

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post-Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post-Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that it may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great part of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

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Post Graduate : English Language Teaching
PG : ELT

Paper - VI

Module—I

**Exploiting Literary Texts for the Study of Literary Forms and World
Varieties of Literatures in English**

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**NETAJI SUBHAS
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**Post Graduate
PG : ELT – 6**

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UNIT : 1 □ TRAGEDY

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1.0 Objective :

This unit introduces you to :

- ~ the origin and growth of tragedy
- ~ the basic as well as related concepts of tragedy
- ~ the characteristics of different schools of tragedy
- ~ the methods of exploiting a tragedy

1.1 The Origin of Tragedy :

The origins of tragedy are obscure, but it is certainly derived from the poetic and religious traditions of ancient Greece. Its roots may be traced to the 'dithyrambs', a choral lyric sung in honour of the Greek god Dionysus. It was performed in a circular dancing-place (orchestra) by a group of men who may have impersonated

satyrs by wearing masks and dressing in goat skins. The words origin is Greek 'tragoida' contracted from *trag(o)-aoidia* = 'goat song' from *tragos* = 'goat' and *asidein* = "to sing". This meaning may have referred to any of these:

- Goat-like costumes worn by actors who played the satyrs.
- A goat being presented as a prize at a song contest.
- The actors ate paid a goat as their pay for appearing on stage.

Phrynichus, son of Polyphradmon and pupil of Thespis, was one of the earliest of the Greek tragedians. Some of the ancients, indeed, regarded him as the real founder of tragedy. Eventually, the content of the *dithyramb* was widened to any mythological or heroic story, and an actor was introduced to answer questions posed by the choral group. (The Greek word for actor is *hypocrites*, which literally means 'answerer'. According to tradition., the playwright Aeschylus added a second actor and Sophocles added a third. Tragedy was recognised as an official state cult in Athens in 534 B.C.

1.2 Conception of Tragedy:

Aristotle (384-322 bc), the great Greek philosopher and scientist, who -shares with Plato and Socrates the distinction of being the most famous of ancient philosophers made the first attempt to the most detailed study on tragedy. In a manuscript that became known as the *Poetics* (about 330 EC), Aristotle meticulously described the elements and goals of tragedy on the Greek stage. In it the theory of tragedy is worked out so admirably, with such insight and comprehension, that 'it becomes the type of the theory of literature' (Abercrombie). Aristotle in Chapter VI to XII of *Poetics* studies tragedy in detail, giving its definition, and analyzing the various constituents and elements of a tragic drama.

1.2.1 Definition :

In Chapter VI of *Poetics* Aristotle defines Tragedy as "... an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds; being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear (*di eleou .kai phobou*) effecting the proper purgation (*Catharsis*) of these emotions."¹

Let us now discuss some of the important aspects of the above definition.

■ "imitation" (mimesis): In the very first chapter of *Poetics*, Aristotle says, "Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy, also and Dithyrambic poetry, as also the music of the flute and the lyre in most of their forms, are in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects-their medium, the objects, and the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct." Thus the medium of the poet (or dramatist) and the painter differs. One imitates through forms and colour, while the

other through language, rhythm and harmony. Also, the manner of a poet may be totally narrative as in an Epic, or representation through action, as in a drama. Again, regarding the objects of imitation, Aristotle says that the objects of poetic imitation are “men of action”. What he means is that a poet may represent men either as better man in real life or worse or as they are. The action may not be only *external* but also *internal* - the action within the soul caused by all that befalls a man. In this way he brings human experiences, emotions and passions within the scope of poetic imitation. Thus according to Aristotle’s theory, imitation is not merely superficial representation of things, but a creative process. The poet selects, organizes and presents his material in such a way that it re-creates reality. He presents a truth of an ideal or universal kind; he depicts not what men are but what they can be or what they ought to be.

■ **“an action that is serious”**²: *serious* in the sense that it best raises and purifies pity and fear, serious in a moral, psychological, and social sense. Thus its objects of imitation are ‘serious actions’, and hence it is different from Comedy which imitates the non-serious. Humphrey House explains the word, “serious” as meaning *weighty* or *important*.

■ **“complete, and of a certain magnitude”**: not just a series of episodes, but a whole with a beginning, middle, and an end. The idea of *imitation* is important here; the artist does not just slavishly *copy* everything related to an action, but *selects* (represents) only those aspects which give form to universal truths. This refers to a well-knit plot.

■ **“language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play”**²: language must be appropriate for each part of the play: choruses are in a different meter and rhythm and more melodious than spoken parts. Thus it employs several kinds of embellishments in different parts, i.e. verse in dialogue and song in the choric parts.

■ **“in the form of action, not of narrative”**: Tragedy on the basis of its manner of imitation is distinguished from the Epic which *narrates* and does not represent through action. It relies on enactment (dramatic performance).

■ **“purgation” (catharsis)**: **Catharsis**, Latin from the Greek *Katharsis* meaning *purification* or *cleansing* is a sudden emotional breakdown or climax that constitutes overwhelming feelings of great pity, sorrow, laughter, or any extreme change in emotion that results in the renewal, restoration and revitalization for living. It refers to the sensation, or literary effect, that would ideally overcome an audience upon watching a tragedy. The fact that there existed those who could suffer a worse fate than them was to them a relief and at the end of the play, they felt *ekstasis* (literally, astonishment), from which the modern words ‘extasis’ and ‘ecstasy’ are derived. The audience is not intentionally led to feel happy in light of others’ misfortunes; in an invariant sense, their spirits are refreshed through having greater appreciation for life. This Catharsis is based on the homeopathic principle proposed by Hippocrates that ‘like cures like’ (*similia*

similihus curaufeurk that pity and fear may be eliminated by rousing in the mind 'these and such like feelings'. The audience is moved to pity by the sufferings of the hero, or are filled with fear in anticipation of his/her own ill fate by a process of dramatic sympathy. This fear rouses a passive sympathy and helps him identify himself with the hero and in the process his whole being is sublimated along with the sublimation mat the hero undergoes.

Thus looking at a tragic spectacle, for example, Sophocles's *King Oedipus* we *pity, sympathise* with the tragic condition of Oedipus, who is destroyed by his fate. For him, fate is destiny. So he had very little choice, but to act according to the inevitable inscriptions written by fate, before his birth. Again, if we consider, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* or *Macbeth*, we feel pity for the tragic end of Caesar and Macbeth due to their over-ambition. Fear is naturally aroused at the thought mat if such good men can meet such dangerous end, then common people, like us, can also come under the caprice of misfortune. Similarly, Clytemnestra's murder of her own husband, and Orestes's murder of her own mother stir our mind with shock and tremendous fear. Also we feel scared at the tragic sufferings of Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Faider, Edward II and at the same time we sympathise with them because we feel mat that placed in the similar situations, we shall have to suffer alike. Thus the simultaneous experience of pity and fear completes the process of tragic empathy.

1.2.2 The Constituent Elements of Tragedy :

In Chapter VI of *Poetics*, Aristotle mentions about six elements that constitute a tragedy. He says, mat every tragedy must have six parts - i) *plot*, ii) *character*, iii) *diction*, iv) *thought*, v) *spectacle*, and vi) *song*. These six elements determine the quality of a tragic play. Of these six elements - *diction* and *song* constitute the medium of imitation; *spectacle* constitutes the manner of imitation; while *plot*, *character* and *thought* constitute the objects of imitation

i) Plot : Aristotle used me Greek word 'mythos' for plot and claims it to be the first and most important thing, in his language - " The first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of tragedy is the plot" (Chapter 7, *Poetics*). Aristotle prescribes a 'right size' for a tragedy so mat it can adequately display "the hero passing by a series of probable or necessary? stages from misfortune to happiness, or from happiness to misfortune.

According to him, a plot must also have a beginning, a middle and an end. A beginning is a situation which has which leads to definite consequences, though not the obvious causes; a middle is a situation with both the causes and consequences; and end is the result of the middle, but creates no further situation in turn.

Two other criteria put forth by Aristotle for coherence in tragedy are 'probability' and '*necessity*'. As he says: "The poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has

happened, but a kind of tiling mat might happen i.e what is possible as being both probable and necessary". The words "*probable* and *necessary*" tilt towards a high degree of "rationality". It proposes to exclude from the play such things as chance, unrelated events for which adequate origins are not shown, supernatural interventions and so on.

Aristotle classifies the tragic plot as simple and complex. He calls a plot "simple, when the hero's fortune takes place without *Peripetiea* or *Anagnorisis*; and complex, when it involves one or the other, or both". *Peripetiea*, "is the change from one state of things within the play to its opposite of the kind described,...in the probable or necessary sequence of events". For instance, in *Oedipus*, the messenger who comes to cheer up Oedipus and remove his fears for having killed his father and married his mother, does the reverse by revealing his true identity. Thus *peripetiea* also includes a sudden reversal of events which comes as a shock. *Peripetiea* is closely linked with *dramatic irony* in which a character may be conscious or unconscious of the real or the hidden meaning in his words. For example, in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the audience knows that Caesar will be killed by the conspirators, just when he was boasting to them of his being firm and steadfast in his position: "I am like the pole star".

Anagnorisis, also known as discovery, means the revelation of facts hitherto unknown to one of the principal characters. It is the hero's suddenly becoming aware of a real situation and therefore the realisation of things as they stood; and finally it is a perception that results in an insight the hero had into his relationship with often antagonistic characters within Aristotelian tragedy. In Aristotelian definition of tragedy it is the discovery of one's own identity or true character (Cordelia, Edgar, Edmund, etc.) or of someone else's identity or true nature (Lear's children, Gloucester's children) by the tragic hero. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defined it as "a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune." It should be noted that Shakespeare did not base his works on Aristotelian theory of tragedy, including use of *hamartia*, yet his tragic characters still commonly undergo *anagnorisis* as a result of their struggles. Aristotle considered it, with *peripetiea*, the mark of a superior tragedy, as when Oedipus killed his father and married his mother in ignorance, and later learned the truth, or when Iphigeneia in Tauris realizes that the strangers she is to sacrifice are her brother and his friend in time to refrain from it. These plots, he considered complex and superior to simple plots without *anagnorisis* or *peripetiea*, such as when Medea resolves to kill her children, knowing they are her children, and does so.

Aristotle was also the first critic to consider the problem of the dramatic unities of action, time and space. By unity of action, Aristotle suggests a logical and sequential arrangement of events and episodes with one episode leading to another keeping a link or connection. It also presupposes that - a) no sub-plot of importance should be made to appear in any play and b) no admixture of tragic and comic incidents.

The **unity of place** indicates that a play should cover a single physical space and should not attempt to compress geography, nor should the stage represent more than one place. The **unity of time** denotes that a play should represent an **action that takes** approximately the same amount of time as the play; years should not pass during the hours a play takes. According to Aristotle: "Tragedy endeavours to keep, as far as possible, within a single circuit of the sun or something near that." (*Poetics*, Chapter 5). In Shakespeare's *Tempest* the events happen in less than four hours - the time required for the performance of the play. Again *Othello* and *Measure For Measure* reassert the unity of time - one day or little more.

A tragic plot may be divided into several parts. The beginning of the story is called the **Exposition** which introduces characters and incidents and gives a hint of the tragic atmosphere of the play. This is followed by rising action or the *Complication* which enfolds the "conflict" of the drama. In the end of the complication comes the **Crisis** or **Climax** of the play, from which the events take a turn. The **Denouement** or 'falling action' brings about the end of the play leading to final catharsis of all emotions.

ii) Character : Character holds the second place after plot in order of importance. Aristotle says, "Without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without manner (or character)". Regarding characterisation Aristotle proposed four essential qualities. First, the characters must be good; but, they must not be perfectly good nor entirely bad rather they should possess both to a certain extent. Secondly, they must be appropriate to the plot or the story the tragedy depicts; inclusion of irrelevant characters will destroy the tragic atmosphere. Thirdly, the characters must be true to their type in respect of their profession, rank or class; they must also represent the true human nature or characteristics like pride, ambition, love, hatred, jealousy, etc. Fourthly, the characters must also show a consistent development fulfilling the demands of necessity and probability, thus, contributing to the complication of the plot.

iii) Diction : Aristotle treats diction as an active concept and relates it to the poet's command of the metres. He differentiates between the language of verse and ordinary prose speech. He proposes the use of words in everyday use, foreign words, dialectical words, words newly coined, metaphorical words and archaic words.

iv) Thought : Thought is, according to Aristotle, "the power of saying whatever can be said, or what is appropriate to the occasion". It is the intellectual element in a tragedy expressed through the speech of the characters. Thus, speeches are extremely significant in a tragedy as they express the views and feelings of the characters which in turn is the thought of the dramatist or the author -

v) Spectacle : The spectacle refers to the scenic effects and depends mainly on the stagecraft and performance than on the composition. But Aristotle contends that the dramatist must depend on his own powers of composition for the desired effects than

on the spectacle. He says, "Fear and pity can be produced by spectacular means but it is much better to produce them by the way you write your play."

vi) **Song or Melody** : The lyrical element is mainly found in the choric parts of a tragedy and it is the 'embellishment' that differentiates Tragedy from Epic.

1.2.3 The Tragic Hero :

An Aristotelian tragic hero must have four characteristics: virtue of birth, nobleness, or wisdom; *hamartia* (translated as *tragic flaw*, but connotes more closely to mistakes or excess in behavior than to something innate, related to *hubris*), and a discovery that is made by his own actions. In a complex Aristotelian tragedy, the hero undergoes a *peripetia*, or a turn of fate that leaves him or her destitute, followed by *anagnorisis*. The tragic end of the hero ideally, according to Aristotle, gives the audience *catharsis*, or emotional purgation.

Some other common traits characteristic of a tragic hero are as follows:

- He must suffer more than he deserves.
- He must be doomed from the start, but bear no responsibility for possessing his flaw.
- He must be noble in nature, but imperfect so that the audience can see themselves in him.
- He must have discovered his fate by his own actions, not by things happening to him.
- He must see and understand his doom, as well as the fact that his fate was discovered by his own actions.
- His story should arouse fear and empathy.
- Physically or spiritually wounded by his experiences, often resulting in his death.
- Ideally, he should be a king or leader of men, so that his people experience his fall with him.

Two terms '*hamartia*' and '*hubris*' are extremely important. *Hamartia* refers to the false step that leads the protagonist in a tragedy to his or her downfall. The term has often been translated as 'tragic flaw'; but this misleadingly includes the cause of the reversal of fortunes to some person's defects of a character, whereas Aristotle's emphasis was on the protagonist's action, which could be brought upon by misjudgement, ignorance, or such other faults which the character himself is not aware of. The error of judgement, as speculated by Aristotle, includes a whole range - some error or omission in action, decision, or conduct, and even some sad deficiency in character, which proves fatal ultimately. Sophocles's *King Oedipus* testifies to Aristotle's notion of some error of judgement or the *hamartia* in the tragic character.

Hubris stands for the arrogance or pride of the protagonist in a tragedy in which he or she defies moral laws or the prohibition of the gods. This leads eventually to the downfall of the protagonist, which may be understood as divine retribution or *nemesis*. Creon in *Antigone* is held by hubris and in his over confidence bans the divine edict of burial of the dead brother of Antigone. In his obstinate pride he brings about his tragedy. In *Macbeth*, *hubris* leads Macbeth to commit desperate actions which ultimately brings his ruin.

1.3 The Classification and Growth of Tragedy :

Tragedy can be broadly classified into three categories according to their place and period of composition.

- i) **Classical Tragedy** : The tragedies of ancient Greece and Rome.
- ii) **Romantic Tragedy** : The tragedies produced during the Renaissance and Restoration in England.
- iii) **Modern Tragedy** : The English *social* tragedies & *problem* plays.

The Greeks were the first tragedians and the very first writers of tragedy were Phrynicus, Pratinas and Choerilus; and also the legendary Thespis who is said to have made a significant innovation by introducing an actor into tragic performances which formerly were given by a Chorus alone. To this Aeschylus (525 - 456 B.C.) added a second, and Sophocles (496-406 B.C.) a third; namely, protagonist, deuteragonist and tritagonist. These two playwrights along with Euripides (480 - 406 B.C.) made other modifications in the structure of the tragedy. Aeschylus wrote about ninety plays of which seven are extant: *Suppliants*, *Persians*, *Seven Against Thebes*, *Prometheus Bound*, and the Oresteian trilogy -*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi* and *Eumenides*. Sophocles wrote about hundred and twenty plays out of which seven are extant: *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Electra*, *Ajax*, *Trachmiae*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Euripides' main works include: *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Trojan Women*, *Orestes*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, -*Bacchae*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Electra* and *Iphigema in Tauris*. By 400 B.C. tragedies ceased to be produced in Greece. In Rome, in around 240 B.C. Livius Andronicus first presented rough adaptations of Greek tragedy and Naevius, a younger contemporary composed tragedies based on Greek subjects and themes. After them tragedy declined and it was not until the age of Nero that tragedy revived in a different form in the hands of Seneca (4 B.C. - 65 A.D.). Some of his notable tragedies include: *Troas*, *Thyestes*, *Hercules Furens*, *Medea*, *Octavia*, etc. Thereafter, for about 1500 years, there was almost no significant contribution anywhere in the field of tragedy.

Later, during the Renaissance in the later half of the 16th century and before the advent of the celebrated Romantic tragedies in England, the tragedies of Seneca inspired the composition of a few of what is called the 'Revenge Tragedy'. An early and important

example of this is *Gorboduc* (1561) by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. Other revenge plays include Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maids Tragedy*, *Cupid's Revenge*, Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Kaffmasi*, John Webster's *Appius and Virginia*, *Duchess of Malfi*, *The White Devil*, Tourner's *The Atheist's Tragedy*, etc.

The Romantic tragedies were the greatest product of Renaissance. Christopher Marlowe was a renowned name during this time with his celebrated tragedies like, *Tamberlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Edward 11*, *The Jew of Malta*. Romantic tragedy reached its height in the hands of Shakespeare. His major plays include: *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, etc. Other contributions are George Peele's *David and Bathsheba*, John Marston's *Antonio and Meliida*, Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Ben Jonson's *Sejanus (1603) and CatiLine (16H)*, Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey (1631)*, *The Tragedy of Chabot (1639)*, Middleton's *Women Beware Women (1621)*, John Ford's *The Roman Actor (1626)* and many more.

During approximately the same period tragedy flourished in Spain where the main writers were Lope De Vega (1562-1635), Molina (1571-1648) and Calderon (1600-1681). France too witnessed a rise in tragedy with two main exponents - Corneille and Racine, though both these dramatists conceived tragedy in classical terms. The major works of Corneille are *Medee (1635)*, *Le Cid (1636)*, *Horace*, *Cinna* and *Polyeucte* (all 1640), etc. The tragedies of Racine include: *Andromaque (1667)*, *Iphigenie (1674)*, *Phedre (1677)*, *Britannicus (1699)*, *Berenice (1670)*, *Mithridate (1673)*, *Esther (1659)* and in England during the Restoration, there was a revival of tragedy in an absurd melodramatic version called '**heroic tragedy**'. The most notable works include John Dryden's *All For Love (1678)*. Milton's *Samson Agonistes (1671)*, Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved (1682)* and Thomas Southerae's *The Fatal Marriage (1694)*, John Banks *The Rival Kings*, Elkanah Settle's *Love and Revenge*. Among the other notable writers were Thomas D'Urfey, Samuel Pordage and Nathaniel Lee.

During the 18th and early 19th century a large number of European playwrights experimented with the tragic formulae. Among the notable achievements include: Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent (1703)* and *The Tragedy of Jane Shore (1714)*; Addison's *Cato (1713)*; Lillo's *The London Merchant (1731)*; Johnson's *Irene (1749)*; Edward Moore's *The Gamester (1753)*; Shelley's *Cenci (1818)*; Victor Hugo's *Hernani (1830)* and *Ruy Bias (1838)* and many more.

A new trend of tragedy, called the '**problem plays**', resulted from the Norwegian influence in the later half of the 19th century, marking the rise of the modern tragedy in England. Henrik Ibsen's *The Pillar of Society (1827)*, *A Doll's House (1879)*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Lady from the Sea* are the significant Norwegian tragedies which brought about a revolution in the field and had laid wide influence in modern tragedies. Other

notable works include Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, *The Father* and *The Dance of Death*; Chekov's *Three Sisters*, *The Sea-Gull* and *Cherry Orchard*; Bernard Shaw's problem plays include *Widower's Houses* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

Galsworthy, primarily a novelist, also produced some problem plays which came to be better known as '**social tragedies**' like *The Sliver Box*, *Strife*, *Justice*, *Loyalties*, etc. which depicted men crushed under the weight of social problems of the modern age. Other significant tragedies of the modern period include: Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910); Granville Barker's *Waste* (1907); Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* (1920) *All God's Chillun* (1924); O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924); T.S.Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935); W.HAuden's *Dance of Death*; Tennessee Williams' *A Street Car-named Desire*; Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1948) and many more.

1.4 Characteristics of different types of tragedy :

Each school of tragedy has its own characteristics which helps in identifying a tragedy as well as interpreting and exploiting its subject matter and contents. Let us now discuss the characteristics of each of these schools.

1.4.1 Classical tragedies :

The characteristics of the classical tragedies are as follows:

- i) In classical tragedies **the subjects** were largely taken from **popular fables** and sacred mythological events known to the audience e.g. Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*.
- ii) The classical tragedies are essentially **tragedies of fate**. In them the angry gods are mainly responsible for the tragedy rather than the character himself. In accordance, with the divine decree in *Oedipus Rex*, we see that before the birth of Oedipus it is forecast that he will kill his father and marry his own mother and this in the end comes true.
- iii) In classical tragedies, **a single conflict** is present i.e. the conflict between the tragic hero and another character or a conflict between two external forces. In *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone* external conflict takes place in the form of wars, violent exchange of speeches and actions.
- iv) The classical tragedies deal mainly with the **themes of blood-guilt**, revenge and curse affecting different royal families. Aeschylus deals with the curse of the House of Atreus and its expiation by Orestes. Sophocles in his *Oedipus* plays deals with the curse ridden royal family of Thebes. Senecan tragedies also include materials of revenge, murder, mutilation and carnage.
- v) In classical tragedies the **social status** of the lead characters is always very high.

They are all Kings, Queens, Princes, Nobles, - Oedipus is King and Agamemnon is that too.

vi) On technical grounds it is seen that the classical tragedies strictly observe **the three dramatic unities** (i.e. The unities of time, place and action). Most of the actions in the classical tragedies take place at one spot and in one day. Even in conformity with Aristotle's propositions there are no sub-plots in classical tragedies; though some comical elements are found in the form of funny gods in *Homer*, Cyclopes in *Euripides*, the messenger in *Antigone* and others.

vii) The **chorus** plays a significant role in the classical tragedies. They narrate the past events, interpret and comment on the incidents and events, indicate the future events and even take part in the dialogue on stage. They have a significant contribution in creating the tragic atmosphere of the play. In the works of Aeschylus the chorus often took part in the action; in Sophocles it served as a commentator on the action; and in Euripides it provided a lyric element.

viii) The classical tragedies, specifically the Greek tragedies are marked by **the absence of the scenes of horror and violence**. The scenes of violence, murders and battles take place off the stage and are reported to the audience by the minor characters such as messengers or heralds or as in *Agamemnon* through the death shrieks of the murdered king.

ix) The classical tragedies also lack in the major role of **supernatural** elements. The fineness of the mimesis in classical tragedies does not permit this sort of supernatural excitement, although Euripides' *Medea* and Aeschylus' trilogy contain some supernatural elements.

x) Finally, the classical tragedies of Greece are not divided into acts and scenes. It is the **choral odes** which divide them into several parts; though in Senecan tragedies the act division is found.

1.4.2 Romantic Tragedies :

The characteristics of romantic tragedies are as follows:

i) In romantic tragedies the stories or **subjects are less known** as in Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Macbeth*, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, etc.

ii) Romantic tragedies are essentially **tragedies of characters** where the hero by some guilty act or some error in judgment or some defect in his character, creates events which bring about his ultimate ruin. It is Macbeth's high ambition which leads to his own doom, while Edward II suffers for his playfulness. Thus, Elizabethan romantic tragedies mainly deal with the theme of - '*Character is Destiny*'. The dictum *Character is Destiny* is often associated with the tragic vision of Shakespeare. The tragic heroes of Shakespeare are all exceptional beings having many noble qualities, which raise

them far above the average level of humanity; but they all possess “a marked one sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion or habit of mind.” (Bradley). This predisposition or fatal tendency leads to the tragic catastrophe. Lear’s fondness for flattery in *King Lear* and Othello’s childlike credulity lead to their tragic doom. Thus in Shakespeare the core of the tragedy lies “in action issuing from character or in character issuing in action”.

iii) **Conflict both external and internal** are presented in romantic tragedies. In romantic tragedies, external conflict is present in the form of murdering Julius Caesar”, murder of Duncan by Macbeth, etc. But along with it the internal conflict or the torture of mind is also found in romantic tragedies. In *Othello* there is a conflict between passionate love and jealousy. In *King Lear*, it is petty pride stirring against sympathy. Again, in *Macbeth* it is kingly ambition warring against the inner conscience.

iv) The **heroes and heroines** of romantic tragedies are **less dignified**. Macbeth is a general, Romeo is a descendent of an aristocrat, Othello is an ugly general, Hamlet is a prince only, while Dr. Faustus is an ordinary doctor and alchemist, Tamberlaine a born peasant and the Jew of Malta a money lender only.

v) On technical grounds, the romantic tragedies are marked by **the violation of the three unities** particularly those of time and place are disregarded as being needless restraints. The actions extend over months and years; and the scenes move freely from one place to another often from a village to a city and even from a city to a country. In terms of actions, the romantic dramatists introduced comic interludes freely. In Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus* there are a number of clownage scenes. Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* has comic events and dialogues in the Porter scene (Act. II; Sc iii). Also romantic tragedies are found to consist of sub-plots and subordinate incidents and characters. *Hamlet* is famous for the use of double-plot.

vi) Romantic tragedies are **gruesome in performance**. Scenes of violence, horror, murders, bloodshed and battles are freely exhibited on the stage. Such scenes like blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear* and the murder of Banquo and Macduffs wife and children are freely acted on stage. These tragedies are tragedies of action.

vii) The introduction of **supernatural elements** like ghosts, witches, strange visions and fearful phenomenon is common in romantic tragedies such as Banquo’s ghost, the three witches and the dagger scene in *Macbeth*.

viii) Romantic tragedies **exclude the role of the chorus**; rather the function is done by the minor characters, retrospective narration put into the mouth of some of the major and minor characters, and the soliloquies.

viii) Finally, the romantic tragedies are divided into **five acts** with intermediate scene division.

1.4.3 Modern Tragedies :

Modern tragedies have their roots in the domestic tragedies of the 17th and 18th centuries like George Lillo's *The London Merchant* and Kyd's *The Lamentable and True Tragedy of Mr. Arden of Feversham in Kent* which present the vicissitudes of 'things below' - of things which belong to the everyday homely life.

i) The very first characteristic of a modern tragedy is that it deals with **social problems** - social inequalities and contradictions. It depicts the conflict between individual passions and inclinations, social conventions and rigours. The protagonist is here pitted against the forces of the society and not his fate or fortune. The events portrayed are all related to the day-to-day life: jealousy, treachery, family quarrels, seduction, etc

ii) A modern tragedy does not deal with the fates and fortunes of kings or queens or persons of great public importance; rather it treats the **woes and sufferings of ordinary men and women**, specially of the middle class persons. The typical heroes of modern tragedy are Falder a petty clerk in Galsworthy's *Justice* and Roberts a labour leader in *Strife*; while Nora in Ibsen's, *A Doll's House* or Maurya in Synge's *Riders to the Sea* are common place middle class women. These people are not exceptional beings; rather subjected to all common weaknesses. Galsworthy's Falder is mentally weak who cannot bear the stress and strain of life. Again, Maurya is an ignorant, superstitious and peevish woman.

iii) Another important aspect of modern tragedies is the depiction of **an individual's hard struggle to stick to his/her high ideals** amidst strong opposition, frustration and criticism. In Tennessee Williams' *A Street Car Named Desire*, Blanch's mental conflict and consequent plight are due to her inability to adapt herself to the emerging new civilization of America; she tries hard to live up to her ideals but fails; but even in her failure, there is 'an unmistakable ring of her ultimate victory'.

iv) With Galsworthy arose a significant type of modern tragedy called '**social tragedies**'. In these tragedies men are seen to be crushed under the weight of contemporary social problems. The characters are ordinary and the toys of the social customs and restrictions. The heroes are not great as they are not able to put a heroic resistance, rather falls pitifully before these forces. The miserable Falder in *Justice* is caught in the toils of a social force which holds dominant in the play. In *Strife* the conflict between Anthony and Robert is keyed to a high pitch and ends in the tragic waste of Robert's wife.

v) Shaw's *Saint Joan* is a significant tragedy of modern age with Joan, a woman, engaged in military fights and which lacks the role of any villain in bringing about the tragedy. Joan with her individualism and self-assertiveness is far in advance of her age and her murder is judicial murder. Joan is "great, yet her murderers are right. Thus, Joan as a tragic heroine is against the Aristotelian conception of a tragic hero(ine). But, Maurya the protagonist in Synge's *Riders To The Sea* holds true to the Aristotelian principles.

vi) Another important characteristic of modern tragedies is the dominant effect of the

then philosophical, religious, social and political propositions like materialism, nationalism, science, mechanical or Freudian. The modern tragedies rests largely on social criticism as propagated by the liberalism of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy or by the social doctrine of the Russian playwrights or by the scientific orientation of Zola and Hauptmann. The deep impact of these forces on the social and spiritual life of man had drastically changed the preset notions of tragedy. A revival of the poetic dramas can be seen in T.S.Eliots's *Murder In The Cathedral* which deals with the battle between the church and the totalitarian state.

vii) As regards the technique, modern tragedy has a much better and **more developed stage-machinery**. The modern tragedies hardly follows the principle of three unities, except for the unity of action. The chorus is dropped and the tragic catastrophe happens all on stage.

viii) Finally, prose is seen to be the medium of expression in most modern tragedies, as it is the common everyday medium of communication and expression of all emotions. Verse is mainly found in poetic dramas.

1.5 Studying a Literary Text :

Studying (and not simply reading) any literary text - a tragedy, a comedy, a lyric, an epic or even a novel or a short story involves the application of two broad skills -

i) **Exploring** and ii) **Exploiting**

1.5.1 Exploring :

Exploring refers to extensive reading of certain extra-textual materials along with the text itself for understanding the broader aspects of the literary piece concerned like the school of the literary piece, the sources and events from which the story has been derived, the overall theme and issues dealt with , overall contribution of all the major and minor characters, the history of performance or publication, its socio-political significance, the thoughts and message, inculcated by the author or the dramatist through his/her work, the author as revealed through his work and such other issues.

Determining all these involves a detailed study of such extra-textual documents like the historical records, chronicles and annals, literary and non-literary works of the then authors and playwrights, the propositions on the specific genre, biographies and autobiographies of authors, the reviews and criticisms of the concerned piece published in newspapers, journals, pamphlets and such other related documents.

1.5.2 Exploiting :

Exploiting, on the other hand, focuses only on the text of the literary work concerned and involves a **close study and analysis** of different parts of the text itself. Hence, it is

an **intra-textual** (different parts of the text) study analysing all the possible aspects as revealed by selected parts of the literary work; such as identifying the immediate context of the selected part/passage, the development of plot and action, the characters involved and their role, their development and contribution , the linguistic features of the text and their significance, the theme as revealed by the selected part and its relation to the overall theme and subject matter, etc.

1.5.3 Exploring and Exploiting a tragedy :

Thus, by exploring a tragedy we can determine the school of the tragedy such as whether it is a Romantic tragedy or social tragedy, etc, the sources and events from which the story has been derived, the overall theme and issues dealt with in the tragic play, overall contribution of all the major and minor characters in the tragedy, the history of performance and publication of the ‘tragedy, its socio-political significance, the thoughts and message inculcated by the author or the dramatist through the tragedy concerned, the author as revealed through his work and such other issues.

By exploiting a tragedy we will analyse all the possible aspects as revealed by selected parts of the tragedy; such as the immediate context of the selected part/passage, the development of plot and action, the characters involved and their role, their development and contribution, the concept of tragic hero as revealed by the extract, the emotional effect of the passage, the linguistic features of the text and their significance, the theme as revealed by the selected part and its relation to me overall theme and subject matter such other text specific issues. The following examples will help you understand *how to exploit* a selected passage from a play (here, *tragedy*)

Example A :

Extract from one of Shakespeare’s famous tragedies, *Macbeth* [Act-V, Sc-v, lines :7-28]

A cry of women within

MACBETH What is that noise?

SEYTON It is the cry of women, my good lord. *Exit*

MACBETH I have almost forgot the taste of fears.

The time has been my senses would have cooled 10

To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair

Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir

As life were in’t. I have supped full with horrors;

Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,

Cannot once start me.

Enter SEYTON

Wherefore was that cry?

SEYTON The Queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH She should have died hereafter;

There would have been a time for such a word.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

20

To the last syllable of recorded time;

An all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing. (V.v.7-28)

Identifying the Context : In Act V, Sc v, within the castle of Dunsinane, Macbeth is accompanied by Seyton and his soldiers with drums and colours. He flings defiance at his enemies and orders his men to hoist flags on the outer walls of the castle. He proudly declares that his enemies will have to wait outside the castle till they are exterminated by famine and malaria, and their castle is so strong and fortified that an attack on them would be a matter of scorn. Suddenly, he is interrupted by a wailing cry of women. It is an eerie sound and he asks Seyton about the sound.

Character, plot and action : *There is* no physical action as such during the speech of Macbeth, but it certainly reveals the mental state of the tragic hero at that point of events to a great extent. The speech here throws a great deal of light on Macbeth as a character. The speech here has reference to his earlier acts of bravery and his state of fearlessness - 'almost forgot the taste of fear's'. It also reveals his quality as a valiant military general who is fearless. He also considers the contrast between his past and present state of mind. Also as the '*night shriek*' recalls Macbeth the murder of Duncan, '*supped full with horrors*' recalls the murder of Banquo, when the horror of Banquo's ghost replaced the conviviality of the Banquet. Again, Macbeth says he is accustomed to the 'Direness' - the horror - 'familiar to' as he says, there may also be a suggestion of the familiarity with the witches; as it prompts the malign actions of the witches. Hence, the horror with which Macbeth has to live drives him to further slaughter - his demon is the horror which he has himself created in his own mind. This speech shows the extent to which a familiarity with horror has injured him. The climatic moment in the speech (play as well) comes when Seyton reports the death of Lady Macbeth. But, surprisingly, the news of Lady Macbeth's death excites no emotional outburst in Macbeth. Seyton's

brief, factual statement need not imply indifference, it might be tinged with awe, but Macbeth does not seem greatly moved; he does not even ask how she died. It appears that Macbeth has lost all concern and regard for his wife, especially if the next sentence means that she should have died later, when he could have spared to attend to the news of her death. But the rest of the speech indicates that it would have made no difference when she died, it is more likely to be expressing a bleak fatalism - she would have died in the future anyway, the word of her death would have arrived at some time or the other. This, dismisses Lady Macbeth less callously, and the speech as a whole shows that if Macbeth no longer values his wife it is only because the whole of his life has lost its value; indeed, the news of her death brings home to him the pointlessness of living - as life to him is 'signifying nothing'; and this very phrase gives us a cathartic effect where we feel pity for the daring Macbeth.

Language and Rhythm : The speech begins in a rhythm that is steady and controlled and 'almost' shows the restraint with which Macbeth considers the contrast between his past and the present state. As he relives his earlier highly-strung reactions the language is very sensory: he recalls the 'taste' of fear -and the sudden chill when his 'senses would have cooled; he feels the thickness of his 'fell' of hair 'rouse and stir', with surprise at its unnaturalness. 'As life were in Y - the two verbs show the precision with which the experience is being recalled by him; while, 'Cannot...me' reveals his unshaken confidence and resolution. Again, the dragging repetition of *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow* hints at the life's futility, but later these *tomorrows* are balanced by 'all our yesterdays' to encompass the full extent of 'recorded time', the record of time is broken down into meaningless 'syllables'. From this point there is an imaginative quickening as Macbeth becomes immersed in his vision of the fruitlessness of life. The rhythm becomes rather more fluent and is given further impetus by the impatient outburst - 'Out, out, brief candle!'; the momentum increases as the images accumulate. The key word in the concluding sentences is the initial word of the twenty fourth line - 'Life' - giving the lines a kind of continuity. 'Life's but a walking shadow' is picked up by a 'poor player', and the rhythm moves easily over the enjambment to the pause at the end of the sentence, where it receives new energy from the alliteration as it swings over the end of the line - It is a tale/Told' - before concluding with the finality of 'Signifying nothing', stopping emphatically in the middle of the line.

Use of Images : The imagery used in the extract is quite striking. The 'candle', a traditional symbol of illumination, is suggested by 'lighted fools' in the previous line, and in turn suggests the 'shadow' of the person walking by the light of the candle - the 'shadow' that expresses the insubstantial nature of life. The 'poor player' - an actor - follows from 'shadow', for actors were often described as shadows depicting only an illusion of what the reality is i.e. representing a non-existing person (character) and his unreal thoughts and actions. Thus, 'Struts and frets' relates Macbeth's disillusioned

view of all human activity both to his own strutting and fretting within the castle of Dunsinane and to the heightened action and speech of the actor who plays him on the stage, The images increase in intensity from the insubstantial 'shadow' to the pathetic 'player' and then to the outright absurdity of 'an idiot', while the neutral 'walking' changes to the trivial self-importance of 'stints and frets', heightened by the clipped alliteration, before the sudden anticlimax, 'Signifying nothing'.

The Theme : The speech reveals that Macbeth now realizes the full implications of all the prophecies and predictions made earlier which ignited his suppressed aspirations. When he was hailed 'King hereafter' he expressed his delighted anticipation in the imagery' of the stage:

Two truths are told
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme;

This speech shows that he now understands the full implications of the earlier metaphor. It expands on his earlier description of life as being a 'fitful fever', in contrast to which the peace of death enjoyed by Duncan is greatly preferred; it is perhaps appropriate then as the only epitaph mat Lady Macbeth gets. Hence, in its brief expanse the speech reflects one of the major themes of the entire play - retribution.

Example B :

Extract from Arther Miller's *Death Of A Salesman*, Act I Sequence 9.

- LINDA You're such a boy!. You think you can go away for a year and . . . You've 'got to get it into you head now that one day you'll knock on this door and there'bc strange people here ~
- BIFF What; are you. talking about? You're not even sixty,
- LINDA But what about your father?
- BIFF (/ame/y). Well, I mearit him too.
- HAPPY He admires Pop.
- LINDA Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him, then you;can't have any feeling for me.
- BIFF Sure I can, Mom.
- LINDA No. You can't just come to see me, because I love him. (*With a threat, but only a threat, 'of tear. '*;) He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You've got to make up your mind now, darling, there's

no leeway any more. Either he's your father and you pay him that respect, or else you're not to come here. I know he's not easy, to get along with - nobody knows that better than me - but . . .

WILLY *(from the left, with a laugh)* Hey, hey, Biffo!

BIFF *(starting to go out after Willy)* What the hell is the matter with him? *(Happy stops him)*

LINDA Don't - don't go near him!

BIFF Stop making excuses for him! He always, always wipes the floor with you. Never had an ounce of respect for you.

"HAPPY He's always had respect for -

BIFF What the hell do you know about it?

HAPPY *(surlily)* Just don't call him crazy!

BIFF He's got no character - Charley wouldn't do this. Not in his own house - spewing out that vomit from his mind.

HAPPY Charley never had to cope with what he's got to.

BIFF People are worse off than Willy Loman. Believe me, I've seen them!

LINDA Then make Charley your father. Biff. You can't do that, can you.' I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper, He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy -

BIFF I didn't mean -

LINDA No, a lot of people think he's lost his- balance. But you don't have to be very smart to know what his trouble is The man is exhausted.

HAPPY Sure!

LINDA A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty-six years this March,

opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they 'ake his salary away.

HAPPY *(indignantly)* I didn't know that, Mom.

LINDA You never asked, my dean Now that you get your spending nionev someplace else you don't trouble your mind with him.

HAPPY But I gave you money last -

LINDA Christmas-time, fifty dollars! To fix the hot water it cost ninety-seven fifty! For five weeks he's been on straight commission, like a beginner, an unknown!

BIFF Those ungrateful bastards!

LINDA Are they worse than his sons? When he brought them business, when he was young, they were glad to see him. But now his old friends, the old buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him a pinch - they're all dead, retired. He used to be able to make six, seven calls a day in Boston. Now he takes his valises out of the car and puts them back and takes them out again and -he'sexhausted. Instead of walking he talks now. He drives seven hundred miles, and when he gets there noone knows him any more, no one welcomes him. And what goes through a man's mind, driving seven..hundred miles home without having earned-a cent? Why shouldn't he talk to himself? Why? When he has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me,that it's his pay? How long can that go on? How long? You see what I'm sitting here and waiting for? And you tell me he has no character? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit? When does he get the medal for that? Is this his reward - to turn around at the age of sixty-three and find his sons, who he loved better than his life, one a philandering bum - philandering bum -

HAPPY Mom!

LINDA That's all you are, my baby! *(to Biff)* And you! What happened to the love you had for him? You were such"

pals! How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he could come home to you!

BIFF All right Mom! I'll live here in my room and I'll get a job. I'll keep away from him, that's all.

LINDA No, Biff. You can't stay here and fight all the time.

BIFF He threw me out of this house, remember that.

LINDA Why did he do that? I never knew why.

BIFF Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows!

LINDA Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

BIFF Just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him – that's all I have to say. I'll chip in from now on. He'll settle for half my pay cheque. He'll be all right. I'm going to bed. *(He starts for the stairs)*

LINDA He won't be all right.

BIFF *(turning on the stairs, furiously)* I hate this city and I'll stay here. Now what do you want?

LINDA He's dying, Biff.

[*End of Extract*]

Identifying the Context : The extract occurs towards the end of Act I in *Death of Of A Salesman*, while Willy is taking his walk and Linda is left alone with the boys in the kitchen. Willy's behaviour since he returned home has been a matter of deep concern for her because Biff has been away working in Texas for a year and Happy, although living in New York, seldom visits Brooklyn, the has had no chance of speaking to them frankly.

Character, plot and action : There is very little physical action during the scene, but a great deal of psychological tension between Linda and the boys, especially between Linda and Biff is revealed. The main character in the extract is Linda who till then has been portrayed as a rather conventional and stereotyped character with all admiration and loyalty towards Willy, devoting all her love to her sons and looking after the family finances. She is also found coping with all the troubles that Willy has been giving her. This scene reveals former details and greater depths in her character.

At the very beginning (from Biff's speech) we come to know that Linda, "not even sixty", is younger than Willy, though she apprehends death to be near *(One day...people herer)*. Linda is not a pretender and she is not of that sort where she would use her emotions,

her feelings for blackmailing, but there is an instance ‘... a threat but only a threat, of tears’⁷ which reveals how strongly she feels about forbidding one of her sons to come to the house if he cannot agree with her husband. It is from her speech that we come to know about Willy a bit when she says that Willy is “‘not easy to get along with’ which according to her is the worst side of his character. Nevertheless, she demands that Biff should show respect to Willy and stops Biff from going to speak to Willy when he is heard muttering alone outside.

Again, Linda herself is quite afraid of Willy’s mental stability, but when Biff declares that Charlie is far better than Willy, she immediately flares up to defend her husband in a series of strong speeches, not only outlining the process of decline of Willy but also demanding that Biff and Happy should do their duty as sons and ‘pay attention’ to their father’s needs. The speech reveals Linda’s love for Willy, a love which is much stronger than the love for her sons. But she does not hate them. In fact, even when she bluntly despises them she uses little habitual endearments in between. She calls Happy “a philandering bum”⁷, but she adds most tenderly, ‘that’s all you ate, my baby!’⁷ Again, to Biff, she says ‘you’re such a boy!’ but she speaks with more respect and sorrow: ‘... And you! What happened ...home to you!’

Biff’s character develops very little in the scene as Linda largely dominates here. Initially, he is portrayed as an unworthy son who calls his father ‘fake’, ‘cheat’, ‘liar’ and goes on to claim Charlie to be a far better person. He is also extremely indifferent to his father’s problems, “‘What the hell is the matter with him?’⁷ But, later he is seen talking to Willy in the garden, in spite of all his bitter feelings and misunderstandings. We also see that he is further willing to contribute half his pay to support his parents. This obviously reveals his sense of duty as a worthy son. Again, though largely out of Linda’s love, Biff agrees to stay and work in a city which he hates most.

Happy has very few speeches and he has much less contribution to the development in the scene. But even in its brief expanse we come to know that he is somewhat sympathetic to his father. When Biff compares Willy with Charlie and concludes that Charlie is far better than their father, Happy immediately defends ‘Charlie never...got to’. We also come to know that he has contributed financially to the family needs.

Language and Rhythm : The language used is real and true to life. There is no poetic effect as such except for the few longer speeches of Linda. Biff and Happy speak in their usual colloquial speech such as, ‘What the hell do you know about it?’ and ‘Charley never had to cope with what he’s got to.’ Biff uses a dramatic phrase, ‘...spewing out that vomit from his mind’.

Again, although the speeches in the play are highly emotional, there is no sentimentality, if we closely examine the two long speeches by Linda we will find that the words used are quite ordinary and most of them are monosyllables. In the first long speech Linda

uses a number of short words - 'He's not be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog'. The picture it evokes is simple but vet}' sad. In the next sentence the repetition of the word 'attention' sounds like drum beats. Linda goes on to say how she imagines Willy suffers during his unsuccessful business trips. The language here is simple yet vivid ("He used to ...one welcomes him.'). Immediately after this intensity and rhythm picks up as she goes on to ask questions one after another to her sons without a pause. Otherwise throughout the extract the rhythm changes frequently with the mood of the speakers as the emotional tension is high all through. Linda, almost bursting into tears, gives Biff an ultimatum forbidding him from coming home unless he shows affection for Willy. This makes it impossible for Biff to accept and there is a momentary deadlock in the situation until the tension is found to be broken by Willy's voice from outside, where he is heard speaking playfully to Biff!

The tension again rises when she remarks that Willy is no longer getting a salary and Happy's denial of any knowledge of this causes Linda to expose all her pent up emotions during her months of loneliness. The rhythm here again increases as she is bitterly disappointed *with her sons*. The mood lightens and the rhythm falls a bit when she writes off Happy as 'philandering bum', but darkens again when she turns to Biff and cannot understand why he despises his fatter. The tension again softens when Biff relents and agrees to stay at home and contribute to the family income.

The scene ends with Biff trying to move upstairs and Linda stopping him and informing them that their father is dying. The extract ends on a shocking pause with the family reunited.

Theme: The extract upholds one of the major themes of the play - family relationships. It is a comment upon Willy from the viewpoint of a wife and a son who truly love him but see him differently. Linda is sympathetic towards Willy as she considers him to be her hero who has been defeated by cruel fate, thus needing attention and love. On the other hand, Biff considers Willy a fake, a liar and a cheat, getting what he deserves. He is angry with the fact that his mother whom he loves intensely is being made to suffer for his father's failures.

Thus, *Exploring* and especially *Exploiting* a tragedy in the above manner help us to delve deep into the tragedy and get the real meaning and feeling of the situations, actions and speeches of the characters involved, giving the true effect of a tragic play.

1.6 Review Questions :

- I. 1. How does Aristotle define a tragedy?
2. What is Aristotle's conception of a tragic hero?
3. Discuss in detail the constituent elements of a tragedy with special reference to plot and character.

4. Write an account of the evolution of tragedy starting from the ancient to the modern period.
5. How are modern tragedies different from Elizabethan romantic tragedies?
6. Make a close critical analysis of Act III, Sc iv, Lines 13-31 in *Macbeth*. ('There's blood upon thy face... We'll hear ourselves again') with special reference to the imagery in the passage and show how it relates to the themes of the play.

II. 1. Read and explore in some detail

- Major tragedies of Shakespeare (Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear)
 - 'Justice' by Galsworthy.
 - 'Death of Salesman' – Arthur Miller
 - Riders to the Sea – Synge.
2. Examine all the uses of the word 'nature' (including the related words like 'natural' and 'unnatural') in *Macbeth* and explain each meaning and significance.
 3. Explain 'Catharsis' citing textual references from *Macbeth* which make you feel the cathartic effect
 4. In *Death Of A Salesman* 'Willy fails to distinguish between popularity and self-respect. Comment on this observation giving examples from the text of the play and analyzing them.
 5. Write short notes on: a) Hamartia, b) Hubris c) Three unities in tragedy d) Social tragedy

1.7 Texts for study :

Macbeth :	William Shakespeare
Othello :	William Shakespeare
Dr. Faustus :	Marlowe
Saint Joan :	Bernard Shaw
Riders To The Sea :	J. M. Synge
Justice :	Galsworthy
Death Of A Salesman :	Arthur Miller

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UNIT 1 □ EXPLOITING LITERARY TEXTS FOR THE STUDY OF THE NOVEL

Structure

- 1.0 What is a Narrative?
- 1.1 What is narrative fiction?
- 1.2 Origin of the narrative fiction in English
- 1.3 Classification of novels
- 1.4 Techniques of narrative fiction
- 1.5 Textual representation of a character
- 1.6 Points of view in narration

1.0 WHAT IS A NARRATIVE ?

It has to be the talking or telling of a story and so whenever a story is told, you have a narrative. Novels are not the only narratives. Long poems (e.g. Kubla Khan), epics, biographies, autobiographies, historical accounts, travelogues, short stories are all narratives. The difference is that various techniques are used in telling a story.

1.1 WHAT IS NARRATIVE FICTION ?

Fact is associated with the real, actual or experienced, while fiction is invented story which may or may not have links with the real events. Fiction is a term usually applied to short stories.

1.2 ORIGIN OF THE NARRATIVE FICTION

Novel as genre appeared in Europe in the 18th cent. Cervantes' Don Quixote, Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Moll Flanders (1722) are among the earliest fictional narratives in English. The novel remained the most popular genre throughout the nineteenth century up to the modern period with experiments carried out during all three hundred years of its life history.

Crucial Factors behind the rise of the novel :

A. Literacy B. Printing C. Market Economy D. The rise of individualism

The rise of the novel has been directly linked with the changing economic and social patterns of the eighteenth century into the modern period.

1.3 CLASSIFICATION OF NOVELS :

Novels are usually classified on the basis of constituent elements such as *Characters* (the Spy Novel), *Setting* (the Historical Novel), *Plot* (the Detective or Adventure novel). Also another form of classification could be the *Epistolary* Novel, The *Picaresque* Novel etc.

1.4 TECHNIQUES OF NARRATIVE FICTION

1. *The story or plot* : The story can be defined as a narrative arranged in time sequence. In plot the causality of events is also present.
 2. *Characters* : Characters can be classified according to (a) their function-heroes, villains, etc. (b) the prominence given to them in the text (c) flat or round characters according to their development (d) static or dynamic characters (e) different ways of delineating the same character in different texts e.g Satan in Paradise Lost
-

1.5 TEXTUAL REPRESENTATION OF A CHARACTER

There may be two major ways of textually representing a character a) by direct definition or b) by indirect presentation

[a] By direct definition

This is the technique of presenting a trait of any character directly or explicitly. The text clearly indicates some particular characteristic through the use of a particular word, sentence, event or description (refer to passages A or E)

[b] By indirect presentation

This takes place when instead of directly mentioning the traits of a character the text concretizes it through some means such as action, speech, the external appearance of the environment, (cf passages C and D)

1.6 POINTS OF VIEW IN NARRATION

What is a point of view ? This can be described as an *observation* point from which a story has been told (who is telling the story ?)

First person narration : Here the narrator may be the protagonist/onlooker/confidant within the story. The matter is limited to what the narrator knows (use of I and we).

Second person narration : This is rarely used

Third person narrative Here the narrator is the author, someone outside the story. Pronouns used will be *he she* or *they*. Here the author has the freedom of going to the minds of all characters. He is the omniscient narrator.

Point of view and Focalisation : A distinction can be made between the two. Focalisation means speaking through a voice whereas a point of view indicates seeing through someone else's angle of vision. This happens in an introspective narrative where an adult narrator looks back and assumes the voice of a child.

EXERCISE :

Explore and exploit the given texts on the basis of the discussion you have had in respect of the novel, its techniques, its textuality, its point of view and focalisation

UNIT 2 □ EXPLOITING LITERARY TEXTS FOR THE STUDY OF THE SHORT STORY

Structure

- 2.0 What is a Short Story?
- 2.1 Origin of Short Story
- 2.2 Features of a Short Story
 - 2.2.1 Textuality
- 2.3 Points of View in a Short Story
- 2.4 Exercise and Activity

2.0 WHAT IS A SHORT STORY ?

A short story is a form of narrative fiction which has its own particular characteristics. It is a relatively new literary genre which has become very popular over the last hundred and fifty years. The reasons for this may be listed as a) the magazine boom b) the frenetic pace of life.

2.1 ORIGIN OF THE SHORT STORY

Though the short story reached great heights in the twentieth century, its origin can be found in fables, anecdotes, fairy tales, *i.e.* in folklore where the emphasis was on *telling* rather than *writing*. Tales from *The Old Testament*, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, could also be taken to be the precursors of the modern short story. The first short stories in English were written by Edgar Allen Poe, an American author, who also had his own theory regarding this genre.

2.2 FEATURES OF A SHORT STORY

The salient features of a short story are as follows

- [a] **Length** : Brevity is essential in a short story. The norm is about 3000 to 6000 words though there are some excellent short stories which are within 1000 words. Brevity implies a mastery over language and a control over situations. Every word should be meaningful and descriptive passages usually are omitted. Compression is essential.
- [b] **Scenes** : The norm is about three scenes. Scenic descriptions are generally avoided and locations which the reader is familiar with are used—*e.g.* Cafes,

hotels, bars etc. Concrete terms are used to describe the setting which the reader can easily visualize. Economy is essential so a few well chosen details picturise the scene, depict characters and show whatever action is required.

[c] **Characters** : The norm is between three and six characters. Each one is crucial to the story. No character development is possible. Short stories tend to focus on periods of life which can be shown in a limited frame work, e.g. childhood or old age, within which the author chooses to focus on a specific point.

[d] **Structure** : Ironic reversals, epiphanic moments and revelations are all part of the structure of a short story, e.g. *O Henry's Gift of the Magi* is an example of ironic reversal.

Epiphanic moments are points of time where the mention of any familiar' object can take a character back in time when some truths are revealed in a flash. The writer may also choose a structure which shows a sequential progression of time.

2.3 POINTS OF VIEW IN A SHORT STORY

What is a point of view ? This can be described as an observation point from which a story has been told (Who is telling the story ?)

The norm for a short story is to choose a point of view most appropriate for the story and to stay with the same view throughout. However, a novelist may change it within a single novel.

First person narration : Here the narrator may be the protagonist/onlooker/confidant within the story'. The matter is limited to what the narrator knows (use of I and we).

Second person narration : This is rarely used

Third person narrative : Here the narrator is the author, someone outside the story. Pronouns used will be *he she* or *they*. Here the author has the freedom of going to the minds of all characters. He is the omniscient narrator.

Point of view and Focalisation : A distinction can be made between the two. Focalisation means speaking through a voice whereas a point of view indicates seeing through some one's angle of vision. This happens in an introspective narrative where an adult narrator looks back and assumes the voice of a child.

EXERCISE :

Explore and exploit the given texts on the basis of the discussion you have had in respect of the short story, its techniques, its textuality, its point of view and focalisation. Refer also to short stories included in the +2 and UG pass syllabus of H.S. Council and Cal. Univ. and other boards.

UNIT 3 □ BIOGRAPHY

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Early biographers
- 3.2 The Role of the Biographer
- 3.3 Excerpts from Biographical Sketches
- 3.4 Discussion
- 3.5 Review questions

3.0 INTRODUCTION

There is perhaps no man who does not enjoy telling a story or at least listening to one. And ever since men have been narrating stories about fellow human-beings and acquainting listeners with known, little known and unknown facts about him or her and about his/her life with its highs and lows, they have actually been setting the stage for the appearance of Biography as a literary form.

It is common knowledge that a biographer tells us a story, the story of an individual, dead or alive, formally and he makes the attempt mainly because we, as readers, are keen to know about the Subject and his journey through life either till the end or till a point chosen by the narrator with a strong awareness of reader requirements. Since a biography is expected to inform readers about an individual it is more than obvious that the Subject has to be one who by his life style/achievements/oddities/eccentricities/success etc. has demanded attention and also raised reader curiosity to such heights that for the biographer the venture is both artistically as well as commercially satisfying.

3.1 EARLY BIOGRAPHERS

Since simple curiosity to know more about any individual is as old as human civilization, 'life stories' have always found readers. Hence Plutarch wrote his *Parallel Lives* and for the benefit of many Sir Thomas North translated these life sketches in 1579. It is believed that it was in the seventeenth century that 'fairly detailed secular' biographies received attention and recognition. One of the earliest of such works was Izaak Walton's *Lives*. The growing popularity of both Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* and James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* in the eighteenth century, was a direct help in establishing Biography as a literary form of importance.

In the *Rambler*, Dr. Johnson expressed anxiety over the *performance* of a biographer since "biography has often been allotted to writers who seem very little acquainted

with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from public papers, but imagine themselves writing a life when they exhibit a chronological series of actions or preferments ; and so little regard the manners or behaviour of their heroes that more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral."

3.2 THE ROLE OF THE BIOGRAPHER

The role of biographer is difficult to define for he is expected to play more than one part. His is the art of a photographer for he is committed to present on paper almost a photo-copy of the original. He is a painter who makes his Subject come alive on his canvas using only words as his tool. He is to be an ideal spectator, keenly observant, knowledgeable and yet detached so that personal bias or prejudice of any kind does not affect the biography adversely. He is expected to have the self-control of an ascetic and not allow personal admiration for the Subject to mar his work which actually documents, for posterity as well, the story of a man's life and works. Not for nothing is Samuel Johnson's account of the poets a suspect.

A biographer must be a compelling story-teller too, capable of making an individual's life story as exciting as a novel. In fact, many of us have read what may be termed *novelized biographies* of personalities ranging from Elizabeth I to Van Gogh and beyond. Lytton Strachey's fame rests on *Eminent Victorians*, *Queen Victoria*, and *Elizabeth and Essex* which show both "what biography can do" and perhaps what biographies should not do. He has often taken liberties and his accounts have not always been authentic.

For authenticity and reliability, a biographer should turn be a literary sleuth as well, probing, investigating, to unveil what has remained unknown. Only systematic research, careful selection, judicious omission of facts that need not be included, can give life to a biography and ascertain both its quality and its success not just as a document but as a work of art that may inspire new writers. Yet one wonders whether there will ever be another James Boswell, hanging upon every word of his Subject, listening with rapt attention, nothing down every point and then spending another seven long years before giving to the world "an immortal work" like the *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

3.3 EXCERPTS FROM BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

You will now go through the following excerpts as samples of biographies. As you read the excerpts note down all the strategies used by the biographers to present the subject.

EXCERPT 1 – GEOFFREY CHAUCER

The known facts of Chaucer's life are fragmentary and are based almost entirely on official records. He was born in London between 1340 and 1344, the son of John Chaucer, a vintner. In 1357 he was a page in the household of Prince Lionel, later duke of Clarence, whom he served for many years. In 1359-60 he was with the army of Edward III in France, where he was captured by the French but ransomed.

By 1366 he had married Philippa Roet, who was probably the sister of John of Gaunt's third wife, she was a lady-in-waiting to Edward III's queen. During the years 1370 to 1378, Chaucer was frequently employed on diplomatic missions to the Continent, visiting Italy in 1372-73 and in 1378. From 1374 he held a number of official positions, among them comptroller of customs on furs, skins, and hides for the port of London (1374-86) and clerk of the king's works (1389-91). The official date of Chaucer's death is Oct. 25, 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

EXCERPT 2 – T.S. ELIOT

Eliot, T. S. (26 Sept. 1888-4 Jan. 1965), poet, critic, and editor, was born Thomas Stearns Eliot in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of Henry Ware Eliot, president of the Hydraulic Press Brick Company, and Charlotte Champe Stearns, a former teacher, an energetic social work volunteer at the Humanity club of St. Louis, and an amateur poet with a taste for Emerson.....In December 1908 a book Eliot found in the Harvard Union library changed his life : Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1895) introduced him to the poetry of Jules Laforgue, and Laforgue's combination of ironic elegance and psychological nuance gave his juvenile literary efforts a voice. By 1909-1910 his poetic vocation had been confirmed : he joined the board and was briefly secretary of Harvard's literary magazine, the *Advocate*, and he could recommend to his classmate William Tinckom-Fernandez the last word in French sophistication—the vers Libre of Paul Fort and Francis Jammes (Tinckom-Fernandez returned the favour by introducing Eliot to Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven" and John Davidson's "Thirty Bob a Week." poems Eliot took to heart, and to the verse of Ezra Pound, which Eliot had no time for.) On the *Advocate*, Eliot started a lifelong friendship with Conrad Aiken.

EXCERPT 3 – Dr. Johnson's harsh account of Jonathan Swift in *Lives of the Poets* : Johnson disliked Swift

He entered upon the clerical state with hope to excel in preaching, but complained, that, from the time of his political controversies, he could only preach pamphlets. This censure of himself, if judgement be made from those sermons which have been published, was unreasonably severe.

The suspicious of his irreligion proceeded in a great measure from his dread of

hypocrisy ; instead of wishing to seem better, he delighted in seeming worse than he was. He went in London to early prayers, lest he should be seen at church ; he read prayers to his servants every morning with such dexterous secrecy, that Dr. Delany was six months in his house before he knew it. He was not only careful to bide the good which he did, but willingly incurred the suspicion of evil which he did not. He forgot what himself had formerly asserted, that hypocrisy is less mischievous than open impiety. Dr. Delany, with all his zeal for his honour, has justly condemned this part of his character.

The person of Swift had not many recommendations. He had a kind of muddy complexion, which, though he washed himself with oriental scrupulosity, did not look clear. He had a countenance sour and severe, which he seldom softened by any appearance of gaiety. He stubbornly resisted any tendency to laughter.

To his domesticks he was naturally rough ; and a man of a rigorous temper, with that vigilance of minute attention which his works discover, must have been a master that few could bear. That he was disposed to do his servants good, on important occasions, is no great mitigation ; benefaction can be but rare, and tyrannic peevishness is perpetual. He did not spare the servants of others. Once, when he dined alone with the Earl of Orrery, he said, of one that waited in the room, That man has, since we sat to the table, committed fifteen faults. What the faults were, Lord Orrery, from whom I heard the story had not been attentive enough to discover. My number may perhaps not be exact.

EXCERPT 4 – *Life of Samuel Johnson : Based on Boswell's observations, conversation etc.*

In 1750 he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified a *majestick* teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. *The Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*, were the last of the kind published in England, which had stood the test of a long trial ; and such an interval had now elapsed since their publication, as made him justly think that, to many of his readers, this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the advantage of novelty. A few days before the first of his Essays came out, there started another competitor for fame in the same form, under the title of *The Tatler Revived*, which I believe was 'born but to die.' Johnson was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title, the *Rambler*, which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses ; which the Italians have literally, but ludicrously translated by Vagabondo; and which has been lately assumed as the denomination of a vehicle of licentious tales, *The Rambler's Magazine*. He gave Sir Joshua Reynolds the following account of its getting this name. 'What MUST be done, Sir, WILL be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon

my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. The Rambler seemed the best that occurred, and I took it.'

With what devout and conscientious sentiments this paper was undertaken, is evidenced by the following prayer, which he composed and offered up on the occasion : *'Almighty GOD, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly, grant, I beseech Thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others grant this. O LORD, for the sake of thy son JESUS CHRIST, Amen.'*

The first paper of the Rambler was published on Tuesday the 20th of March, 1750; and its author was enabled to continue it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Friday, till Saturday the 17th of March, 1752, on which day it closed. This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, which I have had occasion to quote elsewhere, that 'a man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it.' for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his Dictionary, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind, during all that time.

Posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed. It can be accounted for only in this way; that by reading and meditation, and a very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge, which by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever ready at his call, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most apt and energetick expression. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in, and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.

EXCERPT 5 – Preface to Eminent Victorians Lytton Strachey

THE HISTORY of the Victorian Age will never be written : we know too much about it. For ignorance is the first requisite of the historian—ignorance, which simplifies clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the art. Concerning the Age which has just passed, our fathers and our grandfathers have poured forth and accumulated so vast a quantity of information that the industry

Ranke would be submerged by it, and the perspicacity of a Gibbon would quail be it. It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous narration that the explorer can hope to depict that singular epoch. If he is wise, he will adopt a subtler strategy, will attack his subject in unexpected places, he will fall upon the flank, or the real will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hither-to undivided. He will row out over that great ocean of material and lower down into it, here there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some character specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity. Guided by these considerations, I have written the ensuing studies. I have attempted, through medium of biography, to present some Victorian visions to the modern eye. They are in one sense, haphazard visions—that is to say, my choice of subjects has been determined by no desire to construct a system or to prove a theory, but by motives of convenience and of art. It has been my purpose to illustrate rather than explain. It would have been futile to hope to tell even a precis of the truth about Victorian age, for the shortest precis must fill innumerable volumes. But, in the lives an ecclesiastic, an educational authority, a woman of action, and a man of adventure have sought to examine and elucidate certain fragments of the truth which took fancy and lay of my hand.

I hope, however, that the following pages may prove to be of interest from the strip biographical no less than from the historical point of view. Human beings are important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past. They have a value which independent of any temporal processes—which is eternal, and must be felt for its sake. The art of biography seems to have fallen on evil times in England. We have it is true, a few masterpieces, but we have never had, like the French, a group biographical tradition ; we have had no Fontenelles and Condorcets, with the incomparable *eloges*, compressing into a few shining pages the manifold existence of men. With us, the most delicate the humane of all the branches of the art of writing been relegated to the journeymen of letters ; we do not reflect that it is perhaps difficult to write a good life as to live one. Who does not know those two fat volumes, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design ? They are as familiar as *coriege* of the undertaker, and were the same air of slow, funereal barbarism. Or tempted to suppose, of some of them, that they were composed by that functionary the final item of his job. The studies in this book are indebted, in more ways than one to such works—works which certainly deserve the name of Standard Biographies, they have provided me not only with much indispensable information, but something even more precious—an example. How many lessons are to be learnt of them! But it is hardly necessary to particularise. To preserve, for instance, a becon brevity—a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant and nothing that significant—that surely, is the first duty of the biographer. The second, no less sum is to maintain his own freedom of spirit. It is not his business to be complimentary;

his business to lay bare the facts of the case, as he understands them. That is who have aimed at in this book—to lay bare the facts of some cases, as I understand the dispassionately, impartially, and without ulterior intentions.

EXCERPT 6 – Queen Victoria

Lytton Strachey

Betrothal

He was not in love with her. Affection, gratitude, the natural reactions to the unqualified devotion of a lively young cousin who was also a queen—such feelings possessed him, but the ardours of reciprocal passion were not his. Though he found that he liked Victoria very much, what immediately interested him in his curious position was less her than himself.....[He] was aware of a new sensation—the stirrings of ambition in his breast. His place would indeed be a high, an enviable one! And then, on the instant, came another thought..... He would not be there to please himself, but for a very different purpose—to do good. He must be “noble, manly, and princely in all things.....”

[She] was suddenly prostrated by alarm, regret, and doubt....She was to come under an alien domination—she would have to promise that she would honour and obey.....someone, who might, after all, thwart her, oppose her—and how dreadful that would be! Why had she embarked on this hazardous experiment ?

No doubt, she loved Albert ; but she loved power too. At any rate, one thing was certain ; she might be Albert’s wife, but she would always be Queen of England. He reappeared, in an exquisite uniform, and her hesitations melted in his presence like mist before the sun. On February 10, 1840, the marriage took place.

EXCERPT 7 – Marriage

Victoria overcome by a new, an unimagined revelation, had surrendered her whole soul to her husband..... [He] was good—he was great! How could she ever have dreamt of setting up her will against his wisdom, her ignorance against his knowledge, her fancies against his perfect taste ?

The husband was not so happy as the wife. In spite of the great improvement in his situation, in spite of a growing family and the adoration of Victoria, Albert was still a stranger in a strange land, and the serenity of spiritual satisfaction was denied him. It was something, no doubt, to have dominated his immediate environment ; but it was not enough.....Victoria idolised him, but it was understanding that he craved for, not idolatry ; and how much did Victoria, filled to the brim though she was with him, understand him? How much does the bucket understand the well ? He was lonely.

3.4 DISCUSSION AND REVIEW EXERCISE

1. I hope these excerpts have helped in your understanding of the art of Biography.

Before we conclude this unit we shall briefly consider some of the issues that we have identified as important for the writing of a biography.

Here is a list of features. You might match any excerpt that displays these features then discuss and compare your answers with a partner.

Features	Excerpt
(a) <i>Keen detailed observation of family relationships.</i>	
(b) <i>Factual information without any comment or detailed observation.</i>	
(c) <i>Factual information embellished by a few comments and some details.</i>	
(d) <i>Critical presentation of the subjects personal traits, oddities and eccentricities.</i>	
(e) <i>Factual information catering to the readers requirements for developing literary competence.</i>	
(f) <i>Photographic presentation of the subject through historical references and anecdotes.</i>	
(g) <i>Presentation of the subject in the context of contemporary historical and cultural attributes.</i>	

2. **Quote from the excerpts the language cues that helped you match each excerpt with the biographical features.**

UNIT 4 □ ESSAYS

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introducing the Essay
- 4.2 Types of Essays
- 4.3 Exploring and Exploiting Excerpts from Essays
- 4.4 Conclusion
- 4.5 Review Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will discuss another literary form – the Essay. In Part - I you have already familiarized yourself with the Essay as a literary form. You will also learn how to exploit representative texts and excerpts for actual study of the Essay.

4.1 INTRODUCING THE ESSAY

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams defines the Essay as any “short composition in prose that undertakes to discuss a matter, express a point of view, or persuade us to accept a thesis on any subject” However, it needs to be mentioned that some, like Alexander Pope, experimented with verse essays as well. But, unfortunately, Pope’s *Essay on Criticism and Essay on Man* did not succeed in inspiring too many essayists. Hence “verse essays” still lag far behind their prose counterparts.

Though it is difficult to date the first Essay, we may safely trace this literary form back to Ancient Greece and Rome *i.e.* to the prose writings of Theophrastus, Plutarch and to the Latin works of Cicero and Seneca. But, as is common knowledge, it is Montaigne’s *Essays*, signifying “attempts”, that have given this genre its “standard name” and John Florio’s English translation of these essays have made them accessible to interested readers.

4.2 TYPES OF ESSAYS

That essays may be divided into two broad groups, the Formal or the Impersonal and the Informal or the Personal essays, is only too well known. The former, as its name suggests, is legitimately objective, neutral and even detached in tone where as the Personal essay may be a happy substitute for an informal chat between two people. Though it is the content of an Essay along with the stated or the implied purpose of the essayists that may be held responsible for its categorization yet the tone of the

essayists that may be held responsible for its categorization yet the tone of the Essay. A.C. Benson's *The Art of the Essayist* is a definite help. However, whether the tone adopted is conversational or diadetic, the essay is a powerful vehicle for describing, discussing, debating or for voicing thoughts on subjects ranging from a roasted pig to Michelangelo.

4.3 EXPLORING AND EXPLOITING EXCERPTS FROM ESSAYS

You will now go through the following excerpts as samples of essays. As you read the excerpts note (a) the type of essay (b) the cues that helped you identify the type.

EXCERPT – 1 Of custom, and that we should not easily change a law received. *Montaigne.*

I saw the other day, at my own house, a little fellow, a native of Nantes, born without arms, who has so well taught his feet to perform the services his hands should have done him, that truly these have half forgotten their natural office, and, indeed the fellow calls them his hands ; with them he cuts anything, charges and discharges a pistol, threads a needle, sews, writes, puts off his hat, combs his head, plays at cards and dice, and all this with as much dexterity as any other could do who had more and more proper, limbs to assist him. The money I gave him for— he gains his living by showing these feats—he took in his foot, as we do in our hand. I have seen another who, being yet a boy, flourished a two-handed sword, and if I may so say, handled a halberd with the mere motions of his neck and shoulders for want of hands, tossed them into air, and caught them again, darted a dagger, and cracked a whip as well as any coachman in France.

**EXCERPT – 2 That to study philosophy is to learn to die
*Montaigne***

CICERO says “that to study philosophy is nothing but to prepare one’s self to die.” The reason of which is, because study and contemplation do in some sort withdraw from us our soul, and employ it separately from the body, which is a kind of apprenticeship and a resemblance of death, or else, because all the wisdom and reasoning in the world fo in the end conclude in this point, to teach us not to fear to die. And to say the truth, either our reason mocks us, or it ought to have no other aim but our contentment only, nor to endeavor anything but, in sum, to make us live well, and, as the Holy Scripture says, at our ease. All the opinions of the world agree in this, that pleasure is our end, though we make use of divers means to attain it ; they would, otherwise, be rejected at the first motion ; for who would give ear to him that should propose affliction and misery for his end ?

Translated by Charles Cotton

EXCERPT – 3 Aphoristic Essay :

Of Studies

Francis Bacon

Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use ; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute ; nor to believe and take for granted ; nor to find talk and discourse ; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested ; that is, some books are to be read only in parts ; others to be read, but not curiously ; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others ; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man ; conference a ready man ; and writing an exact man.

EXCERPT – 4 Of Revenge

Francis Bacon

Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law ; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy, but in passing it over, he is superior, for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Solomon, I am sure, saith. It is the glory of a man, to pass by an offence. That which is past is gone, and irrevocable ; and wise men have enough to do, with things present and to come, therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labor in past matters. There is no man doth a wrong, for the wrong's sake, but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honor, or the like.

Critical Essays

John Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* is an essay with a difference. That it is an essay in the first place has been established by Dryden's own lines to Charles Lord Buckhurst :

EXCERPT – 5 My Lord,

As I was lately reviewing my loose Papers, amongst the rest I found this Essay, the writing of which in this rude and indigested manner wherein your Lordship now seas it, serv'd as an amusement to me in the Country, when the violence of the last Plague had driven me from the Town. Seeing then our Theaters shut up. I was engag'd in these kind of thoughts with the same delight with which men think upon their absent Mistresses : I confess I find many things in this discourse which I do not now approve; my judgement being a little alter'd since the writing of it, but whether for the better or the worse I know not : Neither indeed is it much material in an Essay, where all I have said is problematical.

EXCERPTS – 6 Excerpt from the Essay.

All the company smil'd at the concept of *Lisidetus*, but *Crites*, more eager than before, began to make particular exceptions against some Writers, and said the publick Magistrate ought to send betimes to forbid them and that it concern'd the peace and quiet of all honest people, that ill Poets should be as well silenc'd as seditious Preachers. In my opinion, replyed *Eugenius*, you pursue your point too far, for as to my own particular, I am so great a lover of Poesie, that I could wish them all rewarded who attempt but to do well ; at least I would not have them worse us'd then *Sylla* the Dictator did one of their brethren heretofore.

I could

wish with all my heart replied *Crites*, that money whom we know were as bountifully thank'd upon the same condition, that they would never trouble us again. For amongst others, I have a mortal apprehension of two Poets, whom this victory with the help of both her wings will never be able to escape, 'tis easie to guess whom you intend, said *Lisideius* ; and without naming them, I ask you if one of them does not perpetually pay us with clenches upon words and a certain clownish kind of raillery ?

EXCERPT – 7 The Function of Criticism at the Present Time *Matthew Arnold*

MANY objections have been made to a proposition which, in some remarks of mine on translating Homer, I ventured to put forth, a proportion about criticism and its importance at the present day. I said : "Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort, the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is "I added, that owing to the operation in English literature of certain causes." almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires—criticism ; " and that the power and value of English literature was thereby impaired.

Periodical Essays

EXCERPT – 8 Spectator No. 2

Richard Steele

The first of our society is a gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great-grandfather was inventor of that famous country dance which is called after him. All who know that shire are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger de Coverley. His great grandfather was inventor of that famous country dance which is called after him. All

who know that shire are very singular in his behaviour, but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world only as he thinks the world is in sourness or obstinacy, and his being unconfined to modes and forms makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town, he lives in Soho Square. It is said he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before this disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherage, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked Bully Dawson in a public coffee-house for calling him “youngster.”

EXCERPT – 9 Spectator No. 130

Joseph Addison

As I was yesterday riding out in the fields with my friend Sir Roger, we saw at a little distance from us a troop of gypsies. Upon the first discovery of them, my friend was in some doubt whether he should not exert the justice of the Peace upon such a band of lawless vagrants, but not having his clerk with him, who is a necessary counsellor on these occasions, and fearing that his poultry might fare the worse for it, he let the thought drop but at the same time gave me a particular account of the mischiefs they do in the country, in stealing people’s goods and spoiling their servants. “If a stray piece of linen hangs upon an hedge,” says Sir Roger, “they are sure to have it ; if the hog loses his way in the fields, it is ten to one but he becomes their prey, our geese cannot live in peace for them ; if a man prosecutes them with severity, his hen-roost is sure to pay for it : they generally straggle into these parts about this time of the year ; and set the heads of our servant-maids so agog for husbands, that we do not expect to have any business done as it should be whilst they are in the country.

Personal Essays

EXCERPT – 10 My Relations

Charles Lamb

I had an aunt, a dear and good one. She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world. She often used to say, that I was the only thing in it which she loved, and when she thought I was quitting it, she grieved over me with mother’s tears. A partially quite so exclusive my reason cannot altogether approve. She was from morning till night pouring over good books, and devotional exercises. Her favourite volumes were *Thomas Kempts*, in Stanhope’s Translation ; and a Roman Catholic prayer Book, with the matins and complines regularly set down, terms which I was at that time too young to understand. She persisted in reading them, church every Sabbath, as a good Protestant should do. These were the only books she studied ; though, I think, at one period of her life, she told me, she had read with great satisfaction the Adventures of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman Finding the

door of the chapel in Essex-street open one day—it was in the infancy of that heresy—she went in, liked the sermon, and the manner of worship, and frequented it at intervals some time after. She came not for doctrinal points, and never missed them.

EXCERPT – 11 The Fight

William Hazlitt

Where there's a will, there's a way.— I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery-lane, about half-past six o'clock on Monday the 10th of December, to inquire at Jack Randall's where the fight the next day was to be ; and I found "the proverb" nothing "musty" in the present instance. I was determined to see this fight, come what would, and see it I did, in great style. It was my first fight, yet it more than answered my expectations Ladies! It is to you I dedicate this description ; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and modesty are the old English virtues ; and may they never look cold and askance on one another ! Think, ye fairest of the fair, loveliest of the lovely kind, ye practisers of soft enchantment, how many more ye kill with poisoned baits than ever fell in the ring ; and listed with subdued air and without shuddering, to a tale tragic only in appearance, and sacred to the FANCY !

Twentieth—Century Essays

EXCERPT – 12 Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to (somehow it always seems worse to ill a large animal) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds ; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing : he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

EXCERPTS – 13 Philosophy for Laymen

Bertrand Russell

Mankind, ever since there have been civilized communities, have been confronted with problems of two different kinds On the one hand there has been the problem of mastering natural forces, of acquiring the knowledge and the skill required to produce tools and weapons and to encourage Nature in the production of useful animals and plants. This problem, in the modern world, is dealt with by science and scientific

technique, and experience has shown that in order to deal with it adequately it is necessary to train a large number of rather narrow specialists.

But there is a second problem, less precise, and by some mistakenly regarded as unimportant I mean the problem of how best to utilize our command over the forces of nature. This includes such burning issues as democracy versus dictatorship, capitalism versus socialism, international government versus international anarchy, free speculation versus authoritarian dogma. On such issues the laboratory can give no decisive guidance. The kind of knowledge that gives most help in solving such problems is a wide survey of human life, in the past as well as in the present, and an appreciation of the sources of misery or contentment as they appear in history. It will be found that increase of skill has not, of itself, insured any increase of human happiness or wellbeing. When men first learnt to cultivate the soil, they used their knowledge to establish a cruel cult of human sacrifice. The men who first tamed the horse employed him to pillage and enslave peaceable populations. When, in the infancy of the industrial revolution, men discovered how to make cotton goods by machinery, the results were horrible ; Jefferson's movement for the emancipation of slaves in America, which had been on the point of success, was killed dead, child labor in England was developed to a point of appalling cruelty ; and ruthless imperialism in Africa was stimulated in the hope that black men could be induced to clothe themselves in cotton goods. In our own day a combination of scientific genius and technical skill has produced the atomic bomb, but having produced it we are all terrified, and do not know what to do with it. These instances, from widely different periods of history, show that something more than skill is required, something which may perhaps be called 'wisdom'. This is something that must be learnt, if it can be learnt, by means of other studies than those required for scientific technique. And it is something more needed now than ever before, because the rapid growth of technique has made ancient habits of thought and action more inadequate than in any earlier time.

4.4 CONCLUSION

We hope these excerpts have given you insights into different type of essays, both formal and informal, written in different ages.

4.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you define an 'essay' as a literary form?
2. What are the different types of essays?
3. Which is more important '*matter*' or '*manner*' in formal and informal essays?
4. Name the major English essayists and their important works.
5. Read classify and analyse the essays included in the HS and UG English syllabus.

NOTE