the influence of Ezra Pound and Imagist movement, which reached its peak in the early teens of the twentieth century.

He believed in writing poetry that was stark, immediate and true to the mysterious inner force which motivated it. Many of his best-loved poems treat the physical and inner life of plants and animals; others are bitterly satiric and express his outrage at the puritanism and hypocrisy of conventional Anglo-Saxon society. Lawrence was a rebellious and profoundly polemical writer with radical views, who regarded sex, the primitive subconscious, and nature as cures to what he considered the evils of modern industrialized society. Tremendously prolific, his work was often uneven in quality, and he was a continual source of controversy, often involved in widely-publicized censorship cases, most famously for his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). His collections of poetry include *Look! We Have Come Through* (1917), a collection of poems about his wife; *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* (1923); and *Pansies* (1929), which was banned on publication in England. D. H. Lawrence had a lifelong interest in painting, which became one of his main forms of expression in his last years.

Besides his troubles with the censors, Lawrence was persecuted as well during World War I, for the supposed pro-German sympathies of his wife, Frieda. As a consequence, the Lawrences left England and travelled restlessly to Italy, Germany, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, the French Riviera, Mexico and the United States, unsuccessfully searching for a new homeland. In Taos, New Mexico, he became the center of a group of female admirers who considered themselves his disciples, and whose quarrels for his attention became a literary legend. A lifelong sufferer from tuberculosis, Lawrence died in 1930 in France, at the age of 44.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY

"The Rocking-Horse Winner" is a short story by D. H. Lawrence that incorporates elements of the fable, the fantasy, and the fairy tale. It was first published in July 1926, in Harper's Bazaar and subsequently appeared in the first volume of Lawrence's collected short stories. It was made into a full-length film directed by Anthony Pelissier and was released in the United Kingdom in 1949.

### SUMMARY

The story describes a young middle-class Englishwoman who "had no luck." Though outwardly successful, she is haunted by a sense of failure; her husband is a ne'er-do-well and her work as a commercial artist doesn't earn as much as she'd like. The family's lifestyle exceeds its income and unspoken anxiety about money permeates the household. Her children, a son Paul and his two sisters, sense this anxiety; moreover, Paul even claims he can hear the house whispering "There must be more money."

One day, Paul asks his mother, why the family always borrows the car of her brother, Oscar Creswell, instead of getting one of its own. She explains that they lack the money to buy one. If you're lucky, she tells Paul, you have money. That is why it is better to be born lucky than rich. He goes off by himself wondering how to generate luck. In the following days, he rides his rocking horse in the nursery in a wild charge to nowhere while his sisters play with their dolls. He commands the horse "take me where there is luck".

When Uncle Oscar visits him one day the boy is riding hard as usual. His mother tells the boy that he is getting too big to be riding a rocking horse. But Paul does not respond until he completes his ride. When Uncle Oscar asks what he named the horse, Paul says he has different names. In the previous week, his name was Sansovino, after the name of a horse that won the race at Ascot. His sister explains that the family's gardener, Bassett, keeps Paul up to date on racing news. Paul tells his Uncle Oscar Creswell about betting on horse races with Bassett, the gardener. He's been placing bets using his pocket money and has won and saved three hundred twenty pounds.

His secret of the divinely power of picking the horses is actually his rocking horse. When he desperately rocks in his horse, the name of the winning horse in the real race gets revealed.

Later, when Creswell takes Paul for a ride through the countryside to his home in Hampshire, he asks the boy for advice on which horse to bet on in the Lincoln race. Paul recommends Daffodil. Daffodil wins the next race and Uncle Oscar gets convinced of Paul's power of prediction.

Uncle Oscar and Bassett both place large bets on the horses Paul names.

After further winning, Paul and Oscar arrange to give the mother a gift of five thousand pounds, but the gift only lets her spend more. Disappointed, Paul tries harder than ever to be "lucky". In a major upcoming horse race, Derby, he becomes determined to pick the winning horse. He madly rides and rocks his rocking-horse to know the winning horse. Two nights before the Derby, her mother returning from a party discovers the maddening rage with which Paul rocks his horse. Paul falls unconscious before her. He has been spending hours riding his rocking horse, sometimes all night long, until he "gets there", into a clairvoyant state where he can be sure of the winner's name.

Paul remains ill through the day of the Derby. Informed by Cresswell, Bassett has placed Paul's bet on Malabar, at fourteen to one. When he is informed by Bassett that he now has 80,000 pounds, Paul, with sheer happiness asks his mother if he had told her earlier that he was lucky. His mother says he never said so. But this reminds the readers Paul's primary assertion that he was actually "lucky".

The boy dies in the night and his mother hears her brother say, "My God, Hester, you're eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking horse to find a winner."

### REVISIONARY EXERCISES

1. What does Mother say was her biggest mistake?

Mother says that getting married to a man of no luck was the biggest mistake she made in her life.

2. What happened to Mother after she got married?

After she got married, she had bad luck.

3. What disintegrates shortly after Mother gets married?

Her relationship with her husband disintegrates shortly after her marriage.

4. How is Mother described at the beginning of the book?

Mother is described as beautiful.

5. What secret do the children know about Mother?

All the children know that their mother has a hard time loving them.

6. Why is Mother's poverty so frustrating to her?

Mother's poverty is so frustrating to her because she, being born and brought up in luxury, is never used to poverty.

7. How does Mother feel about her children?

Mother feels that her children are being thrust upon her. And she doesn't love them.

8. What does the house say to the children?

The house often whispers to the children that it needs money to survive and will fail without any extra money.

9. How does Paul play with his favorite toy?

Paul plays with his favorite toy, his rocking horse, by getting on it and starting out rocking slowly and then increasing the speed until it is quite rapid.

10. How do Paul's sisters feel when they watch him play with his favorite toy?

When Paul's sisters watch him play with his favorite toy, they are disgusted and feel something dark and strange in the way his eyes glaze over and he forgets about everything else around him.

11. Why does Mother say she is so poor?

Mother tells Paul that she is poor because she got married to a man who is very unlucky, and he will never succeed in life.

12. What is the irony in *The Rocking Horse Winner*?

The irony is that Paul finally obtains what he has so long desired, luck and money, but in so doing, he dies.

## PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. Consider “*The Rocking-Horse Winner*” as a parable.

A parable is a short narrative illustrating a religious or moral lesson by comparison or analogy. *The Rocking-Horse Winner* could be considered a parable because it teaches a powerful moral lesson that too much love for money is destructive. The mother’s greed for money destroys the entire peaceful atmosphere of the house. Soon the house is “haunted by an unspoken phrase: There must be more money!” It is the mother’s greed for money that takes away her love towards her children. Paul’s mother desires wealth and material possessions to the exclusion of more valuable items such as love and self-knowledge. Her desires are never satisfied, however, and they result in disastrous consequences when love and money are confused. Paul confronts his mother about the family’s lack of wealth, and she responds by telling him that luck is what causes someone to have money and that his father is a very unlucky man. The little boy’s quest for luck and the corresponding search for money end up in his premature death. When Paul and Oscar arrange to give the mother a gift of five thousand pounds, it only lets her spend more. Disappointed, Paul tries harder than ever to be “lucky” to provide his mother with enough money. He ultimately wins but it costs him his own life. The story teaches a powerful lesson that while considering human life, love and self-knowledge are more precious than wealth and prosperity.

2. Oedipus complex in “*The Rocking-Horse Winner*”

Like most of the works of D H Lawrence, “*The Rocking-Horse Winner*” is also noted for the sexual subtext. Scholars have noted that the descriptions of Paul riding his rocking-horse have an erotic quality, and these scenes have been interpreted as representations of sex and masturbation. Since these quasi-sexual actions are focused on pleasing Paul’s mother, and since Paul’s father has proven incapable of satisfying his wife, many critics believe that the story draws on the concepts of psychologist Sigmund Freud. Freud maintained that young boys are sexually attracted to their mothers and fantasize about replacing their fathers—a condition he termed the Oedipus complex. But there are some analysts who have placed less emphasis on the sexual aspects of the story and instead view Paul’s actions as a tragic attempt to win parental love from his hard-hearted mother.

3. The pursuit of desire in “*The Rocking-Horse Winner*”

Certain individuals have a drive that can lead them to achieve what they desire most. In the short story “*The Rocking Horse Winner*”, D.H Lawrence showcases this through character motivation and symbolism. He furthers this using pursuit of desire, and how if you take it to a certain extent it can result in tragedy if the individual chooses not to conform. Paul wants to please his mother because his mother feels that their family has no luck, but Paul proclaims that he is lucky. Paul suddenly becomes consumed with this sudden spree of good luck and feels this is the only way he will be able to gain the affection of his mother. D.H Lawrence reveals that Paul has a certain flaw that turns him to believe that the only way he will be able to gain his mother’s love and affection is by winning money in the horse races. He leads this pursuit of desire to the

standards he thought he wanted to, but not to the standards that would have achieved what he wanted, which leads to his down fall. When individuals desire love from another, they may choose to conform their beliefs and actions to that person. At first they may feel successful, however if they sacrifice everything, in pursuing this kind of goal, they may pay a heavy price instead of gaining their heart's desire.

## ESSAY

### 1. Controversy between Money and Love as shown in "The Rocking-Horse Winner"

"The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence clearly shows how the desire for wealth and material possessions destroys the peaceful atmosphere in a family. The story is about the life of a family that chooses money instead of some more stable value. It takes money as it's nexus of affection. The story continues to tell us of Hester, who is unable to love her children and is obsessed with money. At the beginning of the story the family did not have enough money to support their opulent lifestyle. The family scrambles to pay the bills at the end of the month. An unspoken phrase whispered throughout the house, "There must be more money! There must be more money!" the whispering said. Even though the family had money, they wanted more.

During a conversation, Paul's mother mentions that luck is, "what causes you to have money. If you're lucky you have money. That's why it's better to be born lucky than rich. When Paul learned from his mother that luck equals money, which in turn brings happiness, he believes if he can bring in money, it would make his mother happy, thus bringing love.

Paul, the child, knew that his family wanted money, and he knew that he was lucky, betting on the horses. Paul became partners with the gardener. He picked the horse, and the gardener placed the bet. Paul had started out with five shillings but his winnings kept adding up. When he had made 10,000 pounds he decided to give his mother 1000 pounds a year for five years. He wanted his winnings to be a secret so a lawyer handled the money. Paul saw the envelope from the lawyer and asked his mother if she had received anything good in the mail. She said "Quite moderately nice" in a cold voice. She liked getting the money, but she wasn't happy. She wanted more.

The same day, she had a meeting with the lawyer who was handling the money. Paul's mother demanded the full sum. She received the money and spent it all. The money ran out and the voices in the house screamed, "Oh-h-h, there must be more money. Oh, now, now-w! Now-w-w- there must be more money-more than ever!"

The family, especially the mother, always wanted more money in the story "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence. The mother got more money but it was spent quickly and debt haunted the family. In the end the mother received 80,000 pounds but lost her only son..



# THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

- John Fowles

## INTRODUCTION

John Robert Fowles was born on March 31, 1926 in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England. His childhood was not a pleasant one. He attended Bedford School from ages 13 to 18. After briefly attending the University of Edinburgh, Fowles began compulsory military service in 1945 but he never came near combat. He resigned from the army in 1947.

Fowles then spent four years at Oxford, where he discovered the writings of the French existentialists. In particular he admired Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, whose writings corresponded with his own ideas about conformity and the will of the individual. He received a degree in French in 1950.

Several teaching jobs followed: a year lecturing in English literature at the University of Poitiers, France; two years teaching English at Anargyrios College on the Greek island of Spetsai; and finally, between 1954 and 1963, teaching English at St. Godric's College in London.

The Collector (1963), his first novel, was an immediate best-seller. His second novel The Magus is a traditional quest story made complex by the incorporation of dilemmas involving freedom, hazard and a variety of existential uncertainties.

The most commercially successful of Fowles' novels, The French Lieutenant's Woman, appeared in 1969. It resembles a Victorian novel in structure and detail, while pushing the traditional boundaries of narrative in a very modern manner.

In the 1970s Fowles worked on a variety of literary projects--including a series of essays on nature--and in 1973 he published a collection of poetry, Poems. He also worked on translations from the French.

Daniel Martin, a long and somewhat autobiographical novel appeared in 1977, along with a revised version of The Magus. These were followed by Mantissa (1982) and A Maggot (1985).

Fowles has written a variety of non-fiction pieces including many essays, reviews, and forwards/afterwords to other writers' novels. He has also written the text for several photographic compilations.

Since 1968, Fowles lived on the southern coast of England in the small harbor town of Lyme Regis (the setting for The French Lieutenant's Woman). His interest in the town's local history resulted in his appointment as curator of the Lyme Regis Museum in 1979, a position he filled for a decade.

'Wormholes', a book of essays, was published in May 1998. The first comprehensive biography on Fowles, John Fowles--A Life in Two Worlds, was published in 2004, and the first volume of his journals appeared the same year (followed recently by volume two).

John Fowles died on November 5, 2005 after a long illness.

## **THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN**

The French Lieutenant's Woman, The most commercially successful of Fowles' novels, was published in 1969. It resembles a Victorian novel in structure and detail, while pushing the traditional boundaries of narrative in a very modern manner. Winner of several awards and made into a well-received film starring Meryl Streep in the title role, it is the book that today's casual readers seem to most associate with Fowles.

This novel is based on the nineteenth-century romantic or gothic novel which deals with the most favorite themes of Fowles, including existentialism and sexual repression.

### **SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**

#### **CHAPTER 1**

The initial chapter of the novel opens with an excerpt from Thomas Hardy's poem "The Riddle," which seems to describe the French Lieutenant's Woman as she is first seen by both the reader and by other characters in the story. She appears as an anonymous figure on the seashore, tragic and full of mystery. She is dressed in black and is staring intently at the sea; she appears to be the typical woman driven mad with grief by a lover who has left her.

In addition to the French Lieutenant's Woman, this chapter also introduces us to Ernestina Freeman, a lively, though somewhat conventional young woman. Charles Smithson is also quite traditional, though he would like to think that he isn't. He quotes Darwin and dabbles in palaeontology. He represents the fashionable young man of his day, who rebels against what he sees as the stuffiness of his society, but who never rebels "too much." The narrator, who is the persona of Fowles himself, is present at several points in the story. He both observes and manipulates his characters, as we shall see later in the novel. In keeping with the style of his tale, the narrator observes the couple and the lone figure on the beach. This device allows the author to introduce and describe his main characters, as well as allowing us a look at the setting where much of the action will take place. The chapter closes with a brief glimpse of the French Lieutenant's Woman herself.

#### **CHAPTER 2**

To introduce the second chapter, Fowles uses a quotation which states that there were at this time in England more women than men; this provides an implied commentary on the Victorian ideal of marriage as an appropriate goal for all women.

This chapter delineates the interrelationships of the characters as they appear at the beginning of the story. The first focus is on the rather trite conversation between Charles and Ernestina. As they walk to the end of the Cobb, Charles sees the French Lieutenant's Woman, and Ernestina decides that she wants to turn back. In saying so, she gives Charles a brief account of the story of the "fallen woman," Charles, who thinks of himself as a scientist, is more tolerant and more curious than Ernestina. Charles is both disturbed and fascinated by the mystery and romance that he perceives in the woman, though he will not admit that his curiosity goes beyond what he considers to be merely scientific.

#### **CHAPTER 3**

This chapter is largely a portrait of Charles, focusing on his relationship to his era. Charles feels the ennui created by the slower pace of his century, though it should be noted that his

boredom with life derives in part from the few demands which life makes upon him because of his favored social position. Charles is dissatisfied for reasons he cannot explain and, as a result, will prove to be easily attracted by that which is not only different or unusual, but which also has a hint of rarity about it.

Charles is a rather typical romantic hero, a superficially cynical and a slightly tarnished yet inwardly idealistic Victorian gentleman. Charles' feelings about his sexuality are reminiscent of the struggles that the hero in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* undergoes when he is repulsed by his first sexual experiences. Charles' society has trained him to think that sex is evil, but then discourages him from giving it up. His father curses him when Charles desires to take Holy Orders.

#### **CHAPTER 4**

The narrator then introduces us to two characters that are examples of the sort of hypocrisy that flourished in Victorian society. Mrs. Poulteney calculates the arithmetical advantage of saving her soul by doing the not too inconvenient good deed of taking in a poor but refined gentlewoman. Mrs. Fairley, the housekeeper, is her "spy," who makes Sarah Woodruff's life miserable after she agrees to come and live with Mrs. Poulteney.

Both characters represent types that appear often in Victorian novels; they were the sort of person that the author's social criticism was frequently directed towards. Both Mrs. Poulteney and Mrs. Fairley are self-righteous and quite malicious. Although they profess to be good and moral Christians, they possess few Christian virtues.

#### **CHAPTER 5**

The quotation that prefaces Chapter 5 is from *In Memoriam*, which, according to the narrator, states that love can only be lust if there is no hope for immortality. This chapter is largely a portrait of Ernestina. The narrator comments briefly on Victorian attitudes towards sexuality and duty, and the problems resulting therefrom.

Charles and Ernestina part and Charles leaves for his hotel, while Ernestina returns to her room. There she contemplates herself in the mirror while undressing, until a stray thought of sex (about which she knows virtually nothing) occurs to her and, embarrassingly, she ceases admiring herself.

#### **CHAPTER 6**

Returning to Mrs. Poulteney and the vicar, who is encouraging her to help Sarah Woodruff, we receive a more detailed description of Sarah and her encounter with the shipwrecked French lieutenant during the time when she was a governess for the children of Mr. and Mrs. Talbot of Charmouth.

Mrs. Poulteney decides to interview the girl in order to decide if she is a fitting object for the lady's dubious charity. She interprets Sarah's silence and habitual sad expression as an indication of feelings of remorse and takes her in. Although Sarah has earlier refused such charitable offers of employment from other people, she is destitute now and must accept the position. One of her reasons for accepting was that Marlborough House possessed a good view of Lyme Bay, enabling Sarah to maintain her vigilant watch for the French Lieutenant who promised to return to her.

#### **CHAPTER 7**

Fowles gives us a closer look at the relationships between the two main social classes that appear in the novel: the well-to-do middle class and their servants. The focus here is underscored

by a quotation from one of the works of Karl Marx, in which he discusses the role of the servant class in an industrial society and its exploitation by the ruling classes.

As the chapter opens, it is the next morning and Charles is with his valet, Sam Farrow. Whereas the servants of the 1830s seemed relatively content with their lot, the servants of the late 1860s began to sense and to demand a participation in the struggle referred to today as "upward mobility." The relationship between Charles and Sam is friendly, although to the reader Charles often appears patronizing in his condescending remarks to Sam.

## **CHAPTER 8**

Charles examines the seashore for fossils after having called on Ernestina and found that she would be indisposed until afternoon. He spends so much time there, however, that he has to take a shortcut back by an inland path. Inserted in this chapter is a discussion of Victorian attitudes towards scientific inquiry, and the public's lack of understanding of the significance of Darwin's discoveries. The scientific method, as we perceive it, was not widely used until quite recently by many who called themselves scientists. Many Victorians believed that all essential knowledge had already been discovered and what remained was to catalogue and arrange this body of knowledge.

While Charles is considerably less hampered by some preconceived notions than his contemporaries, his idea of research in collecting fossils seems to be more of an excuse to avoid facing himself, who he is and who he wants to be. He plays the role of the gentleman, the dilettante naturalist, and then wonders why he is bored and dissatisfied with life.

## **CHAPTER 9**

Fowles presents an account of how Sarah manages to live with the dour old woman and is even able to attain some measure of freedom. In addition, Sarah intervenes on behalf of a maid, Millie, and wins herself the affection of Millie and the other servants. The popularity which Sarah gains among the servants brings with it the enmity of Mrs. Fairley, the housekeeper, who feels somewhat upstaged by Sarah.

Mrs. Fairley spies on Sarah and reports to Mrs. Poulteney what Sarah does and where she goes on her day off. Both women interpret Sarah's gazing at the sea as evidence that she has not fully repented of her infatuation with her seducer, the French Lieutenant. Mrs. Poulteney confronts Sarah with this matter of her unconvincing remorse. While Sarah manages to appear contrite, she says nothing, merely offering to leave. But rather than lose the companion whose services she has come to depend upon, Mrs. Poulteney agrees to a compromise. If Sarah will agree not to be seen too often on the seashore, Mrs. Poulteney will not forbid her to go there; thus, Sarah may go down to the sea at least occasionally. This appears to be a solution to the problem of Sarah's vaguely improper conduct. But at the close of the chapter Mrs. Fairley reports to her mistress that Sarah is now engaged in even more scandalous behavior: She has taken to walking on Ware Commons. We have yet to see why this is shocking, but we soon will, for Fowles clearly implies that young "ladies" do not stroll on Ware Commons, ever.

## **CHAPTER 10**

Charles decided not long ago to take a shortcut home through some wild patches of seaside landscape called "Ware Commons" at its eastern end. This uninhabited and secluded patch of land was often used by couples as a meeting place, which resulted in its infamous reputation. Upon reaching a grassy meadow overlooking the ocean, Charles sees Sarah sleeping on a ledge below him. Entranced, he stares down at her until she suddenly awakes. He is embarrassed by his intrusion, apologizes, and leaves.

But this chance encounter with the woman affects him deeply. He senses intuitively that she is innocent, no matter what she has done or not done. Without his being consciously aware of it, a part of him has forever rejected Victorian definitions of propriety and morality. We get a glimpse here of Victorian attitudes towards sex as revealed through Charles' concern about the woman whom society has made an outcast. He senses a disparity between what he is told is right and what he feels is right, a feeling that he cannot explain. But he knows that the cause of his discomfort is this strange woman.

## **CHAPTER 11**

This chapter describes for us the meeting and subsequent engagement of Charles and Ernestina. Ernestina, deciding that she likes Charles much more than her other suitors, carefully plans how she will lure him into proposing, without seeming to be overly impressed by him at all. She succeeds. He proposes, thinking himself a fool for not having thought of it sooner.

Charles' own innocence and sexual inhibition are apparent in both this chapter and the preceding one. The author shows how Victorian ideas about such matters generally served to frustrate and confuse most people. We also see in Charles' encounters with Ernestina and with Sarah his awakening awareness of his own humanity and that of the opposite sex as well.

## **CHAPTER 12**

Charles stops at "the Dairy" on his way back to Lyme and purchases a bowl of cold milk. When Charles and the dairyman see Sarah walking back to town from Ware Commons, the man calls her "the French Loot'n't's Hoer," and Charles becomes angry but says nothing. He stops at Aunt Tranter's for tea with Ernestina and tells her of his hunting for fossils on Ware Commons. Although he is tempted to tell her about his meeting with Sarah, he senses that Ernestina would be disturbed, and thus carefully omits the tale of his spying on the sleeping woman. We again see Sarah and Ernestina juxtaposed and sense that both women are unconsciously acting in a manner determined for them, at least partly, by the social and economic dictates of their culture. Fowles' quotations from Marx and Tennyson at the beginning of this chapter tend to support this interpretation.

## **CHAPTER 13**

Sarah is depressed after her encounter with Mrs. Poulteney, for Mrs. Poulteney has accused her of wanton behavior: she has been seen on Ware Commons, commonly believed to be a "lovers' lane." Sarah denies any such knowledge of the place and insists that she goes there simply to be alone, which is the truth. Sarah is exonerated, but just barely. We then see her at night, in her nightgown with her hair loose, staring out of her window. The narrator observes her, putting himself in the story again, as he will do at several points in the narrative. He tells us that although Sarah contemplates throwing herself from the window, she makes no move to do so.

## **CHAPTER 14**

This brings us to an important digression by the author. Fowles, the narrator, interrupts his story here to discuss the process of his writing, the autonomy of his characters, and his use of a pseudo-Victorian voice, in spite of the fact that his perspective derives strictly from the twentieth century. In this chapter he explicitly states his feelings about his style and methods that we have already perceived for ourselves in the narrative. It is for the reader to decide if such an explanation is necessary, but it might be noted that part of Fowles' purpose in writing this novel is to explore the genre of the novel and its possibilities, in addition to telling a story. Such commentary as Fowles inserts here serves to enable the reader to become aware of how this particular novel is part of a

long tradition of novels in general and romantic novels in particular, and that he is as concerned with the form of his work as he is with its content.

## CHAPTER 15

Charles, Ernestina, and Aunt Tranter feel that they must pay obligatory visits to various members of Lyme society. The visit with Mrs. Poulteney is a bit of a fiasco, for she and Charles disagree about the proper methods of courtship. To Mrs. Poulteney, apparently, no methods are proper. She complains of Aunt Tranter's maid's relationship with Sam Farrow. Aunt Tranter believes that Mary is above reproach, but it is Charles who enters into an argument over it with Mrs. Poulteney. In the uncomfortable silence that follows the exchange, Charles and Sarah, who is also present, pass a quick glance of understanding. Sarah's discomfort and her feelings of awkwardness about being present at a social gathering where she feels out of place arouse Charles' sympathies. In addition, her empathy and Ernestina's apparent lack of it at this time cause Charles to become somewhat irritated with his fiancée. Meanwhile, Sam and Mary, the girl whose morals were discussed so freely, share a shy but sincere conversation in Aunt Tranter's kitchen. Their honesty is compared with the artificiality of the preceding conversation in Mrs. Poulteney's drawing room.

Several actual and potential relationships present themselves here, as Fowles examines the way various Victorians of different social classes view love. Sam and Mary, who have much less interest in the kind of respectability demanded by the upper classes, nevertheless base their courtship on a solid if simpler ground of what has been considered acceptable behavior for centuries.

One cannot discuss Victorian concepts of morality or appropriate behavior without noting the position of Sarah, the outcast, the fallen woman. Because of her self-admitted status, she is forever excluded from polite society.

Later, at home, Charles unkindly teases Sam about the way that he treats the local girls, but Sam asserts his sincerity — he truly loves Mary. Observing Charles and Sam together again, we notice how differently Charles acts in various social contexts, using different voices, so to speak, depending upon whether he is talking to Sam, to Sarah, to Ernestina, or to Mrs. Poulteney. Charles later becomes vaguely aware of this duplicity, but he is at a loss to understand it fully, for it is an activity in which we all participate.

## CHAPTER 16

Some of the more domestic aspects of Charles and Ernestina's courtship are presented. Ernestina acts as the dutiful wife-to-be, and Charles is somewhat disturbed by her meekness, perhaps because at the edge of his conscious awareness is the realization that this demure person is not the real Ernestina Freeman.

Ernestina is singularly ignorant of any deficiencies in the status of women in her time. By comparing the lives of Ernestina and Sarah, one could infer that part of the reason Sarah is able to see some of the injustice women experience in Victorian society is that her education and economic position are so disparate. Ernestina, by comparison, is relatively secure in her position in society, and thus is less inclined to question it.

The chapter ends with another encounter between Charles and Sarah on the cliffs above the sea. Charles is struck by the intense sensuality that Sarah radiates. They discuss Sarah's history. Then suddenly, Sarah makes a startling confession: Her French Lieutenant is married; more important, she is not waiting for him. Charles is stunned by this revelation, for it makes the

motivation of her odd behavior more difficult to fathom than it was before. Charles does not yet realize it, but he is becoming more and more attracted to this strange young woman.

### **CHAPTER 17**

Later, Charles, Aunt Tranter, and Ernestina attend a concert. Charles begins to be irritated by Tina, while Sam falls more deeply in love with Mary. The social trivia which serves to pass as entertainment is brilliantly caricatured by the author. Sarah beginning to become an obsession to Charles, but he is realistic enough to know that his position is just as circumscribed as everyone else's. If he betrays Tina he will be ostracised, yet paradoxically he must betray her by not telling her about Sarah.

The complexity of Charles' feelings about Ernestina are juxtaposed with the simplicity of Sam's feelings for Mary. Sam and Mary's courtship is truly romantic, while Charles and Ernestina's is much more the result of a variety of social, economic, and personal influences that affect both his and her decision to marry one another.

### **CHAPTER 18**

Charles again meets Sarah by the seashore. She gives him two fossils she has found, and then asks him for his help. She wants him to hear her full story. He misunderstands and, consequently, offers other sorts of aid; for example, he suggests that she talk to the sympathetic Aunt Tranter. But it is not mere kindness that Sarah wants. She seems to want Charles to understand her and her situation, matters that he is hardly capable of perceiving at this point, for he thinks in terms of one's conduct and its impact on the individual's relationship to society. Hence, he advises her to leave Lyme and begin life anew somewhere where she isn't known. She refuses. She does not want to hide from herself, though the totality of what she does want is by no means clear. After much discussion, Charles reluctantly agrees to meet Sarah again and to allow her to tell him about herself.

It is safe to say that Sarah does not yet realize that she is attracted to Charles in ways that go beyond the mere perception that he is more sensitive than most people whom she has met. Charles is likewise attracted to Sarah, but he struggles against what he feels would be a dangerous relationship. His conventional background deludes him into thinking that he has agreed to be Sarah's confessor from the highest of motives only. It is true that he does want to help her, but he carries deep within himself the sniggering suspicion that his motives for wanting to see her aren't entirely selfless.

### **CHAPTER 19**

Charles, Ernestina, and Aunt Tranter share a meal that evening with Dr. Grogan, a hearty Irish physician. The uninhibited conversation of Dr. Grogan and Aunt Tranter disturbs Ernestina a bit, for she is the product of a later and more rigid upbringing than they were. Charles and Dr. Grogan return later to the doctor's rooms for a drink and discuss science, Darwin, and Sarah Woodruff. They attempt to bring their knowledge of science to the problem they feel she presents. The doctor believes that she suffers from a vague disorder labeled "melancholia" because she fails to take any action, such as leaving town that might relieve her suffering. He rightly perceives that Mrs. Poulteney's home is probably the worst possible place she could have chosen to live, and he agrees with Charles that the only solution to Sarah's problem is that she must leave Lyme. This conversation with the doctor enables Charles to soothe his guilty feelings about allowing Sarah to confide in him, for he can feel that he, as an objective but sympathetic listener, can help her where others have failed.

Charles and Dr. Grogan believe that they, as enlightened rationalists, can understand and solve Sarah's problems. They believe she is seriously disturbed, possibly on the verge of madness. Their reasoning is ironic, considering the purported rigorousness of the moral standards of the time. They believe that Sarah's irrationality is related to her feelings of alienation from normal society because she was once seduced. They discuss how similar things have happened to many other women, yet these women have gone on to marry and live normal lives.

## **CHAPTER 20**

We next encounter Sarah and Millie. Following her illness, Millie has taken a room next to Sarah's. The young maid is afraid of the dark and often sleeps with Sarah for comfort; there, the arms of the older girl give her the sole sense of security she has known in her short, difficult life. The meeting between Sarah and Millie illustrates the contrast between the almost wordless rapport of the girls and the highly abstract and rationalized behavior of the two men. The narrator inserts modern explanations of Darwinism, social reform, and lesbianism, all of which, as Fowles intends, fail to explain the events as the reader perceives them. Dr. Grogan and Charles do not understand Sarah, nor would a modern psychologist be accurately explaining Sarah's relationship to Millie by referring to it as lesbianism. The point of these digressions by Fowles is that there is no one to answer to Sarah's problems.

## **CHAPTER 21**

Charles and Sarah meet again as they agreed to do. Sarah reveals the story of herself and the French Lieutenant. His ship was wrecked not far from shore, and all but two of the crew were drowned. Captain Talbot brought the survivors ashore, and Lieutenant Varguennes, whose leg was seriously injured, was nursed in the captain's home. Sarah, who was the governess for the Talbot children, helped to nurse him. However, as he recovered he began to take an interest in Sarah, and he teased and flirted with her. Sarah's knowledge of French was limited, and Varguennes spoke little English. As a result, their playful banter had an air of unreality for Sarah, and she was easily beguiled by the charming Lieutenant. After his recovery was complete, the Lieutenant traveled to a neighboring town to board a ship for home. He told Sarah to meet him there so they could say their farewells. Sarah states that she did follow him, but found him staying at a disreputable hotel. At that point she realized how shallow he really was, and she also realized the true nature of his affection for her. But then, in an odd combination of defiance and despair, she gave herself to him, knowing that she would never see him again, and knowing that she did not want to see him, ever.

The willfulness of Sarah's act is inexplicable to Charles. Her explanation, however, is simple. She tells Charles that she did not give herself to Varguennes as an act of love, or even of sensuality. Her decision was made on the basis of what we might today call a political act of defiance. She would be changed; society would be forced to acknowledge her existence. Yet this explanation only further mystifies Charles. Had Sarah been seduced or raped, or had she even thought herself to be in love, Charles would have understood, but the abstract determination, the sense of committing herself to a chosen destiny that lies beyond her act, is unfathomable to him. The mystery surrounding her is increased by the apparent unreason of her choice of a lover. Charles is both shocked and stimulated by her confession. She has only added to her aura of romance and mystery. For Charles, she is even more of an idealized dark romantic figure, a woman who is attractive and compelling because she is such an enigma.

Sarah continues her confession, attempting to explain how little the fact that Varguennes was married really mattered to her. She discovered that he was married about a month after he left,



and even by then it did not matter. Already she was playing the role of martyr and pariah, for she had made no secret of her rendezvous with the Lieutenant.

Charles points out that it is absurd for her to condemn herself so thoroughly. He uses Dr. Grogan's argument that many women have suffered worse and, at least, appear to live normal lives in spite of their experiences. Sarah counters his argument, stating that such women perceive themselves as outcasts, but lack the courage to admit that they have acted contrary to the rules of society. They become secret pariahs, while Sarah is a visible one. The two then talk further, and Charles becomes uncomfortably aware of his attraction for her. But he tells himself that perhaps he has been able to convince her to save herself.

Suddenly, they hear a noise and, looking around, they see Sam and Mary. Charles is afraid of being caught with Sarah, but the other young people do not see them. Sam and Mary move away, and Charles and Sarah separate, presumably for the last time. Charles goes back to town, rather guiltily congratulating himself on his narrow escape; he believes that his sincere desire to help Sarah has succeeded. The excuse that his interest in her is purely charitable enables him to justify to himself his otherwise suspiciously clandestine meetings with Sarah.

## **CHAPTER 22**

Charles is still savoring his relief at escaping from the snare of Sarah's attractiveness as he returns to town and finds a telegram waiting for him at his hotel. His uncle at Winsyatt asks that he make an immediate visit to discuss some important matters. Charles is overjoyed for two reasons: First, the message provides a perfect excuse to leave Lyme for awhile, thus saving him from having to explain his activities, should he be asked to do so. Second, he believes that the subject of the discussion will be concerned with his upcoming marriage, and that his uncle wishes to know which of the two houses the young couple will settle in once they are wed.

## **CHAPTER 23**

The sumptuous estate in which Charles' uncle lives is given a lengthy description: We read about the lands, the people, and of Charles' fond memories of them. He is especially charmed at again seeing Mrs. Hawkins, the laundry maid, for she was a substitute mother for the motherless boy. The elaborate treatment given this description of the estate enables the author to comment on the lot of the people who worked on such estates as compared to that of the downtrodden poor of London and other industrial cities. The life of these country people was considerably more pleasant than that of their urban counterparts. Although they were poor, they worked in pleasant surroundings and were often treated quite well by the gentry.

However, our admiration for the country life is cut short when we discover, along with Charles, the reason he has been asked to visit. Instead of seeing his uncle, Charles is greeted by an empty house that has been mysteriously redecorated. Even the bustard, a grouse-like bird which Charles had shot long ago, and which his uncle had cherished and had had stuffed, was missing.

## **CHAPTER 24**

The scene now focuses upon Charles' return to Aunt Tranter's house, and we learn what passed between him and his uncle. As the reader might have guessed, Charles' uncle has decided to marry a young widow, Mrs. Tomkins. Ernestina is enraged on Charles' behalf, or so she says, but Charles is a bit embarrassed by the vehemence of her protests at the unfairness of his uncle's decision. Changing the subject, Charles asks what news has occurred in Lyme, and he is told that Mrs. Poulteney has dismissed Sarah Woodruff, and that she has since disappeared. Charles is stunned. He leaves abruptly, wondering how much of his association with Sarah is known and

whether she was dismissed because she was seen with him on Ware Commons. He goes immediately to the White Lion, the inn where Sarah's things were sent.

### **CHAPTER 25**

The White Lion, coincidentally, is also where Charles is staying. Back in his rooms there, his extreme agitation becomes evident. He finds two notes that Sarah has left for him: a sealed one written in English, urgently requesting that he see her one more time, and an unsealed note in French, telling Charles where he can find her. Charles attempts to discover who sent the notes, which arouses Sam's suspicion. He hastily orders Sam to attend to dinner, but then leaves in a hurry without eating anything.

### **CHAPTER 26**

Chapter 26 continues to focus on the effects of Charles' sudden change of fortune. While Sam sits in Charles' sitting room, he contemplates how he can manipulate his employer to his own advantage, for Sam suspects that Charles is more deeply involved with the strange woman, Sarah Woodruff, than he would care to have anyone discover. Sam's ultimate loyalty, however, is to himself and his future wife, Mary. Now that Charles cannot hope with any confidence to receive the inheritance which his uncle had promised him, Sam Farrow must plan his future carefully.

At this point, Fowles provides us with Sam's memories of his and Charles' visit to Winsyatt and Charles' discovery that the heir to his uncle's fortune will be the child of Mrs. Tomkins.

### **CHAPTER 27**

As Charles' financial status has changed, so do his feelings about his relationships with the people around him. He is still cautious regarding his involvement with Sarah, but he is less apt to deny that he is involved with her, at least to himself. We also can see that the attitudes of others towards Charles are also altered.

Disturbed about Sarah, and doubtful about his commitment to Ernestina, Charles goes to see his friend Doctor Grogan again. The doctor suggests that Charles leave Lyme for awhile, and he will attempt to help Sarah if he can. He views Charles' infatuation with the woman as an aberration that could threaten the young man's marriage to Ernestina. He advises Charles to confess to his fiancée that he has seen Sarah, and says further that Sarah's actions appear to be those of a woman who might be mad, and the doctor is convinced that she might have to be incarcerated in an insane asylum. This shocks Charles, for he does not believe that Sarah is motivated by madness, though he does find her behavior strange.

In an effort to show Charles the true nature of Sarah Woodruff, the doctor gives Charles a book that describes the court trial of another French lieutenant: Lieutenant Emile de La Roncière, who in 1835 was apparently framed by a woman not unlike Sarah, in the doctor's opinion. On very slight evidence, the man was convicted of sexually assaulting the woman and served a prison sentence.

This chapter illustrates still another interpretation of Sarah's actions—that is, Dr. Grogan sees in her puzzling behavior the symptoms of mental illness, as defined by the psychological knowledge of the era. The reader can see here the assumptions held by many people of this time about the nature of the human psyche. A woman who did not fit the established criteria of a contented female member of society — passive, modest, weak, and unsensual — was likely to be labeled insane. There was a close connection between a woman's sexual behavior, or lack of it, and her role in society. It was, in short, believed by many people at this time that a proper woman didn't enjoy sex; if she did, there was something wrong with her.

## CHAPTER 28

Here, Fowles inserts a recounting of Lieutenant de La Roncière, based on the evidence of Marie de Morell, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Roncière's commanding officer. Marie, it seems, provided false evidence in the form of "poison-pen threats" allegedly written by Roncière. Although numerous contemporary observers of the trial protested the verdict, Roncière was found guilty and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Later discussions of the case note the personality disturbances of young Marie, and present evidence indicates that Roncière was innocent of her accusations.

Dr. Grogan gives this information to Charles, hoping he will find some similarities between the story of this woman and her French lieutenant, and the situation Sarah appears to find herself in. The doctor quite honestly believes that Sarah is emotionally unbalanced and suffers from the same melancholia that was thought to plague many young women. His diagnosis indicates an interesting example of the Victorian attitude towards women. While women were often idealized as being pure, loving, kind, and nurturing, they were also seen as being weak, childlike, and subject to all manner of illnesses. Often a woman's perfectly normal expressions of strong will or emotion were taken to indicate that she was unbalanced or even insane.

Charles finishes reading the account, but remains unconvinced. His memory of Sarah does not resemble the portrait which he has just examined of Marie de Morell. He changes his clothes and decides that he will go to see Sarah himself. He is apprehensive about Grogan's judgment of Sarah and does not wish to see her incarcerated. He also cannot resist the temptation to see her again. He is singularly unaware of his true motives, knowing little about what he really desires. What is interesting, as we shall see, is that Sarah does not fathom her own motives, in spite of the apparent singleness of her vision.

## CHAPTER 29

Thus, early in the morning, Charles goes to the derelict cottage used by the man from the dairy for storing hay, the building that Sarah described in her note. The place appears deserted, but Charles looks over a stall, half-fearing to find her dead and sees her, sleeping.

## CHAPTER 30

This is a flashback to Sarah's earlier confrontation with Mrs. Poulteney, which led to her dismissal and sudden disappearance. Mrs. Poulteney, as usual, is self-righteous and vindictive. She gives Sarah an envelope and tells her to leave. Sarah asks to know why she is being dismissed, although she is aware that Mrs. Fairly saw her on Ware Commons, possibly with Charles although it is unlikely that he was seen. Mrs. Poulteney calls Sarah a "public scandal," an accusation about which Sarah says absolutely nothing except that she will leave. She even refuses her wages, suggesting that Mrs. Poulteney take the money to buy an instrument of torture to use on those who are unfortunate enough to come into association with her. This retort upsets Mrs. Poulteney so thoroughly that she dramatically falls into a faint. Sarah then goes to her room and cries herself to sleep. She decides that she will leave the next morning.

## CHAPTER 31

Fowles returns his narrative to Charles. Looking over the partition, our hero sees Sarah asleep. His desire to protect her overwhelms him and, as he talks to her, he tries to convince her to leave Lyme. Then the real reason that he has sought her out yet one more time overtakes him, and they embrace. This scene occurs several times in the book; Charles, at one point, agrees to meet

Sarah one more time, only to succumb to feelings of passionate physical attraction rather than the altruistic "duty" he thinks he is feeling.

### **CHAPTER 32**

Back at Aunt Tranter's house, Ernestina is tense, with good cause; she is disturbed about her minor argument with Charles, but has vowed in her diary to be more loving and dutiful, a note that strikes falsely with her normally wry attitude. Fowles explains that she is a victim of her environment and her upbringing. In spite of a valuable sense of irony, she is still a proper young lady and she tries to conform. We also discover that Sam has decided to leave Charles, which upsets Mary considerably. But we should realize by now that Sam is exploitative in his relationship with Charles and that he feels justified in getting what he can from him.

### **CHAPTER 33 & 34**

Returning to the hay-shed where Charles and Sarah are discovered by Sam and Mary, we witness Charles and Sam confronting one another. Sam now knows for certain, though he had suspected before, that Charles is involved with Sarah. Sam's desire that Charles marry Ernestina is threatened by this relationship, but he hopes at this point that his tacit agreement with Charles to be silent about Sarah will place him in a position to influence Charles. Sam realizes that he may have to blackmail Charles to prod him to marry Ernestina, but as of yet, he has made no definite plans. Charles, by contrast, naively assumes that Sam is absolutely loyal. There is much irony in the two men's perception of each other.

Sam and Mary leave, and Charles warns Sarah that Dr. Grogan has mentioned committing her to any asylum. Both are appalled at this idea, and Sarah is convinced she must leave. She plans to go to Exeter. Later, Charles talks to Ernestina and tries to explain that he must leave for a time. She is upset, but not surprised, for she has suspected that he has been having a relationship with Sarah. The exchange is stiff and false, and Charles also meets Mary, a witness of the morning's events, but she, too, will say nothing, so long as her beloved Sam tells her not to.

Just at the time that Charles and Ernestina's relationship becomes more and more of a charade, and Charles hides his true feelings and Ernestina hides her fears and suspicions, Sam and Mary grow even more strongly devoted to each other. Sam will stop at nothing to gain some measure of security for himself and his future wife, and he is a prototype of the ambitious and struggling young businessman who will dominate much of the twentieth century. There are more similarities between Sam and Ernestina's father, Mr. Freeman, than the latter would guess, or care to admit if he did consider them.

### **CHAPTER 35**

This chapter consists of a long digression discussing the role of women in relation to Victorian ideas of sexuality. From this general discussion we return to the courtship of Sam and Mary, one that follows the customs of their period and their class.

One might note that most of the ideas about women's sexuality or lack of it were generated by and for the middle classes. The great number of rural and working classes paid a minimum amount of attention to such repressive notions and lived and married much as they always did. Many of the Victorian conceptions of sexuality dealt with their ideals of the romantic marriage, an ideal which often contradicted the economic realities of marriage and courtship.

Women were treated as "special creatures," things to be admired and cherished. But this admiration carried with it a view that women were helpless and childlike, which, for the majority, resulted in a narrow and restricted life. They may have been cherished and pampered, but women

of the middle classes were often just plain bored. Even continuous childbearing didn't serve to keep them occupied, since their servants contributed most of the work involved in caring for children. For the poor, the ideals of Victoria made little change in their lives; they worked long and hard and received no emotional or financial remuneration.

### CHAPTER 36

After Sarah goes to Exeter, she takes up residence at Endicott's Family Hotel, a rather disreputable place in the poorer section of town. With a portion of the money which Charles has given her to live on, she buys a few things—a dark green merino shawl and a Toby jug. She is excited that she is actually purchasing and owning something. Finally she has done what has always been denied her. We see the contrast of her natural dignity and simplicity against the utter poverty of her surroundings.

One might compare the apparent serenity of Sarah's quiet life at the hotel with the quotation from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* in which he alludes to the passion underlying many of Sarah's seemingly innocent acts. This suggests that there is more going on in Sarah's mind at this moment than is apparent in this chapter.

Sarah, unlike Ernestina, does not have to be a lady, which in Victorian terms, meant denying that she had a body, or was capable of feeling passion or desire. Women were, as we have noted, believed to be delicate creatures: If they thought too much or studied too hard or exerted themselves physically, they became ill. Many people even believed that a lady was not capable of enjoying sexual intercourse with her husband. However, if a woman was poor, she must have been much healthier, from society's point of view, for the poor (men, women, and children) worked long hours doing difficult jobs in factories and mines, and only the hardy survived.

The feminist movement was beginning in England at this time, along with other reform movements. Although women were barely beginning to question their circumscribed lives, some slow progress was being made towards a measure of social and economic freedom.

### CHAPTER 37

Returning to Charles' problems, we listen as he meets with Mr. Freeman to inform him of his changed prospects. While the latter is somewhat surprised at what he hears, this change does not alter Charles' marrying Ernestina, in Mr. Freeman's opinion. In addition, the two discuss a topic that they previously were reluctant to discuss — that is, the possibility of Charles' future employment in Mr. Freeman's company. Charles, Mr. Freeman says, would be an executive of course, and we should be aware that in this period there was a sharp distinction drawn between those who worked in trade for a living, even when they owned the company, and those who inherited their wealth.

The interview is eventually concluded, evidently to the satisfaction of both parties, and Charles is led in to meet Mrs. Freeman. We see his discomfort with these people, which stems partly from his background of old wealth and from his doubts, still largely unadmitted, about his marriage to Ernestina. Charles later admits that he hoped Mr. Freeman would cancel the wedding when he told the gentleman of the probable loss of both his inheritance and his title. He is, of course, feeling disappointed and trapped. Mr. Freeman still approves of the marriage. Charles also feels guilty because he should feel grateful for Mr. Freeman's generous offers of employment and future help for the couple, but he does not.

### CHAPTER 38

Charles leaves the Freeman residence in London. The foggy evening outside provides an apt metaphor for his depressed mood. He does not know why he attempted to impress upon his future

father-in-law the gravity of his reduced circumstances, but it is apparent to the reader that Charles vaguely hoped that Ernestina's parents would not allow her to marry him.

For this reason, he is looking to external events to help him resolve the conflict between his attraction to Sarah and his duty to Ernestina. He walks through London and, while doing so, he inadvertently passes by Mr. Freeman's large shop. The thought of actually working there gives him a feeling of nausea. He sincerely believes that his repugnance is based on his conviction as a scholar and as a scientist that life should mean more than merely acquiring money. But actually some of his animosity towards working in trade is based on his upbringing as a member of the upper classes; he can't help but feel that working is somehow beneath him and, he fears that he will lose his self-respect if he eventually accepts Mr. Freeman's values. He is in despair about his fate. He hails a cab in order to seek refuge at an institution that persists even today: his club.

### **CHAPTER 39**

The tone of this chapter indicates that although Charles' marriage to Ernestina is still a definite prospect, he is dismayed rather than reassured by this. There is a great deal of irony in Fowles' handling of Charles' attitudes towards his dilemma. He is influenced and inhibited by what is considered proper behavior for a Victorian gentleman, just as his fiancée is governed by what is considered proper for a lady.

### **CHAPTER 40**

Charles goes to his club and he meets two fellow members whom he has known from his college days. These two aristocrats are stereotypes of Victorian decadent young rakes. Together they drink milk punch, followed by champagne, and soon persuade the now inebriated Charles to accompany them in pursuit of an evening's pleasure. The three men go to a brothel where they witness an exotic dance, after which the dancers join them. Charles, however, revolted by these surroundings and activities, leaves. As he rides off alone, he finds himself propositioning a young woman who reminds him of Sarah.

In this chapter, Charles' behavior reflects his confused and anguished state of mind. We might also note, however, his discomfort with what was, to many people of this time (and the present), an acceptable pastime. He vaguely senses that not all the women in the brothel enjoy their work and that they may be victims of exploitation. Fowles perhaps perceives this paradox of the role of the prostitute in Victorian society; this is suggested by the quotation he chooses to open the chapter with, taken from a letter supposedly written by a prostitute, protesting the way society shuns and scorns her and yet seeks her services. Although Sarah is not a prostitute, this letter shows how similar the problems of these professional fallen women are to Sarah's in a society that both scorns and exploits their supposed immorality.

### **CHAPTER 41**

Charles and the girl go to her rooms, and he is touched by what he feels is her innocence in spite of her profession, particularly by the solicitude she shows towards her sleeping child in the next room. However whatever his intentions are, Charles never succeeds in completing what he begins. He asks her name and when she casually replies that her name is Sarah, the shock and his own drunken state combine to make him physically ill. But Charles' nausea is more than physical. He believes that he is forever deprived of that mystery in his life that would both save him and free him, namely Sarah Woodruff. Whether or not the author really intends Sarah to be Charles' savior, however, remains to be seen.

## CHAPTER 42

The next morning Charles is horribly hung over, but he recalls all too clearly the events of the night before and remembers how the girl Sarah calmly held his head while he was sick, and then went and got a cab for him. While she was out, Charles comforted her baby, who had started crying. When she returned he left a rather large amount of money for her. As he got into the cab, he saw her run after him and thank him for the money.

Although Charles feels wretched, he begins to take what appears to be a more realistic look at his present situation. He feels that his rakish evening was perhaps simply a gesture of farewell to the single life and that he will now settle down to marriage with Ernestina and a job with her father's company. Sam informs him that he plans to ask Mary to marry him, hoping that Charles will advance the young couple 250 pounds towards setting up their own haberdashery. Sam realizes that his future now may depend on the dowry that Ernestina will bring, since Charles no longer can expect an inheritance from his uncle. Thus Sam is especially interested in what Charles does, and feels increasingly threatened by the possibility that Charles won't marry Ernestina.

## CHAPTER 43

Sarah has left a note at Charles' hotel, containing only the address of her hotel in Exeter. He resolves to ignore the implied invitation and prepares to return to Lyme. He has decided to go ahead with his plans to marry Ernestina and feels somewhat reconciled to his fate. He and Sam take a carriage back the way they came. They stop in Exeter, where Charles knows that Sarah Woodruff is staying, but Charles says that they will continue their journey rather than stop for the night. This is the beginning of the section of the novel in which Fowles presents us with several possible endings for Charles, Ernestina, and Sarah. Here, we are shown Charles and the possible outcome of the story if his embryonic romance with Sarah were to be terminated at this point.

## CHAPTER 44

Charles and Sam arrive in Lyme, and Charles goes to see Ernestina. Their banter is concluded with his retelling of a trivialized version of his encounter with Sarah. Fowles then enters to tell us briefly how Charles and Ernestina, Sam and Mary, and other characters we have met, lived their lives, begat families, and died, if not with great joy, certainly without great sadness. He also, in the course of this digression, discusses the fate of Mrs. Poulteney when she finally goes to meet her celestial reward. He creates a fantasy about the soul of Mrs. Poulteney, who has recently died, and how it fares in heaven. She arrives at the pearly gates and expects to be treated with the deference she received when she was alive. However, much to her surprise and the gratification of the reader, she is summarily turned away. Thus, the whimsical and playful tone of the last half of the chapter prepares us for the revelation that the first half, the reunion of Charles and Ernestina, is also merely an imaginative aside, a speculation on what might have happened if Charles had returned to Lyme when he was supposed to, which he didn't.

At last, we realize the "truth" about the events of the novel: At Exeter, Charles decided to stop for the night, not consciously realizing it, but intending all the same to visit Sarah. He still believes that his visit is nothing more than an attempt to end the affair in a fashionably Victorian way.

## CHAPTER 45

Charles finds Sarah's hotel and goes to her room, where she is resting an injured foot. They speak of minor things and Charles is overcome by the realization that he came, not to say goodbye,

but simply because he felt compelled to see her again. The embrace and, finally acknowledging their passion, he carries her to bed.

Fowles notes at the end of the chapter that this passionate scene occurred in only ninety seconds. The implication is that Fowles takes a rather ironic attitude towards the concept of the romantic novel, since all that "love" seems to amount to is a few words and a brief coupling. Even the most passionate moments, he seems to say, are only a small portion of existence. This ironic tone will occur again, especially in scenes that are supposedly typical of romantic novels.

#### **CHAPTER 46**

The two lovers lie in each other's arms. We see this moment from Charles' point of view. His conduct horrifies him, as it can only horrify a Victorian gentleman who believes that no well-bred woman enjoys or desires physical lovemaking. Furthermore, we see an interesting contrast in this chapter when he idealizes Sarah. She is perfect, an angel, and he can think of no other course of action than to marry her. But she gently tells him that she is unworthy of him, though she never explains why. It is enough, she insists, that she knows he loves her, and that under other circumstances they might have married. He doesn't argue any more, but says that he will think about what to do for a few days.

#### **CHAPTER 47**

As he gets up and proceeds to get dressed in the next room, he discovers blood on himself. At first he thinks he has injured himself, but then realizes that she was a virgin. He suddenly understands fully that everything she said and did was based on a lie. She had never given herself to Varguennes. It is here that we see the other side of Charles' concept of her. Now, instead of seeing her as an angel, Charles can only believe that she is a temptress, a demon, and a wicked woman who for some unknown reason, perhaps blackmail, wanted to seduce him. Yet he is still perplexed by what she has done, and he wants to know why. Sadly, she says she does not know. She does love him, but insists that they cannot marry. Sarah asks him to leave, addressing him as Mr. Smithson. He is hurt by her return to formality. She has told him that he has given her something to live for, the knowledge that he might have loved her. But he cannot comprehend what little explanation she is able to give. She orders him to leave and finally he does.

The two images that Charles has of Sarah are illustrated here. We cannot conceive of her except in terms of some romantic ideal. She is a woman of mystery, an angel, and finally a woman of mystery again, but this time one who, to him, has sinister overtones.

The impression that the reader gets from this chapter is that Sarah is none of the women Charles thinks she is; she is simply a human being. This does not fully explain why she acted the way she did in her relationship with Charles, but although we do not know the secrets of her motives, we know that Charles' conclusions are wrong. It is worthwhile to remember that Sarah, for reasons of her own, was playing the role of the fallen woman long before Charles arrived in Lyme. Yet something apparently happened to her when she met Charles, just as he was affected when he met her. They were attracted to each other and, without really understanding why, they fell in love. Had these events occurred under other circumstances their relationship might have evolved along other lines. But that is another story.

#### **CHAPTER 48**

Charles, distraught by his encounter with Sarah, confronts himself. He leaves Endicott's Family Hotel, walking rapidly down a street in a poorer section of Exeter. He passes a church and is drawn to it. As he enters, the curate tells Charles that it is closing time. Charles asks if he might



stop and pray a moment. The curate, seeing that Charles is a gentleman, gives him the keys to the church and asks him to lock it when he leaves. Charles kneels and mumbles a prayer to himself, but the image of Sarah keeps rising before him. In despair he weeps, not only over what he has done, or lost with Sarah, but also over the fact that there is no comfort or forgiveness to be found in religion as he understands it.

The Victorians were still adhering to the old, structured ways of believing in God, but were continually torn by changes in their society that threatened that structure. They wanted to believe, but feared that they did not. Faced with this dilemma, common to many of his time, Charles makes an intuitive leap. He feels that he understands the message of Christ conveyed by the crucifix in the church in a new way. It is not the dying figure on the cross that is significant, but rather the example of the living Christ who wanted people to live rightly, to be kind, and to be good that was the true meaning of religion. His inspiration is followed by a dialogue with himself in which he comes to terms with his actions. Although for the first time he sees what his true feelings for Sarah are, he has come to no decision regarding what to do about her or about Ernestina. All he knows is that he wishes to do the right thing, which at this point appears to be honestly facing how he really feels. Although he has made no decision as of yet, he intuitively feels that he cannot marry Ernestina if he does not really love her. He has not yet expressed this thought except in the vaguest way, but it supports his actions and his thoughts regarding his fiancée.

#### **CHAPTER 49**

Charles returns the key to the curate after leaving the church, concluding as he does so, that he is finished with institutionalized religion. However, this does not undermine the truth of his feelings that he experienced when he was in the church, but rather emphasizes the gap between inner perception and outward, socially acceptable forms that a few people of his time were beginning to perceive.

Fowles develops this duality further, discussing the difficulty that Victorians had in reconciling the disparate impulses of the body and soul. Charles illustrates this duality in his belief that he cannot freely express his love for Sarah until he has freed himself of his obligation to Ernestina. Unlike others of his time, Charles does not ignore his essential feelings about Sarah, and his lack of a similar feeling for Ernestina. Though he may attempted to do so too late he tries to follow an inner guide rather than allow the conventions of proper society to govern his acts. He chooses a perilous course of action.

After returning to the hotel, Charles washes out his bloodstained garments and then writes Sarah a long, somewhat stilted but nevertheless sincere, letter. He gives the letter to Sam to deliver. He plans to go to Lyme and break his engagement with Ernestina, and then return to Exeter for Sarah.

#### **CHAPTER 50**

Upon returning to Lyme, Charles goes to Ernestina and tries to tell her that he is unworthy of her. He tells her that he proposed to her with something less than honorable intentions and that her position as the only child of a wealthy merchant influenced him. She is shocked, but instinctively refuses to accept this statement. Ernestina wavers between strength and weakness in her reaction to the news. Her outrage is more than a personal reaction, for marriage is an important institution in itself, as far as women are concerned, and Ernestina feels threatened by this change in her prospects. The breaking of an engagement is a more profound blow to such a woman than it would be to her modern counterpart, as evidenced by her threat of legal action against Charles to protect her reputation. But at last she weakens and begs Charles to remain. She tells him that she

realizes he thinks that she is immature, but she knows that she will change. She says that he feels he is unworthy because he lacks confidence in himself and she wants to devote herself to helping him.

Charles is deeply touched by what she has said, but as a result he finds himself forced to admit the real cause of the broken engagement. He finally admits that he is in love with another, though he does not reveal her name. Angry at first, Ernestina gives way to despair and apparently faints. Although her pain is real, Charles notices that the fainting spell is a bit too perfect to be real and is not as shocked by it as one might imagine. It is simply a conventional gesture, a way in which a young lady could express outrage and shock, since screaming, tearing one's hair, or attacking someone else are not acceptable gestures. Charles summons the maid to attend her while he goes to fetch Dr. Grogan.

## **CHAPTER 51**

Charles returns to his rooms at the hotel after telling Dr. Grogan what has occurred. The doctor is nearly as shocked as was Ernestina, for an action such as this was less common and less accepted than it was to become later on. Charles feels like a traitor, but resigns himself to the consequences of his act. Sam comes to Charles shortly and asks him if it is true that he has terminated his engagement to Ernestina, and Charles confirms that it is. Sam is more disturbed about his own future than that of his fiancée's mistress, and questions Charles about his own prospects. In his distraught state, Charles is unable to give Sam a coherent or concrete answer to his questions, which Sam interprets as indifference. Frustrated and angry, Sam resigns.

Here Fowles hints that Sam's rebellious attitude towards Charles isn't the only misbehavior Sam is guilty of. As we shall see later, Sam has been looking out for his own interests ever since he knew that Charles would probably not inherit much money from his uncle.

Caught up in the emotion created by the events, Charles is hardly less amazed and shocked by what is happening than are the others. But he consoles himself that he will return to Sarah as soon as he can. In the meantime, he drafts a letter to Ernestina's father, and while he is writing, the doctor returns.

## **CHAPTER 52**

While Charles and Sam are arguing at the hotel, Aunt Tranter returns home to find Dr. Grogan there and the house in an uproar. She confers with Dr. Grogan, who has given Ernestina something to make her sleep. Then Mary tearfully explains to her what has happened, not failing to include that Sam has left Charles' employ because, Mary says, of his former master's treatment of Ernestina. Thus part of Mary's unhappiness is based on her fears for herself and Sam. Aunt Tranter promises her that the two of them will be taken care of, and Mary joyfully runs to Sam in the back of the house, where he has been waiting for her since his return from talking with Charles.

## **CHAPTER 53**

The scene then shifts back to Charles and Dr. Grogan. The doctor has just returned from taking care of Ernestina. He sharply lectures Charles on the vileness of his act, but also offers a bit of consolation as a friend. He states that Charles must try to become a better person in order to mitigate some of the damage he has just done. If he does not, then the harm already done will only be made worse, for it will have served no purpose. Leaving Charles with this odd bit of advice, he wishes him good luck, and warns him to be out of town within the hour.

## **CHAPTER 54**

Charles returns to Exeter, only to find that Sarah has disappeared without leaving an address where she might be found. After checking at her hotel, Charles discovers that Sam never delivered the letter to Sarah. He is both angry and helpless since there is nothing he can do about it now. He vows to find Sarah and boards a train, intending to go to London and locate her. He hopes to have a compartment to himself; however, at the last moment, a bearded stranger also boards the train. Both men exchange disapproving glances, and the journey begins. Though Charles is unaware of the fact, the reader is informed that this stranger is the persona of John Fowles. And in this chapter the author attempts to explain how he will conclude the novel.

### **CHAPTER 55**

In this fanciful encounter with one of his characters, Fowles illustrates some of the problems of writing a novel. He stares at Charles, who has fallen asleep, and like some minor deity, wonders what to do with him. At this point neither Charles nor Fowles know where Sarah is, so neither is of any help. Fowles digresses and explains the art of novel writing as pitting the characters and their desires against one another, letting them fight it out and describing the fight. But while the fight is in progress, the novelist has already decided who will win in advance. He is a good novelist if his audience does not guess the victor before he chooses to tell them.

But Fowles has decided to challenge this convention; he has decided to let these characters, Charles and Sarah, decide the fight for themselves, or so he says. In order to accomplish this, he will provide two endings, one in which Charles wins and one in which Sarah does. The reader might note here that both the charm and difficulty of the novel lie in the fact that it has two endings, for it is difficult not to perceive one as true and the other as false. If we follow Fowles' hint in this chapter, they both are simply possible endings for a novel we have just observed unfold. However, we might also notice that the first conclusion is the one we might perhaps expect to find in such a novel, while the second has far less of that conclusiveness which Fowles indicates is desirable in such a novel. He is tempted, he says, to end it right here, with Charles riding into London on the train, but the conventions of the novel do not allow for such an inconclusive ending.

### **CHAPTER 56**

Charles engages detectives to look for Sarah, but they fail. In the meantime, he receives a letter from Mr. Freeman, delivered by his solicitor, requesting that he attend a meeting with Freeman and his solicitors if he wishes to avoid facing an action in a suit for a breach of the engagement contract. Charles consults with his solicitor and friend, a Mr. Montague, who informs him that this letter, while unpleasant, is a stroke of luck. Montague tells Charles that he will probably have to admit publicly to having been dishonorable in his relations with the Freemans, but that such an admission is far better than having to defend him in a lawsuit.

At the humiliating meeting which Charles and Montague attend, Charles consents to sign a document in which he fully admits his guilt in his breach of contract for marriage to Ernestina. The terms of the admission, it might be noted, emphasize that marriage had its economic, as well as its social aspects, and hence could well be considered to be a sort of contract. After this, Charles continues to search for Sarah in London but ultimately gives up. Upon Montague's advice, he decides to travel abroad for awhile.

### **CHAPTER 57**

Twenty months pass, and we discover that Mary and Sam are living in London and that Mary is expecting her second child. Currently she is strolling in a park and enjoying the early spring weather. However, she is soon surprised by the sight of Sarah Woodruff alighting from a

carriage not far from her. She tells Sam of the surprising sight, and he is rather more disturbed by the news than one would think likely. His distress is at least partly due to his sense of guilt over the role he played in destroying the relationship that existed between Sarah and his former master, Charles, even though he still disapproves of Charles' actions.

The rest of this chapter describes the young couple's life in London and their rise from the servant class. Sam is now a successful employee at Mr. Freeman's haberdashery and is gaining the experience which he hopes someday to use in establishing his own business. Although Sam has accepted his good fortune with equanimity, Mary is still amazed by the fact that she is married to a man who is so successful that she can even afford to hire a young girl to be their maid, a job she herself had only a short time before.

## **CHAPTER 58**

Charles travels throughout Europe and the Mediterranean countries, but he is affected little by his experiences. He keeps a journal of the daily events of his travels, but expresses his actual feelings only in poetry which he shows to no one. Fowles quotes the entirety of Matthew Arnold's poem "To Marguerite" as expressing some of Charles' feelings about his isolation and loneliness better than Charles himself could.

However, Charles eventually begins to feel that perhaps the Sarah whom he longs for never really existed except as an ideal that perhaps the real woman did not match the image he created and has carried with him all these months. Although he does not despair of ever finding her again, somehow the need to find her becomes less urgent.

After meeting a charming pair of Americans, an elderly man and his nephew, Charles decides to visit America. His view of himself as a rebel and an outcast contribute to his desire to visit America, a country so unlike and yet so like his home. In this chapter, Fowles raises the question of why Charles does not completely give in to despair over his loss and disgrace and perhaps commit suicide. But he answers his own question with the suggestion that Charles has found some comfort in the knowledge that he is an outcast and thus different from others of his kind. Then, too, when he encounters young couples on his travels, he cannot say that he feels envy for them, but only relief that he did not give in to convention and consummate a matter that was false. This is small comfort, in the face of his loss, but apparently it sustains him for the time.

## **CHAPTER 59**

In this chapter Fowles describes Charles' travels in America. We get a very brief glimpse of the United States of this period as compared to England. Here, while the influence of England is strong, it is tempered by the different problems faced by the struggling country that was still recovering from the devastation of the Civil War. Charles is impressed by the vitality of the country and the openness of its people, but he swiftly books the first passage to Europe when Montague sends a cable that Sarah Woodruff has been located in London. After some twenty months of separation, she still has a powerful effect on him.

## **CHAPTER 60**

In this chapter we read the first of two possible endings to the story. In this version, Sarah is found residing in London under the name of Mrs. Roughwood. Charles believes her to be employed as a governess for a family, but it turns out that she is an assistant and an artist's model for Mr. Rossetti, a well-known artist whose work is considered somewhat shocking by many Victorians.

In spite of Montague's advice, Charles goes to see Sarah. He is surprised to find that she does not need someone to rescue her from penury or immorality, for his greatest fear was that he would find her living a miserable existence as an underpaid governess, or even worse, as a prostitute. However, his expectations are contradicted by the confident, well-dressed young woman Sarah has become.

We quickly perceive the contrast between Sarah's world of new trends and ideas and Ernestina's world, in which old values still hold sway, even when they are questioned. Charles finds himself caught between them; he finds Sarah's new life rather uncomfortably bohemian for his tastes, yet he cannot help admiring her strength and freedom, qualities he admired in the Americans whom he recently met.

Sarah is not to be won easily though. She refuses to marry Charles, and when he asks her why, she obliquely states that she simply wishes not to marry, something, she says, he will never understand. Her life, as it is, is pleasant and is all that she wants.

Charles is stunned when she admits that she saw his advertisements inquiring about her and that she moved and changed her name because of them. He is ready to leave, despairing that she ever loved him when she begs him to stay long enough to meet someone, a "lady" who will explain her motives to him. He is puzzled but waits. Sarah leaves, and shortly another young woman enters and places a child on the floor. Charles asks her where the "lady" is, and she points at the child. Rather dramatically, Charles realizes that it is his and Sarah's child. Sarah comes back a few moments later, and they embrace.

Whether or not they will ever marry is not certain, but the story ends with the couple finally united, and with their love strengthened by all they have gone through.

This ending fulfills the romantic convention in which the lovers are finally united after a long period of trials and separations.

Although this ending may be a conventional ending for many Victorian novels, it is deceptively so, for there is something quite modern in the manner in which the lovers are reconciled. Furthermore, this ending does not meet the criteria for most love stories — that is, that they have a fairly well-defined conclusion, whether it be happy or tragic. The story could end here, but Fowles is dissatisfied and has his characters perform their parts again, with different results.

## **CHAPTER 61**

Fowles intrudes for the last time, posing as a sort of theater director who takes great pleasure in manipulating his characters to achieve different roles. Fowles has just finished observing and directing the scene between Sarah and Charles in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's house and seems quite amused by it. He steps into a coach and leaves, after first setting his watch back a quarter of an hour. We are told this is an affectation of his, but, as we shall see, since the observer is the author, he has in fact turned back time.

We return to the scene in Rossetti's house, but we are back at the point where Charles believes he has been betrayed. Now, instead of denying that she has betrayed him, and finally admitting that she loves him, Sarah admits nothing; she remains as silent and enigmatic as ever. And again, utterly disgusted with himself and with the woman he allowed himself to fall in love with, Charles leaves. He sees the child in the arms of a young woman as he exits but takes no further notice of it.

He leaves, bitter and alienated, to search for a new life for himself. The narrator returns and explains that his intervention in this story has no more effect than the random particle of radiation

that causes a mutation in some evolving organism, one that may, perhaps, contribute to its survival. Thus Charles and Sarah both face the world alone, as someday their child must also do.

However, Fowles' final choice of a conclusion is not as random as he would make it seem. In discovering that he could reject conventional attitudes, and love Sarah regardless of the social consequences, Charles discovered a strength in himself that he did not have before. Fowles could have ended the novel there, with the couple reunited. But just as he worked within the conventions of the novel before, he rejects them now, and arrives at a conclusion where there are no lovers, only individual people.

Although Fowles offers us two "endings," they both move the reader towards this final conclusion. Fowles has differed from most authors in that he has revealed to his audience the process, the alternatives, as well as the final result, but it was towards this final result that the characters were moving all along.

## EXERCISES

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who is called the French Lieutenant's Woman and why?

Sarah Woodruff is called "the French Lieutenant's Woman" or "Tragedy" or the "French lieutenant's whore" because it is believed that she had an affair with a shipwrecked French sailor.

2. Where does the story take place?

The story takes place in Lyme Regis, a small English town set on a rocky shore. Lyme Regis is shown as something of a resort or health retreat.

3. How does the novel begin?

The novel opens with an excerpt from Thomas Hardy's poem "The Riddle," which seems to describe the French Lieutenant's Woman as she is first seen by both the reader and by other characters in the story

4. With whom does the author compare Sam Farrow?

Sam Farrow, the valet of Charles, is compared with Charles Dickens' character Sam Weller, a low-comedy servant whose image Sam Farrow tries to rise above.

5. What is the significance of 'Ware Commons' in the novel?

"Ware Commons" refers to some wild patches of seaside landscape at the eastern end of Lyme Regis. This uninhabited and secluded patch of land was often used by couples as a meeting place, which resulted in its infamous reputation. Young "ladies" were not supposed to stroll on Ware Commons, ever. Sarah Woodruff used to visit "Ware Commons" occasionally.

6. What was the Victorian concept towards scientific knowledge?

Many Victorians believed that all essential knowledge had already been discovered and what remained was to catalogue and arrange this body of knowledge.

7. What does the dairy man call Sarah?

The dairyman sees Sarah walking back to town from Ware Commons, the man calls her "the French Loot'n'nt's Hoer,"

8. Why does Charles go to 'Ware Commons'?

Charles considers himself to be a naturalist and his hobby is collecting fossils. He goes to Ware commons to hunt fossils.

9. What does Mrs. Poulteney accuse Sarah of?

Mrs. Poulteney accuses Sarah of her wanton behavior: she has been seen on Ware Commons, commonly believed to be a "lovers' lane." Young "ladies" were not supposed to stroll on Ware Commons.

10. With whom does Sam Farrow fall in love?

Sam Farrow falls in love with Mary, the maid servant of Aunt Tranter.

11. Why does Aunt Tranter believe that Mary is above reproach?

Mary is seductive and overtly sexual. But Aunt Tranter believes that Mary is above reproach and allows her to be what she is because of her social station as one of the lower classes.

12. What is the name of the French Lieutenant who duped and deserted Sarah?

Lieutenant Varguennes is the French Lieutenant who duped and deserted Sarah.

13. What was Sarah's intention behind giving herself to Lieutenant Varguennes?

Sarah, after knowing that Varguennes is insincere in his love towards her, gives herself to him in an act of defiance. Her intention was to give herself to him and to never see him again.

14. How does the author present the courtship between Charles and Ernestina?

The author presents the courtship between Charles and Ernestina as an artificial relation. Their courtship is being presented as the result of social and economic influences that direct them to marry.

15. What startling discovery does Charles make during his stop at Exeter?

During his stop at Exeter, Charles makes the startling discovery that Sarah was a virgin.

16. The French Lieutenant's Woman is based on which literary genre?

Published in 1969, The French Lieutenant's Woman is based on a literary genre called 'gothic fiction'.

17. Why does Sarah accept the job of a paid companion?

Sarah accepts the job as a paid companion to Mrs. Poulteney for two reasons. First of all, she is a destitute now and she must accept the job. The second reason for accepting the job was that Marlborough House possessed a good view of Lyme Bay, enabling Sarah to maintain her vigilant watch for the French Lieutenant who promised to return to her.

18. Where does Charles find Sarah after she's fired by Mrs. Poulteney?

After she is fired by Mrs. Poulteney, Charles finds Sarah sleeping in a cottage used for storing hay.

19. What were the established criteria for a woman in Victorian times?

A respectable woman, in Victorian times, was supposed to be passive, unsensual and Subject to all manners of illnesses. Women were considered as delicate creatures. Even the thought of sexuality for a woman was considered as blasphemous.

20. Who serves as the narrator for the novel?

The persona of the novelist himself serves as the narrator for the novel.

## PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Comment on the Irony in the novel

Irony runs through this text as the narrator sets up Charles, for instance, as superior in class, but is clearly less superior in intelligence and acuity in his understanding of Sarah. Irony is often used, then, to undermine pomposity and to question the received values of the Victorian era. The central irony that is present in this tremendous novel is related to freedom and who possesses it and who does not. As the novel progresses, Charles, who apparently seems to have everything in society a man could wish for, comes to realise how actually he is very constrained and trapped by society and its restraints. Ironically, Sarah, the figure who is shunned by society and seems to lack freedom, becomes a symbol of the complete and total freedom that he craves and desires to have for himself.

The central irony of this novel therefore relates to the way in which Charles, the novel's protagonist, moves from a position of feeling himself to enjoy freedom only to realise that he suffers from its profound lack. Note how he identifies himself as a "brilliant man trapped; a Byron tamed." This is accompanied by his growing retaliation that Sarah, the character who is despised and shunned by society, actually possesses the perfect freedom he so desperately craves. Moving from being happy with his lot, he realises that his lot only represents a "fixed voyage to a known place." Sarah is able to stir up within him an intense desire for the unknown, for the perfect freedom embodied in her life, which is a life lived free from the constraints of society.

2. In what ways are figures such as the fallen woman reinterpreted in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*?

The figure of the fallen woman, initially clearly captured in the figure of Sarah Woodruff, is transformed as the novel progresses and both Charles and the reader try to establish the identity of Sarah and who she actually is. What is so fascinating about her character is the way she is shrouded by mystery. The reader, and Charles, is never fully aware of her full identity and story, and it is only possible to try and piece, jigsaw-like, the various elements of her character together that are presented in the novel. Sarah initially is presented as the traditional fallen woman who is an outcast from society because of her relationship with the French lieutenant named in the title. However, as the novel progresses, she becomes associated not with shame and being an outcast, but freedom and a resistance to living one's life in accordance with the role given to one by society. Note what she represents to Charles:

Sarah comes to symbolize freedom from society's restrictions, and this is something that Charles himself comes to identify with greatly. Sarah therefore is used to reinterpret the role of the fallen woman through presenting her not as a character who is trapped in that role but as a character who refuses to accept the role that society presents her with. Sarah, through her determination to live her own life and to get what she wants, presents herself as an empowered individual rather than a disempowered figure, which is traditionally the way that fallen women have been perceived.



3. What is the point of view in the novel?

The point of view of this postmodern novel is a very interesting area of discussion. On the one hand, there are elements of the omniscient narrator in the point of view in that the narrator is definitely external to the action and looking in at what is unfolding. However, at the same time, there are areas where the traditional omniscient point of view is not accurate when thinking about the narration of this book. One reason for this is the way that the narrator constantly intrudes into the action, identifying himself as the author and highlighting certain facts about the production of this text, such as when he refers to Austen's use of the Cobb in *Persuasion* and also describing a Henry Moore sculpture, which was carved many years after the time of the novel.

Whilst the point of view can be considered to be third person omniscient in some ways, the habit of the author of intruding his own thoughts and opinions into the narrative, indicated with his reference to the word "we" and "our," indicates that the author is a character in his own right, commenting upon the action and drawing the reader's attention to certain aspects of the story. In addition, it is problematic to describe the point of view as third person omniscient, as the author deliberately keeps certain characters from being explained and explored, the most obvious example being Sarah.

4. How does the novelist show the class difference, which prevailed in Victorian England, through the novel?

The stringent demarcation between classes - and sexes - in Victorian England is one of this novel's central themes and is scrutinized and deconstructed constantly. Charles, who is one of the main protagonists, is cast as a gentleman and is deemed by society (and often by himself) to be superior to his servants, his bride-to-be, Ernestina, and Sarah. He is ranked higher due to the chance of birth and just misses out on reaching nobility when his uncle marries and produces an heir.

Each of the characters is shown to be aware of the rigid class distinctions and the narrative uses this theme to undermine the naturalization of these barriers. Mary, the maid servant of Aunt Tranter is presented as seductive and overtly sexual. But Aunt Tranter believes that Mary is above reproach and allows her to be what she is because of her social station as one of the lower classes. Charles is characteristically less intelligent than his supposed inferiors Sam and Sarah. He blanches at the thought of working in commerce for his future father-in-law as this is regarded as being below him by consensus in this class-bound society.

Both the class system and patriarchy confine Sarah. Although her education moves her up the social ladder away from her father who was a farmer, this serves to leave her in the limbo world of being fit for the role of only governess or companion. The society she is born into effectively marginalizes her twice: for being a woman and for being born into the working classes.

5. Convention as being shown in 'The French Lieutenant's Woman'

The French Lieutenant's Woman uses an overtly twentieth-century perspective to critique this representation of Victorian England where duty and conformity take precedence over kindness and honesty.

The belief that one should adhere to convention is put into question by the hypocrisy of many of the main characters. Apart from Sarah, who is depicted as attempting to live by her own codes of behavior rather than society's, others, such as Charles, Mrs. Poulteney and Ernestina, are

more concerned about how they appear to the outside world than in acting on their desires. The sense of duty, which in some measure is shown to be admirable, has become twisted as duty becomes more valued than the Christian ethos that informs it.

6. Loss of faith in authority in 'The French Lieutenant's Woman'

As though to undermine the strong thematic concern that exposes the adherence to conformity in this described society, there is a parallel theme that questions authority. This is brought about in a range of small ways, from Sam disobeying his employer Charles, to the depiction of Charles's growing interest in Darwinism. The preference for evolutionary theories over creationism implies a questioning of the authority of the Bible. Sarah's decision to be an outcast, rather than another governess who knows her place, also exemplifies this challenge to dominant thinking as does the insertion of the author in what appeared to be a realist text.

Further to this, the use of two endings also undermines authority as the tradition of closure is demolished. The authority of the novelist is invoked by his appearance in the novel, but this role of God is simultaneously undermined as he refuses to decide the ending. The readers are empowered as they are left to choose the one they prefer. The novelist's toss of the coin to decide which ending comes first is an ostensible means of showing that this is a work of fiction and the ending or endings are arbitrary.

7. Examine and compare the relationships between Charles and Ernestina and Charles and Sarah.

The engagement and impending marriage of Charles and Ernestina dominates the novel and Ernestina's thoughts. The author presents the courtship between Charles and Ernestina as an artificial relation. Their courtship is being presented as the result of social and economic influences that direct them to marry. Notions of duty, respectability and, to some extent, love, influence their relationship. It is a conventional arrangement until Charles decides to breach the trust between them.

His interest in and feelings for Sarah are bound up in a more recognizably twentieth-century understanding of attraction. With Sarah's refusal to abide by convention, Charles is drawn into thinking of women and his own position with more self-reflection than he has previously had to. Sarah is able to stir up within him an intense desire for the unknown, for the perfect freedom embodied in her life. Ernestina comes to represent the Victorian era and Sarah is the New Woman of the forthcoming next century.

8. Consider the characterization of Mrs. Poulteney and what she represents.

Mrs. Poulteney is the arch villain of the novel and is described as similar to a Gestapo agent. She is without mercy in her treatment of her employees and her cruelty is bolstered by the conventions of her society. This is because these conventions adhere to strict class hierarchies and a hypocritical understanding of Christian values. This is most obviously exposed in her desire to 'buy' a positive judgment from God when she reaches the pearly gates. This payment comes when she employs Sarah as a companion; although this is also for the superficial reason of showing her like-minded acquaintances that she is charitable.

Her character represents types that appear often in Victorian novels; she is the sort of person that the author's social criticism was frequently directed towards. Mrs. Poulteney is self-righteous and quite malicious. Although she professes to be a good and moral Christian, she possesses few

Christian virtues. Instead, she believes herself as superior to someone such as Sarah, whose sins, real or imagined, have not warped her nature into a parody of morality.

Her character is drawn from melodrama and is purposely made one-dimensional with no saving graces. She is also a believable construction as she embodies the hypocrisies of the negative aspects of the Victorian age.

9. Consider the effect of the insertion of the novelist as a character.

By inserting the novelist as a character in a work of fiction, the realist narrative is deconstructed. This appearance of the twentieth-century Fowles in a nineteenth-century landscape has an alienating effect on the readers as it illustrates that this is a work of fiction, rather than an attempt to copy life realistically.

The novelist in the novel makes this a work of metafiction as it becomes a novel that discusses the fiction-making process and is a postmodern device that ensures the readers remember that this is a fiction not a documentary.

10. Analyse the use of two endings and the effects these may have on the readers.

With the insertion of the novelist and the news that he will toss a coin to decide which ending comes first, the traditional use of closure is put aside. By questioning the neat tying up of ends, which is prevalent in texts of the period when this novel is set, Fowles puts the possibility of having one, authoritative ending into doubt.

The readers may be seen as being empowered by this choice of two different versions as no definitive ending is imposed by the omnipotent novelist. Postmodernism, which notoriously attempts to collapse hierarchies and authority, is being invoked and put into practice.

This questioning of closure may also mean that the readers are left stranded as they might have become so used to closure that it has become a naturalized belief that they should expect it. In this instance, the use of two endings entails a questioning of how a novel 'should' be written. Fowles broadens the boundaries of how a novel may or may not be defined.

11. Consider Lyme Regis and Fossils as metaphors in the novel.

The town Lyme Regis is used as the central setting and comes to stand for provincial life. It epitomizes the twentieth-century view of the Victorian era too as in this small relatively well-to-do place its denizens use gossip and rumor to control each other's behavior. Sarah is able to be the abject outcast here, rather than London or Exeter, as the moral majority (as personified in Mrs. Poulteney) dominate the bourgeois landscape.

Through Charles's amateur interest in collecting fossils, the narrative is able to explore and demonstrate the schism between science and religion. As befits his hobby, he has become increasingly influenced by Darwinism and, consequently, questions the Christian faith he has been raised with. Charles, in turn, becomes a cipher for revealing doubts in the Church, God and authority.

In addition, he is also compared to a fossil in Chapter 43 when he appears to have decided finally that he will marry Ernestina and spend his life trying to please her father. He is a relic from

the past in this instance as he attempts to conform to the duty of meeting his obligations. If he goes through with this marriage, he will also have been swept along by history (and duty) and will become as dead and overlooked as the fossils he collects.

12. Comment on the character of Dr. Grogan

Dr. Grogan, a hearty Irish physician. He is a friendly man whom Charles finds to be a sympathetic listener. Charles and Dr. Grogan believe that they, as enlightened rationalists, can understand and solve Sarah's problems. Although he feels sorry for Sarah Woodruff, unlike Charles, he cannot take her seriously. He tries to convince Charles that she really is ill. He strongly believes that Sarah is seriously disturbed, possibly on the verge of madness. His reasoning is ironic, considering the purported rigorousness of the moral standards of the time. Dr. Grogan, like Aunt Tranter, represents a type of Victorian character who seems more understanding and less hampered by convention than most people. Part of the reason for this is that both of the older people actually belong to the generation before Victoria's, an era somewhat less repressive in certain respects.

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