

MAR GREGORIOS COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SUBJECT NAME: BRITISH LITERATURE-III

SEMESTER: III

PREPARED BY: PROF. G.PRADHA

UNIT-I: POETRY

ULYSSES

BY ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

ABOUT THE POET

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was the most renowned poet of the Victorian era. His work includes 'In Memoriam,' 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'Idylls of the King.'

Born in England in 1809, Alfred, Lord Tennyson began writing poetry as a boy. He was first published in 1827, but it was not until the 1840s that his work received regular public acclaim. His "In Memoriam" (1850), which contains the line "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," cemented his reputation. Tennyson was Queen Victoria's poet laureate from 1850 until his death in 1892.

ABOUT THE POEM

"Ulysses" was written in 1833 by Alfred Lord Tennyson, the future Poet Laureate of Great Britain. The poem takes the form of a dramatic monologue spoken by Ulysses, a character who also appears in Homer's Greek epic The Odyssey and Dante's Italian epic the Inferno (Ulysses is the Latinized name of Odysseus). In The Odyssey, Ulysses/Odysseus struggles to return home, but in Tennyson's "Ulysses," an aged Ulysses is frustrated with domestic life and yearns to set sail again and continue exploring the world. Dante seems to condemn Ulysses's recklessness as an explorer, but in Tennyson's poem, there is nobility and heroism in Ulysses' boundless curiosity and undaunted spirit.

THEME

The central theme of "Ulysses" is that **there is a search for adventure, experience and meaning which makes life worth living**. Tennyson used Ulysses as the old adventurer, unwilling to accept the settling of old age, longing for one more quest. Tennyson also wrote this in memory of his friend Arthur Hallam.

POEM

*It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.*

*I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.*

*This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay*

*Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.*

*There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

Summary

Ulysses (Odysseus) declares that there is little point in his staying home –by this still hearth with his old wife, doling out rewards and punishments for the unnamed masses who live in his kingdom.

Still speaking to himself he proclaims that he –cannot rest from travel but feels compelled to live to the fullest and swallow every last drop of life. He has enjoyed all his experiences as a sailor who travels the seas, and he considers himself a symbol for everyone who wanders and roams the earth. His travels have exposed him to many different types of people and ways of living. They have also exposed him to the –delight of battle while fighting the Trojan War with his men. Ulysses declares that his travels and encounters have shaped who he is: –I am a part of

all that I have met, he asserts. And it is only when he is traveling that the margin of the globe that he has not yet traversed shrink and fade, and cease to goad him.

Ulysses declares that it is boring to stay in one place, and that to remain stationary is to rust rather than to shine; to stay in one place is to pretend that all there is to life is the simple act of breathing, whereas he knows that in fact life contains much novelty, and he longs to encounter this. His spirit yearns constantly for new experiences that will broaden his horizons; he wishes to follow knowledge like a sinking star and forever grow in wisdom and in learning.

Ulysses now speaks to an unidentified audience concerning his son Telemachus, who will act as his successor while the great hero resumes his travels: he says, —This is my son, mine own Telemachus, to whom I leave the scepter and the isle. He speaks highly but also patronizingly of his son's capabilities as a ruler, praising his prudence, dedication, and devotion to the gods. Telemachus will do his work of governing the island while Ulysses will do his work of traveling the seas: —He works his work, I mine.

In the final stanza, Ulysses addresses the mariners with whom he has worked, traveled, and weathered life's storms over many years. He declares that although he and they are old, they still have the potential to do something noble and honorable before the long day wanes. He encourages them to make use of their old age because —'tis not too late to seek a newer world. He declares that his goal is to sail onward beyond the sunset until his death. Perhaps, he suggests, they may even reach the Happy Isles, or the paradise of perpetual summer described in Greek mythology where great heroes like the warrior Achilles were believed to have been taken after their deaths. Although Ulysses and his mariners are not as strong as they were in youth, they are strong in will and are sustained by their resolve to push onward relentlessly: —To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Form

This poem is written as a dramatic monologue: the entire poem is spoken by a single character, whose identity is revealed by his own words. The lines are in blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter, which serves to impart a fluid and natural quality to Ulysses's speech. Many of the lines are enjambed, which means that a thought does not end with the line-break; the sentences often end in the middle, rather than the end, of the lines. The use of enjambment is appropriate in a poem about pushing forward beyond the utmost bound of human thought. Finally, the poem is divided into four paragraph-like sections, each of which comprises a distinct thematic unit of the poem.

2. My Last Duchess

BY ROBERT BROWNING

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive. I call
 That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
 -Fra Pandolf! by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
 But to myself they turned (since none puts by
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps
 Fra Pandolf chanced to say, -Her mantle laps
 Over my lady's wrist too much,|| or —Paint
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 Half-flush that dies along her throat.|| Such stuff
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart—how shall I say?— too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame

This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—which I have not—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, –Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
 E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

ABOUT THE POET

Robert Browning (7 May 1812 – 12 December 1889) was an English poet and playwright whose [dramatic monologues](#) put him high among the [Victorian poets](#). His verse was noted for [irony](#), [characterization](#), dark humour, [social commentary](#), historical settings and challenging [vocabulary](#) and [syntax](#). In 1846 Browning married the older poet [Elizabeth Barrett](#) and went to live in Italy. By her death in 1861 he had published the collection [Men and Women](#) (1855). His [Dramatis Personae](#) (1864) and book-length [epic poem](#) [The Ring and the Book](#) (1868-1869) made him a leading British poet.

ABOUT THE POEM

This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself. His musings give way to a diatribe on her disgraceful behavior: he claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his –gift of a

nine-hundred-years- old name.¶ As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with ever-more chilling certainty that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess’s early demise: when her behavior escalated, –[he] gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.¶ Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl. As the Duke and the emissary walk leave the painting behind, the Duke points out other notable artworks in his collection.

THEME

Major Themes in “My Last Duchess”: **Jealousy, hatred, and power** are the major themes of this poem. Browning has presented the character of a duke who wants to rule his woman with an iron fist. He talks about his late wife and details the reasons why he did not like her.

Form

–My Last Duchess¶ comprises rhyming pentameter lines. The lines do not employ end-stops; rather, they use *enjambment*—that is, sentences and other grammatical units do not necessarily conclude at the end of lines. Consequently, the rhymes do not create a sense of closure when they come, but rather remain a subtle driving force behind the Duke’s compulsive revelations. The Duke is quite a performer: he mimics others’ voices, creates hypothetical situations, and uses the force of his personality to make horrifying information seem merely colorful. Indeed, the poem provides a classic example of a dramatic monologue: the speaker is clearly distinct from the poet; an audience is suggested but never appears in the poem; and the revelation of the Duke’s character is the poem’s primary aim.

Commentary

But Browning has more in mind than simply creating a colorful character and placing him in a picturesque historical scene. Rather, the specific historical setting of the poem harbors much significance: the Italian Renaissance held a particular fascination for Browning and his contemporaries, for it represented the flowering of the aesthetic and the human alongside, or in some cases in the place of, the religious and the moral. Thus the temporal setting allows Browning to again explore sex, violence, and aesthetics as all entangled, complicating and confusing each other: the lushness of the language belies the fact that the Duchess was punished for her natural sexuality. The Duke’s ravings suggest that most of the supposed transgressions took place only in his mind. Like some of Browning’s fellow Victorians, the Duke sees sin lurking in every corner. The reason the speaker here gives for killing the Duchess ostensibly differs from that given by the speaker of “Porphyria’s Lover” for murder Porphyria; however, both women are nevertheless victims of a male desire to inscribe and fix female sexuality. The desperate need to do this mirrors the efforts of Victorian society to mold the behavior—sexual and otherwise—of individuals. For people confronted with an increasingly complex and anonymous modern world, this impulse comes naturally: to control would seem to be to conserve and stabilize. The Renaissance was a time when morally dissolute men like the Duke exercised absolute power, and as such it is a fascinating study for the Victorians: works like this imply that, surely, a time that produced magnificent art like the Duchess’s portrait couldn’t have been entirely evil in its allocation of societal control—even though it put men like the Duke in power.

A poem like *My Last Duchess* calculatedly engages its readers on a psychological level. Because we hear only the Duke's musings, we must piece the story together ourselves. Browning forces his reader to become involved in the poem in order to understand it, and this adds to the fun of reading his work. It also forces the reader to question his or her own response to the subject portrayed and the method of its portrayal. We are forced to consider, Which aspect of the poem dominates: the horror of the Duchess's fate, or the beauty of the language and the powerful dramatic development? Thus by posing this question the poem firstly tests the Victorian reader's response to the modern world—*it asks, Has everyday life made you numb yet?*—and secondly asks a question that must be asked of all art—*it queries, Does art have a moral component, or is it merely an aesthetic exercise?* In these latter considerations Browning prefigures writers like Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde.



This poem is set in 1564 and is based on the real-life Duke Alfonso II who ruled Ferrara, Italy in the latter half of the 16th century. In the poem, he's talking about his first wife Lucrezia de' Medici, who died under suspicious circumstances shortly after marrying the Duke.

In the poem the Duke is speaking to an emissary who is negotiating the Duke's next marriage to the daughter of another powerful family. He is showing his visitor around his palace and stops in front of a painting of his late wife.

The Duke then begins to reminisce about his late wife's portrait sessions with the painter, and then about the Duchess herself. His reminiscing soon turns into a verbal onslaught of his late wife's behaviour, where he abjectly accuses her of being overly flirtatious with everyone, and not appreciating his gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name. As his speech continues, the reader realises with ever more terrifying certainty that the Duke was responsible for the Duchess's early demise, due to her worsening

behaviour: [I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together]. After making this declaration, the Duke returns back to the discussion of arranging his next marriage. As the Duke and emissary leave to return to the other guests, the Duke calls attention to his bronze statue of Neptune taming a seahorse.

3. Dover Beach

By Matthew Arnold

The sea is calm tonight.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits; on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray

Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,

With tremulous cadence slow, and bring

The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
 Of human misery; we
 Find also in the sound a thought,
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
 But now I only hear
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
 Retreating, to the breath
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
 And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

ABOUT THE POET

Matthew Arnold, (born December 24, 1822, Laleham, [Middlesex](#), England—died April 15, 1888, Liverpool), English Victorian poet and [literary](#) and social critic, noted especially for his classical attacks on the contemporary tastes and manners of the -Barbarians|| (the aristocracy), the -Philistines|| (the commercial middle class), and the -Populace.|| He became the apostle of -culture| in such works as *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).

Life

About the Poem

English Victorian poet Matthew Arnold's most famous poem "Dover Beach" is a **dramatic monologue** where the poet expresses his **frustration and hopelessness of the modern chaotic world**. He also expresses his view that this kind of situation where there is "neither joy, nor love, nor light, / nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain" has been created by the **decline of 'faith'**, religious faith to be precise.

The poem begins with a straightforward description of nature and the speaker calling his beloved to see the beautiful sea and to hear the sound of the waves. The **setting** is inside a room, may be a hotel, on the coast of the English Channel near the English town Dover. The speaker and his beloved are looking outside their window at the French coast across the sea.

So, at the beginning it would seem to be a love poem, or even a sonnet, as the first stanza consists of fourteen lines like a sonnet, with a change of tone at the ninth line as it should be the case for a sonnet. But, obviously, the rhyme scheme does not comply.

It is only in the fourteenth line of the poem that the readers are introduced to some serious thoughts with the "eternal note of sadness". The unpleasant roar of the waves brings a **sense of melancholy** to the speaker's mind. In the second stanza the speaker is reminded of the ancient Greek playwright Sophocles who also heard the sounds of the Aegean Sea and then wrote tragedies on human misery. In the next stanza, the speaker laments the lack of faith in the modern

society. Here he compares faith with the receding tides. In the last stanza of 'Dover Beach', the speaker urges his ladylove to 'be true to one another' as the new world, that seems to be so beautiful apparently, does not evoke much hope for him.

To talk about the stylistic aspects of the poem, the lines are mostly rhyming. The poem consists of 37 lines and is divided into four unequal stanzas. Use of **enjambment** (continuation of a clause or sentence to the next line of a poem) gives the poem faster pace.

First Stanza

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;

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It is night. The calm and quiet sea is filled with water at the time of high-tide. The moon is shining brightly (fair) upon the narrow English channel (straits).

...on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Our speaker is staring at the French coast some twenty miles away on the other side of the channel. He sees the light on the French coast gleaming. And now, as the light has gone off, he concentrates on the English shore instead. The famous cliffs (steep rocks on the sea shore) of Dover stand tall with their large wavering reflections in the quiet sea.

Advertisements

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,

The speaker asks his mistress to come to the window to enjoy the sweet night-air coming from where the sea meets the moonlit land of France.

Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,

He now asks her to listen to the continuous and irritating (grating) sound of the pebbles drawn by the waves. The waves are drawing the stones backward to the

sea and then again throwing (fling) them back onto high shore (strand) on their return journey.

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Advertisements

The sound of the waves begins and stops, and again begins. The trembling rhythm continues slowly. But now, it brings the eternal note of sadness — the monotonous rhythm of the waves makes the speaker depressed. The tone of the poem now changes from cheerful to melancholy.

Second Stanza

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The speaker is now reminded that Sophocles also heard the same sound sitting on the shore of the Aegean Sea. That brought to his (Sophocles') mind the picture of human sufferings like muddy water (turbid) going in and out (ebb and flow).

Our speaker has also found a feeling of sadness hearing similar sound beside the northern sea (The [Strait of Dover](#) is between the English Channel and the North Sea.) far away from Sophocles' Aegean Sea.

Third Stanza

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

Human Faith, the religious faith and faith in fellow people once covered the earth like sea water. It was at its fullest as the tide is now. Faith covered the earth like the folds of a bright girdle folding (furled) well. The comparison suggests that it was not loose, but tightly attached to this world. It was the time when faith made everything easy and solved many problem, made people united and brought meaning to life.

But now I only hear
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
 Retreating, to the breath
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
 And naked shingles of the world.

The speaker regrets that those days are now past. Faith is fading away from the society just like the wave is from the shore. Now he only hears the sorrowful roar of the retreating steps of faith with the receding tides. It only leaves behind the chill night wind whistling (breath) over the desolate beach with dull (drear) edges of the cliffs and raw (naked) pebbles (shingles). The poet here creates a fearful picture of the underlying nakedness of the colourful modern world.

Fourth Stanza

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

The desolate speaker now again turns to his beloved and urges her to be faithful to each other. The dreamy modern world which seems so beautiful with its varieties, is not really a source of joy, love, light, certainty, peace or help for pain for the speaker. This chaotic artificial world doesn't induce much hope for him.

And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Now the speaker compares this world to a dark place where we are completely unaware of what we are doing. We are in a confused struggle as if ignorant soldiers are fighting with each other in the darkness. This is Matthew Arnold's assessment of the morally corrupted modern world full of vanity.

4. Easter, 1916

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument

Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our wingèd horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
 Through summer and winter seem
 Enchanted to a stone
 To trouble the living stream.
 The horse that comes from the road,
 The rider, the birds that range
 From cloud to tumbling cloud,
 Minute by minute they change;
 A shadow of cloud on the stream
 Changes minute by minute;
 A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
 And a horse plashes within it;
 The long-legged moor-hens dive,
 And hens to moor-cocks call;
 Minute by minute they live:
 The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
 Can make a stone of the heart.
 O when may it suffice?
 That is Heaven's part, our part
 To murmur name upon name,

As a mother names her child
 When sleep at last has come
 On limbs that had run wild.
 What is it but nightfall?
 No, no, not night but death;
 Was it needless death after all?
 For England may keep faith
 For all that is done and said.
 We know their dream; enough
 To know they dreamed and are dead;
 And what if excess of love
 Bewildered them till they died?
 I write it out in a verse—
 MacDonagh and MacBride
 And Connolly and Pearse
 Now and in time to be,
 Wherever green is worn,
 Are changed, changed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born.

ABOUT THE POET

William Butler Yeats was an English-language Irish poet, dramatist, prose writer and one of the foremost figures of 20th-century literature. A pillar of the Irish literary establishment, he helped to

found the Abbey Theatre, and in his later years served two terms as a Senator of the Irish Free State.

ABOUT THE POEM

"Easter, 1916," was written by the Irish poet W.B. Yeats to commemorate the Easter Rising in 1916, in which Irish nationalists led a rebellion to win independence from British rule. The leaders of the Rising were ultimately executed, and Yeats's poem balances critique of the rebellion and its political extremism with admiration for the rebels' dedication and bravery.

Summary

The speaker begins by describing how he used to encounter "them," the men and women he will later identify as the Irish rebels who died during the Easter Rising, at the end of the day. Their faces might reveal some internal agitation or strong emotion, but the speaker first saw them only in the context of ordinary, everyday life, coming home in the evenings from jobs in shops or offices, meeting the speaker on the streets of Dublin outside the grey stone eighteenth-century buildings. The speaker would briefly acknowledge them with a nod and meaningless small talk just to be polite, or stop a short while and make meaningless small talk just to be polite. Even while he was talking to them, he would already be thinking of some way to make fun of them while talking to one of his own friends later at their posh club. The speaker had nothing more serious on his mind than a joke because he thought that they all were just living regular, unimportant lives. Now, though, everything is completely, totally different. Some event has occurred that was highly destructive but also helped bring about profound change.

The speaker then describes individual men and women who participated in the Rising. One woman tried earnestly but misguidedly to accomplish positive change. Her devotion to extreme political positions was reflected in her endless, strident arguing for her side. She used to show a more moderate, engaging

personality when she was a young, beautiful woman who spent her time in leisurely pursuits like hunting. One man was a schoolteacher and poet, metaphorically riding the "winged horse" (a symbol of poetic inspiration in Greek mythology); another man was a poet and critic who was helping the first man develop his talent and cultivating his own. This poet might have become famous for his art, given his perceptiveness and his attractive, innovative style. There was another man whom the speaker perceived as an arrogant, good-for-nothing drunkard. This man was abusive towards people the speaker cared for very deeply. But the speaker admits that he must respect and acknowledge even this man. This man left also behind the unimportant activities of everyday life. This man also was completely, totally transformed by his participation in the Rising. This event was highly destructive but also helped bring about profound change.

The speaker suggests that people who, like the rebels, dedicate all their love, energy, and activity to one goal can sometimes start to seem inhuman in their single-minded dedication. Like an unmoving stone in a moving stream, such people can disrupt the flow of ordinary life around them. Almost all things in nature, whether animals, humans, or the weather, are in a state of constant change. Small events, like a cloud passing by above a stream or a horse's hoof slipping into the water, can have major consequences. The natural events of life, like wild birds mating, show that each living thing must adapt every minute for its own survival. But stones simply exist in the same state.

The speaker suggests that people who give up too much of their lives to pursue unchanging goals may lose their ordinary human feelings. He first wonders when all these sacrifices will be enough to achieve the goal, but then decides that it is Heaven, or God's, job to answer that question. The job for him and the rest of the community is simply to remember the dead with seriousness, respect, and love, just as a mother would watch over her sleeping child with gravity and love

when the child has finally fallen asleep after running around in a frenzy. The speaker wonders if death may be something temporary and relatively painless, like sleeping through the night before waking up in the morning. He rejects that idea, however, to remind himself and the reader that the rebels are truly dead and will not come back. He next wonders if their deaths may have been unnecessary. Britain might have kept its promise to grant Ireland Home Rule, in spite of the nationalists' mistrust of the British. But again, the speaker decides it is not his or the public's job to answer that question. They don't need to know whether the rebels accomplished their goal; just knowing that they died for the sake of this goal is enough to earn them honor and respect. Still, the speaker cannot help wondering again if their extreme devotion to their goal may have clouded their judgment. But once again, he turns away from that speculation to remember the dead rebels. He lists by name some of the Rising's most important leaders—MacDonagh, MacBride, Connolly, Pearse. He affirms that for the rest of Ireland's existence, whenever the Irish gather to celebrate their country, these rebels will be honored, their identities having been completely transformed from that of ordinary people. The event was highly destructive but also helped bring about profound change.

THEME

Heroism and Bravery

In "Easter, 1916," the speaker is moved to admire the heroism and bravery displayed by the Irish rebels in trying to throw off British rule—even though he didn't wholly admire or agree with the rebels beforehand. The poem chronicles the rebels' flaws and the speaker's earlier, dismissive attitude towards them (and it's worth noting that the poet himself, historically, was also critical of extreme nationalism and didn't initially support the violence of the Easter Rising). But these conflicted, critical feelings only makes the speaker's respect for the rebels

all the more meaningful. The bravery and commitment the rebels displayed in dying for their ideals is so great that it compels even the skeptical speaker to admire it. The poem shows that true heroism can transcend personal flaws and, as the [refrain](#) says, transform a person utterly.

In the poem's first [stanza](#), the speaker explains how he used to see the rebels as foolish or hardly worth noticing. The speaker did not take the rebels seriously in the past. He only exchanged "polite meaningless" small talk with them or mocked them to his friends with a "gibe" (a joke). The reference to "motley," the clothes of a jester, shows that he saw them as comic figures.

In the second stanza, the speaker then details the individual flaws of certain rebels, revealing how they irritated or angered him. The speaker criticizes a certain woman for lack of judgment, possibly brought on by her devotion to political "argument." He also calls one rebel a "drunken, vainglorious" man, and informs the reader that this man had wronged people that he, the speaker, cares for.

But ultimately, the speaker's admiration for the rebels overcomes his criticisms. He affirms that their bravery in being willing to die for their cause has transformed them into heroic figures, figures that his poem must honor. The first two stanzas end by saying that the rebels have been changed or transformed, that "a terrible beauty is born." The terror is the high price the rebels had to pay for seeking Ireland's freedom; it refers to their deaths, and the deaths of many others in the violence. But at the same time, this beauty refers to the heroism the rebels revealed in being willing to die for this cause.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker asks whether this high cost was truly necessary: "was it needless death after all?" It is possible that England would have granted Ireland freedom without this rebellion. The rebels may have been misguided in instigating a violent uprising. But the speaker again puts aside this criticism to

honor them for their bravery: "We know their dream; enough / To know they dreamed and are dead." In other words, regardless of their flaws of judgment or character, it is enough to make them heroic that they were willing to die for their cause. The speaker honors the rebels as heroes by listing out their names in the final lines of the poem and affirming again how they have been "changed utterly." This act of bravery means they are no longer defined by the flaws the speaker noted earlier. They have been transformed from people the speaker criticized to people the speaker must admire forever, "[n]ow and in time to be."



5. Journey of the Magi

T. S. Eliot

—A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter. |
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,

With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.
Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.
All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,

But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,

With an alien people clutching their gods.

I should be glad of another death.

ABOUT THE POET

T.S. Eliot, in full **Thomas Stearns Eliot**, (born September 26, 1888, St. Louis, [Missouri](#), U.S.—died January 4, 1965, [London](#), England), American-English poet, playwright, literary critic, and editor, a leader of the [Modernist](#) movement in [poetry](#) in such works as *The Waste Land* (1922) and *Four Quartets* (1943). Eliot exercised a strong influence on Anglo-American [culture](#) from the 1920s until late in the century. His experiments in [diction](#), style, and versification revitalized English poetry, and in a series of critical essays he shattered old orthodoxies and erected new ones. The publication of *Four Quartets* led to his recognition as the greatest living English poet and man of letters, and in 1948 he was awarded both the [Order of Merit](#) and the [Nobel Prize](#) for Literature.

ABOUT THE POEM

In the poem "Journey of the Magi", the magus shares **Eliot's view that spiritual transformation is not a comfort, but an ongoing process**—an arduous journey seemingly without end. The magus's view on the birth of Jesus—and the shift from the old ways to Christianity—is complex and ambivalent.

Journey of the Magi is written from the point of view of one of the magi, or wise men, who travelled from their foreign kingdoms to pay homage to the infant Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews.

Summary

The title of the poem refers to a "journey." This word means an act of traveling from one place to another, but also, in a metaphorical sense, the long and often difficult process of personal change and development.

"[Journey of the Magi](#)" begins with a quotation from a Christmas sermon, which establishes the initial choral voice of the poem: the Persian

kings who crossed the desert in winter to honor the birth of the baby Jesus. In the quotation, the magi, speaking in a plural "we," describe how the journey was difficult for them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This quotation leads into a longer description of the difficulties of the journey.

The second stanza begins with a new dramatic beat: The dark night of the soul has passed, and it is now the dawn of a new day, literally and spiritually. [The Magi](#) descend into the fertile Judean valley. This stanza is full of Biblical allusions. The Magi find the manger where Jesus was born.

The third stanza switches to the voice of a singular Magus, who is reminiscing about the journey. (In retrospect, this could mean that the entire poem was written from a first-person perspective, but there was no way to know that before this point). He evaluates the experience, deciding that he "would do it again," but then wonders at the paradox that the birth of Jesus was also a death. This death refers to both the death of Christ and the death of the old religious order, including the magical power of the Magus. He ends the poem wishing for another death, which represents both suicidal despair and an anticipation of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, ushering in a new Christian era.

Useful Links:

- Journey of the Magi does not give any details of the magi's eventual arrival into Bethlehem, or the image of the newborn Jesus. Curiously, the magus withholds that famous moment from his listeners. The story of the magi, of course, is recounted in the [Gospel of Mathew, 2:1](#).
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_\(King_James\)/Matthew#2:1](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(King_James)/Matthew#2:1)

6. God's Grandeur

BY GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

ABOUT THE POET

Gerard Manley Hopkins, (born July 28, 1844, Stratford, [Essex](#), Eng.— died June 8, 1889, Dublin), English poet and Jesuit priest, one of the most individual of Victorian writers. His work was not published in collected form until 1918, but it influenced many leading 20th-century poets.

ABOUT THE POEM

"God's Grandeur" is a sonnet written by the English Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manly Hopkins. Hopkins wrote "God's Grandeur" in 1877, but as with many of his poems, it wasn't published until almost thirty years after his 1889 death. The word "grandeur" means grandness or magnificence. In "God's Grandeur" Hopkins conveys his reverence for the magnificence of God and nature, and his despair about the way that humanity has seemed to lose sight of the close connection between God and nature during the Second Industrial Revolution. Though the poem is a traditional 14-line sonnet, it's also

an example of Hopkins's characteristic use of unconventional poetic meters—though the meter of “God's Grandeur” is actually *more* conventional than that of many of his other poems.

The first line of “God's Grandeur” establishes the poem's main theme as well as several stylistic characteristics of the poem. The line, a single declarative sentence, uses a **metaphor** to compare “the grandeur of God” to an electric force that “charges”—that is, that suffuses and animates—the world. This idea, of God being both a force that powers nature and an essence found throughout nature, is a fundamental concept that pervades the rest of the poem.

The first four lines of the octave (the first eight-line stanza of an Italian sonnet) describe a natural world through which God's presence runs like an electrical current, becoming momentarily visible in flashes like the refracted glintings of light produced by metal foil when ruffled or quickly moved. Alternatively, God's presence is a rich oil, a kind of sap that wells up—to a greatness—when tapped with a certain kind of patient pressure. Given these clear, strong proofs of God's presence in the world, the poet asks how it is that humans fail to heed (—reck!) His divine authority (—his rod!).

The second quatrain within the octave describes the state of contemporary human life—the blind repetitiveness of human labor, and the sordidness and stain of —toil! and —trade.! The landscape in its natural state reflects God as its creator; but industry and the prioritization of the economic over the spiritual have transformed the landscape, and robbed humans of their sensitivity to the those few beauties of nature still left. The shoes people wear sever the physical connection between our feet and the earth they walk on, symbolizing an ever-increasing spiritual alienation from nature.

The sestet (the final six lines of the sonnet, enacting a turn or shift in argument) asserts that, in spite of the fallenness of Hopkins's contemporary Victorian world, nature does not cease offering up its spiritual indices. Permeating the world is a deep —freshness! that testifies to the continual renewing power of God's creation. This power of renewal is seen in the way morning always waits on the other side of dark night. The source of this constant regeneration is the grace of a God who —broods! over a seemingly lifeless world with the patient nurture of a mother hen. This final image is one of God guarding the potential of the world and containing within Himself the power and promise of rebirth. With the final exclamation (—ah! bright wings!) Hopkins suggests both an awed intuition of the beauty of God's grace, and the joyful suddenness of a hatchling bird emerging out of God's loving incubation.

Form

This poem is an Italian sonnet—it contains fourteen lines divided into an octave and a sestet, which are separated by a shift in the argumentative direction of the poem. The meter here is not the –sprung rhythm for which Hopkins is so famous, but it does vary somewhat from the iambic pentameter lines of the conventional sonnet. For example, Hopkins follows stressed syllable with stressed syllable in the fourth line of the poem, bolstering the urgency of his question: —Why do men then now not reckon his rod? Similarly, in the next line, the heavy, falling rhythm of –have trod, have trod, have trod, coming after the quick lilt of –generations, recreates the sound of plodding footsteps in striking onomatopoeia.

Commentary

The poem begins with the surprising metaphor of God's grandeur as an electric force. The figure suggests an undercurrent that is not always seen, but which builds up a tension or pressure that occasionally flashes out in ways that can be both brilliant and dangerous. The optical effect of –shook foil is one example of this brilliancy. The image of the oil being pressed out of an olive represents another kind of richness, where saturation and built-up pressure eventually culminate in a salubrious overflow. The image of electricity makes a subtle return in the fourth line, where the –rod of God's punishing power calls to mind the lightning rod in which excess electricity in the atmosphere will occasionally –flame out. Hopkins carefully chooses this complex of images to link the secular and scientific to mystery, divinity, and religious tradition. Electricity was an area of much scientific interest during Hopkins's day, and is an example of a phenomenon that had long been taken as an indication of divine power but which was now explained in naturalistic, rational terms. Hopkins is defiantly affirmative in his assertion that God's work is still to be seen in nature, if men will only concern themselves to look. Refusing to ignore the discoveries of modern science, he takes them as further evidence of God's grandeur rather than a challenge to it. Hopkins's awe at the optical effects of a piece of foil attributes revelatory power to a man-made object; gold-leaf foil had also been used in recent influential scientific experiments. The olive oil, on the other hand, is an ancient sacramental substance, used for centuries for food, medicine, lamplight, and religious purposes. This oil thus traditionally appears in all aspects of life, much as God suffuses all branches of the created universe. Moreover, the slowness of its oozing contrasts with the quick electric flash; the method of its extraction implies such spiritual qualities as patience and faith. (By including this description Hopkins may have been implicitly criticizing the violence and rapaciousness with which his contemporaries drilled petroleum oil to fuel industry.) Thus both the images of the foil and the olive oil bespeak an all-permeating divine presence that reveals itself in intermittent flashes or droplets of brilliance.

Hopkins's question in the fourth line focuses his readers on the present historical moment; in considering why men are no longer God-fearing, the emphasis is on –now. The answer is a complex one. The second quatrain contains an indictment of the way a culture's neglect of God translates into a neglect of the environment. But it also suggests that the abuses of previous generations are partly to blame; they have soiled and –seared our world, further hindering our ability to access the holy. Yet the sestet affirms that, in spite of the interdependent deterioration of human beings and the earth, God has not withdrawn from either. He possesses an infinite power of renewal, to which the regenerative natural cycles testify. The poem reflects Hopkins's conviction that the physical world is like a book written by God, in which the attentive person

can always detect signs of a benevolent authorship, and which can help mediate human beings' contemplation of this Author.

7.The Unknown Citizen

By W.H.AUDEN

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
 One against whom there was no official complaint,
 And all the reports on his conduct agree
 That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
 For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
 Except for the War till the day he retired
 He worked in a factory and never got fired,
 But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
 Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
 For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
 (Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
 And our Social Psychology workers found
 That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
 The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
 And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
 Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
 And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
 Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
 He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan
 And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
 A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
 Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
 That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
 When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
 He was married and added five children to the population,
 Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
 And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
 Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
 Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

ABOUT THE POET

W.H. Auden was a **poet, author and playwright**. Auden was a leading literary influencer in the 20th century. Known for his chameleon-like ability to write poems in almost every verse form, Auden's travels in countries torn by political strife influenced his early works. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948.

ABOUT THE POEM

"The Unknown Citizen" was written by the British poet W.H. Auden, not long after he moved to America in 1939. The poem is a kind of satirical **elegy** written in praise of a man who has recently died and who lived what the government has deemed an exemplary life. This life, really, seems to have been perfectly ho-hum—exemplary only insofar as this man never did anything to question or deviate from society's expectations. On the one hand, the poem implicitly critiques the standardization of modern life, suggesting that people risks losing sight of what it means to be an individual when they focus exclusively on the same status symbols and markers of achievement (like having the right job, the right number of kids, the right car, and so forth). The poem also builds a frightening picture of a world ruled by total conformity and state oppression, in which a bureaucratic government dictates and spies on its citizens' daily lives.

Themes

Oppression, Surveillance, and the State

"The Unknown Citizen" is a parody of an **elegy** (a poem to commemorate someone who has recently died). This elegy is delivered by "the State"—the government and its institutions—rather than by a loving friend or family member. Through this, the poem pokes fun at and implicitly critiques the modern world for granting too many far-reaching powers to the state, showing how the state oppresses those unlucky enough to live within its grasp.

In particular, the poem looks at how this oppression is achieved through surveillance—through the state knowing everything about its inhabitants. The title is thus **ironic**, as there's little that the state *doesn't* seem to know about the dead man. Overall, the poem argues that freedom is impossible in a society that so closely watches its citizens, even under the guise of helping them live a supposedly good life.

Though on the surface the poem is praising the life of the dead "unknown citizen," it only does so because this person lived a textbook example of an obedient, non-questioning life. In the poem's world, a good citizen is one who does everything they're supposed

to. Indeed, that's why the speaker—the creepy “well” of the poem—begins by offering what is probably the highest compliment in this dystopia: “there was no official complaint” against the dead man (according to the Bureau of Statistics). In other words, he never did anything wrong. If he had, the state would “certainly have heard” about it—revealing the frightening reach of their view into people's lives.

This points to one of the poem's main criticisms of the state: its over-reaching surveillance. The state treats life as a kind of science, improvable only through increasingly detailed data sets—and denying life any sense of mystery, joy, or freedom in the process. There is *one* way to be, this implies, and the surveillance is there to help (or, more likely, force) the individual to be that way.

Accordingly, the state encroaches on every aspect of the dead man's life. Indeed, the poem reads pretty much as a list of all the ways that a state can violate its citizens' freedoms. The state approves of the dead man's life because it knows so much about him: his working life, sociability, opinions on the news, his personal possessions, his attitude to his children's education, and so on. There is a kind of parable at work here, as the poem implies that a state with too much power will only use that power to sink its claws deeper and deeper into people's everyday lives.

And not only does this oppressive state spy on its citizens, it also co-opts their language. So while an alternative view of humanity might prioritize, say, happiness, a tight-knit community, and moral virtue over everything being done correctly and by the book, the state here has already got that covered. “Community,” “saint”[lines], and happiness have all been re-defined to fit what the state wants, not just taking away people's freedoms but eroding the ways in which they can even *conceive* of those freedoms.

Overall, then, Auden's “The Unknown Citizen” reads as a cautionary tale to modern society—asking people to question the relationship between the state and the individual, and to examine whether their government upholds the right values in terms of

what it means to live a good life. Ironic and a little funny, yes, the poem nevertheless offers a stark and bleak picture of a sinister world in which genuine freedom is impossible.

Summary

According to the Bureau of Statistics, nobody ever made a formal complaint about him. The other reports about his behavior all say that he was basically the perfect citizen, because he did everything he was supposed to do in order to serve his society. He worked the same job his entire life until he retired, apart from a break when he served in the War. His employer, Fudge Motors Inc., was fine with him. He had a totally normal outlook on life and politics, and he contributed to his Union (which, we've checked, was not a threat). Our Psychology institution also established that his friends liked hanging out with him. According to the Official Media, he bought a paper regularly and responded to adverts as was to be expected. He had the proper insurance, and our official health records show he only needed to stay in the hospital one time. The departments in charge of organizing society agree that he approved of the State's vision and that he had all the possessions that a modern individual needs—like a record player, radio, car, and fridge. Our Public Opinion department asserts that he always held the right view on the big issues: if it was a peaceful time, he approved, but he also went to war when we needed him to. He had a wife and five children, contributing the correct number of new human beings to society according to our governmental official who aims to optimize the gene pool. He let the children's teachers do their work without questioning their teachings. It's ridiculous to ask if he was free or happy, because we would have known if there was anything wrong with him.

8. The Thought-Fox

By TED HUGHES

POEM

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:

Something else is alive

Beside the clock's loneliness

And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:

Something more near

Though deeper within darkness

Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,

A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;

Two eyes serve a movement, that now

And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow

Between trees, and warily a lame

Shadow lags by stump and in hollow

Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,

A widening deepening greenness,

Brilliantly, concentratedly,

Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head.

The window is starless still; the clock ticks,

The page is printed.

ABOUT THE POET

Edward James Hughes OM OBE FRSL was an English poet, translator, and children's writer. Critics frequently rank him as one of the best poets of his generation and one of the twentieth century's greatest writers. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1984 and held the office until his death.

ABOUT THE POEM

The Thought Fox is a famous poem taken from his volume, **The Hawk in the Rain**. Hughes uses poetic masks like that of the fox and particularly of the wolf. The fox here, is a symbol of the contradictory nature of things. The scope of this symbol gradually extends from personal to universal significance. Like several other poems, it deals with the conflict between two selves. The poem commences with an exposition of the protagonist's imagined picture. The poet imagines what the conditions will be in the forest, in a moment at midnight. He is in his room expecting inspiration, with the clock ticking away. He feels that there is something else besides this loneliness of midnight and the quiet movement of his fingers on the blank sheet of paper.

As he looks out of his window there is not even a star to illuminate the environment. He senses the entry of something into his loneliness. In the cold night, a fox's nose, delicate as the snow, seems to touch a tender twig, a leaf.

Character List

The Speaker

A poet at a loss for inspiration, who notices a fox creeping at the edge of the forest.

The Fox

A fox, sneaking around at the edge of a forest, who inspires the speaker to write a poem.

Summary

The speaker, sitting in his home at midnight, struggles to write a poem. He "imagines" that some idea must be brewing inside his head, even if he can't quite figure out a first line. He looks out of the window and sees no stars against the dark night sky. However, he feels that "something more near" must be lurking in the forest, waiting to enter his consciousness.

Analysis

There's a lot to unpack in these first two stanzas, so let's start with the basics: tone, mood, and setting.

We know right away that the poem is told from the perspective of a first-person speaker. We also know that he's alone, and it's midnight, and he's addressing his audience from his home, located at the edge of a forest. It's rather dark, even for midnight: the speaker can't see a single star in the sky when he looks out of the window. He wants to write something—let's say a poem—but for some reason, he's at a loss for inspiration. His fingers move over the blank page, but no words come. However, the clock isn't the only thing that keeps the speaker company on this lonely night: he feels that "something else is alive," even if he can't quite say or see what this something is.

The first line contains an important clue to understanding "[The Thought-Fox](#)." The speaker "imagines" this moment's "forest," which functions both as the poem's setting and its

metaphorical and symbolic foundation. To grasp the forest's symbolic resonance, we can connect its image to the speaker's action and look for similarities between them. Because we "imagine" an idea or image with our heads, we know that the forest must also refer to the speaker's mind. Likewise, the "something else" lurking just beyond his reach must also lurk outside within the forest. The speaker *imagines* the poetic significance of the forest and the fox, but he also *sees* them. Additionally, everything contained in the forest must also exist in the speaker's mind, which will be useful when analyzing the fox's role in the poem.

The line "Something else is alive" imbues the poem with an ambiguous, disconcerting tone. It's difficult to say whether the speaker is anxious, afraid, or eager to encounter this "something." This tone is subtly emphasized by the poem's slow, steady pace, established through the abundance of "s" sounds, long vowels, and stressed syllables, all of which continue from the first stanza into the second. Combined, these elements create a sense of dread, while also foreshadowing the fox's careful, considered movements in the forest. The speaker draws out the first two stanzas the same the way the fox will slowly, then suddenly, emerge from the forest's clearing.

Although the speaker's struggle continues in stanza 2, he feels again that "something" is approaching him through the dark night. The absence of stars signals the speaker's lack of inspiration, but his intuition that an idea may be growing closer causes him to gaze deeper into the darkness outside, into the darkness within his mind. This something is "deeper within darkness" than the absent stars because of the forest's density and his mind's depth. The speaker isn't looking to unveil inspiration, but to discover something lurking deep within him, to coax this idea into the light, to make it so present that his words pour forth upon the page.

While stanza 1 lays bare the poem's situation, stanza 2 sets the stage for this "something" to come, which turns out to be the fox sniffing around in the dark, and the poem his image inspires.

Sometimes, writing feels easy: you sit at your desk, uncap your pen, and a poem pours out of you. But other times you struggle to figure out the first line, and you find yourself waiting for the words to form, for inspiration to strike. This is what [Ted Hughes' "The Thought-Fox"](#) is about: nurturing an idea as it first takes shape in your mind's depths, then coaxing the right words to the surface.

Ted Hughes' "The Thought-Fox" is an *ars poetica*, or a poem about writing a poem, that uses the metaphor of a thought as a fox. As the fox emerges from the dark forest and its "sharp hot stink" enters the "dark hole" of the speaker's head, inspiration strikes the speaker. The speaker puts pen to page, and voila—the poem, which a few stanzas earlier seemed arduous and impossible, is complete.

The fox's dual nature complicates the poem. On one hand, the speaker "imagine[s]" the dark forest and the fox, but he also *sees* them. By drawing a parallel between the poem's setting and conflict, Hughes suggests that poetic inspiration is like a fox lurking in the forest, minding its own business: for writers, the best ideas are often right in front of them, waiting to be noticed. At the same time, the dark forest is like a writer's mind: dark and dense, deep, fertile, and fecund but also sinister and threatening. They never know what will emerge from their mind's depths, but they know they must be present and ready with pen in hand when an idea strikes.

The poem appears in Hughes' first collection, *The Hawk and The Rain*, published by Faber & Faber in 1957, when the poet was 27 years old. The collection received the Somerset Maugham Award, a prestigious literary prize granted to young British writers in support of their work. Decades later, "The Thought-Fox" remains one of Hughes' most celebrated poems.

Next Section

he speaker, sitting in his home at midnight, struggles to write a poem. He "imagines" that some idea must be brewing inside his head, even if he can't quite figure out a first line. He looks out of the window and sees no stars against the dark night sky. However, he feels that "something more near" must be lurking in the forest, waiting to enter his consciousness.

Analysis lines 1 to 8

There's a lot to unpack in these first two stanzas, so let's start with the basics: tone, mood, and setting.

We know right away that the poem is told from the perspective of a first-person speaker. We also know that he's alone, and it's midnight, and he's addressing his audience from his home, located at the edge of a forest. It's rather dark, even for midnight: the speaker can't see a single star in the sky when he looks out of the window. He wants to write something—let's say a poem—but for some reason, he's at a loss for inspiration. His fingers move over the blank page, but no words come. However, the clock isn't the only thing that keeps the speaker company on this lonely night: he feels that "something else is alive," even if he can't quite say or see what this something is.

The first line contains an important clue to understanding "[The Thought-Fox](#)." The speaker "imagines" this moment's "forest," which functions both as the poem's setting and its metaphorical and symbolic foundation. To grasp the forest's symbolic resonance, we can connect its image to the speaker's action and look for similarities between them. Because we "imagine" an idea or image with our heads, we know that the forest must also refer to the speaker's mind. Likewise, the "something else" lurking just beyond his reach must also lurk outside within the forest. The speaker *imagines* the poetic significance of the forest and the fox, but he also *sees* them. Additionally, everything contained in the forest must also exist in the speaker's mind, which will be useful when analyzing the fox's role in the poem.

The line "Something else is alive" imbues the poem with an ambiguous, disconcerting tone. It's difficult to say whether the speaker is anxious, afraid, or eager to encounter this "something." This tone is subtly emphasized by the poem's slow, steady pace, established through the abundance of "s" sounds, long vowels, and stressed syllables, all of which continue from the first stanza into the second. Combined, these elements create a sense of dread, while also foreshadowing the fox's careful, considered movements in the forest. The speaker draws out the first two stanzas the same the way the fox will slowly, then suddenly, emerge from the forest's clearing.

Although the speaker's struggle continues in stanza 2, he feels again that "something" is approaching him through the dark night. The absence of stars signals the speaker's lack of inspiration, but his intuition that an idea may be growing closer causes him to gaze deeper into

the darkness outside, into the darkness within his mind. This something is "deeper within darkness" than the absent stars because of the forest's density and his mind's depth. The speaker isn't looking to unveil inspiration, but to discover something lurking deep within him, to coax this idea into the light, to make it so present that his words pour forth upon the page.

While stanza 1 lays bare the poem's situation, stanza 2 sets the stage for this "something" to come, which turns out to be the fox sniffing around in the dark, and the poem his image inspires.

lines 9 to 16 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Outside the window, the speaker sees a fox emerge from the forest's clearing. The fox sniffs a branch and slowly wanders between the trees and stumps at the forest's edge, leaving behind a series of paw prints in the snow. The fox's shadow hangs behind him, "in hollow" of its bold body, while the speaker continues to watch the fox move, contemplating his image.

Analysis

While first two stanzas served mainly to establish the poem's setting, tone, and conflict, stanzas 3 and 4 get into the poem's action—or rather, the speaker's detailed description of what he sees outside his window. The "something" the speaker anticipated in the previous stanzas turns out to be a fox lurking at the edge of the forest, sniffing a tree branch. The speaker pays careful attention to the fox's eyes, which "serve" the fox's careful movements between the forest's trees and stumps.

It's significant that the speaker describes the fox through a series of parts, and through a highly focused sequence of images. First, the speaker homes in on the fox's nose "delicately" touching the tree branch. Then, he concentrates on the fox's "two eyes" which "serve a moment, that now/ And again.../ Sets neat prints into the snow," which evokes an image of the fox looking down, cautiously measuring his steps. Finally, in this section, the speaker describes the fox's shadow, which "warily.../...lags" by a tree stump, "in hollow" of the fox's body. This strategy allows us to develop a complete image of the fox *through* the actions and specific features the speaker emphasizes.

Additionally, the speaker's piecemeal approach to describing the fox echoes the manner in which the poem comes together. The ambiguity of stanzas 1 and 2 creates an outline of the "something" the speaker anticipates, which is later filled in by images of the fox in stanzas 3 and 4. The repetition of "now" in lines 11 and 12 continues the slow, steady pace from stanzas 1 and 2, while also evoking an image of the fox cautiously moving through the snow, calculating each the step the same way a poet will try out different words in a line to see which fits best. The fox's "neat prints" are like a poet's precise language, careful and deliberate, each with its proper place and meaning. This repetition also echoes the poet's labor, the constant effort and dedication a writer must devote to his work to compose anything of substance.

An interesting parallel between stanza 1 and stanza 4 occurs in line 15. In line 4, the speaker's fingers move over the blank before him, while in line 15 the fox's eyes "serve a movement, that now/ And again.../ Sets neat prints in the snow." While the speaker goes through the motions of writing in an attempt to begin his poem, the fox carefully selects his steps. The similarities

between these two actions—grasping for the right words, inspecting the snow to determine the best next move—subtly suggests a spiritual or conceptual likeness between the speaker and the fox. As the speaker watches the fox through his window, does he feel some kind of connection to the animal, alone in the snow, as they both search for some unknown, indefinite thing?

The fox's cautious inspection of the forest's clearing continues into stanza 6, echoing the manner in which a poet explores an idea, experimenting with different combinations of sound and rhythm before settling on the final version of a line. His shadow "lags by stump and in hollow/ Of a body that is bold" to emerge from the forest's depths, as if it can't keep up with the fox's pace. This image brings to mind the speaker's current situation, sitting beside his window struggling to bring an idea to the surface of his mind. The speaker is ready, willing, and waiting to write, but the ideas brewing in his head have yet to catch up with him.

Analysis of lines 17 - 24

Summary

Stanza 6 continues the enjambment at the end of stanza 5, when the describes the fox's shadow. Now, the speaker shifts his attention to the fox's eye, zooming in on its "widening deepening greenness." The speaker remarks that the animal is simply "Coming about its own business"; then, suddenly, the "sharp hot stink of fox" hits the "dark hole" of the speaker's head. He notices that stars have yet to appear in the sky. But, as the clock continues ticking, the speaker finally puts pen to page.

Analysis

We know from the poem's first two stanzas that the fox exists both at the edges of the forest beyond the speaker's window, and within the metaphorical dark forest of his mind. However, in the poem's final stanzas, these meanings converge: the fox is both animal and idea, literal and metaphorical. The phrase "Across clearings" at the beginning of stanza 5 could signal this collision. The speaker draws out his description of the fox's eye, its "widening deepening greenness," as though prolonging the image to test a combination of words, to determine which feels best.

As the fox continues to go "about its own business," the speaker is struck with the "sudden sharp hot stink of fox," which represents a creative breakthrough. Something about the fox, or about the speaker's careful observation, triggers the words the speaker has been searching for. This "sharp hot stink" of inspiration, though anticipated by the poem's previous stanzas, jolts the speaker, compelling him to write. The language used to describe the speaker's head—a "dark hole"—makes his mind seem abyssal and threatening; however, the speaker's mind, in spite of this darkness, proves to be a fecund, generative space.

The organic nature of the speaker's work is emphasized in line 23 when the speaker notices that "the window is starless still." The inspiration for the poem he writes is not divine or lofty, but grounded in the world in front of him and rooted in *his* perspective of this world. Ultimately, the fox inspires the speaker because he forces him to recognize the power of his own vision, mining the material lurking within the dark, dense forest of his mind. The clock continues to tick, but it is no longer lonely: the page, now filled with the speaker's words, is printed.

The final stanza differs also from the rest of the poem through its introduction of violence. Inspiration, represented by the fox's smell, is no gentle force. The fox's "hot stink...enters" the speaker's head like an arrow piercing a target's bullseye. The language used to describe the fox's smell—"sudden," "sharp," "hot"—juxtaposes with the animal's cold and delicate, albeit bold, demeanor. By including elements of the fox's wild nature, the speaker creates a nuanced picture of the inspiring power he signifies: inspiration, at times, can be variously affronting and all-consuming, unbiased and unaccommodating. As a result, the speaker's poetic creation arises through a kind of violence. Something has "entered" or disrupted the speaker's mind; now he is changed. This fertilizing disruption is what the speaker had been waiting for, and it is the source of the poem.

Personal Significance of the Fox

After reading and analyzing "[The Thought-Fox](#)," it's easy to see why the image of a fox emerging from the edge of a dark forest is similar to an idea developing and surfacing from the depths of a writer's mind. The fox's manner—sneaky, clever, bold—echoes the way which an inspiration can suddenly strike, while the forest's setting—dark, dense, deep—is much like a writer's imagination. But the qualities the fox exhibits are also apparent in other animals who creep around the forest at night. A cat on the prowl, for example, would fit the bill, too. So why a fox?

The answer to this question lies in a dream Hughes had one night during his first year at Cambridge. In his article "[Ted Hughes](#)' 'The Thought-Fox': Object, Symbol, and Creativity," Bibhu Padhi quotes poet W.S. Merwin, who once relayed Hughes' story of this dream. According to Hughes and Merwin, Hughes dreamt he "Saw [his] door open and someone like himself [came] in with a fox's head. The visitor went over to his desk, where an unfinished essay was lying, put his paws on the papers, leaving a bloody mark." This dream figure then told Hughes "You're killing me," and left.

At the time, Hughes was pursuing English literature. Following this dream, he decided to study Anthropology and Archaeology instead, two fields which corresponded to his interests in folklore, mythology, and the natural world. While this switch may seem contrary to a young poet's goals, these disciplines fueled his creativity, allowing Hughes to seriously pursue the possibilities lying in subjects that first captured his attention during his childhood.

Specifically, the animal world fascinated Hughes from a young age. In an interview with Drue Heinz for the Spring 1995 issue of *The Paris Review*, Hughes recalled the role that the natural world played in his childhood, citing his Yorkshire upbringing as a crucial element in his creative development. "When I came to consciousness," he remembered, "my whole interest was in wild animals." He also said that "up to the age of seventeen or eighteen, shooting and fishing and my preoccupation with animals were pretty well my life, apart from books." The natural world's complicated character—gentle but unforgiving, violent but generative, fertile but filled with decay—combined with literature proved an enduring poetic match throughout Hughes' career.

Considering that "The Thought-Fox" appears in *The Hawk and The Rain*, Hughes' first collection, the poem resonates more powerfully as the work of a young poet coming into his own, exploring his own mind's forest, teasing the possibilities of what lurks within. Because Hughes' fateful dream established a connection between the poet and the fox's image and character, it's not a far reach to equate the speaker of "The Thought-Fox" with Hughes and the animal lurking near the forest with the sudden shock of the fox-figure in Hughes' dream. Hughes' dream forced him to acknowledge and act upon a feeling he already knew to be true: abandoning the academic realm of literary studies for the world of folklore, mythology, and mysticism would best benefit his poetry.

Symbols, Allegory and Motifs

The Fox (symbol)

The fox, the poem's driving symbol, signifies the fickle, multifaceted nature of poetic inspiration. The fox is cold, delicate, and neat; however, he is also lame, sharp, and bold. He appears slowly, then suddenly, from the forest's darkness; he minds his own business, but he also provokes a powerful creative response in the speaker. The fox is both animal and idea; he is wild, but also subject to the poet's manipulation, an image to be used, described part by part.

The Eye (symbol)

Like the fox, the eye symbolizes inspiration. In lines 17-19, the speaker concentrates on the fox's eye just before an idea, "with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox," strikes him. However, the eye also symbolizes vision and perspective. The speaker draws out the seemingly simple, straight-forward image of the fox emerging from the forest through an abundance of colorful, specific adjectives and concrete imagery. Ultimately, the poem arises through the way the speaker *sees* the fox, and puts its image, significance, and affect to paper.

Stars (symbol and motif)

Stars traditionally symbolize inspiration, hope, and guidance. However, when the speaker looks out of his window in the first stanza, he sees no stars in the sky. Likewise, their absence corresponds to the lack of inspiration he feels, and forces him to look elsewhere for an idea. At the end, as the image of the fox causes a poem to coalesce in his mind, the speaker mentions that "the window is starless still." The speaker's ability to write a poem in spite of the stars' absence suggests that the speaker doesn't need to wait for divine, lofty inspiration, and that generally inspiration doesn't *need* to be divine or lofty: it can be right front of him, or inside his own mind.

The Forest (symbol)

The forest, dark and snowy, represents the speaker's mind. From his intuition that "something else is alive" and "near," he knows that an idea must be developing within it, even if he can only sense its outlines emerging from his mind's depth. At the end of the poem, the idea sparked by the fox's image enters "the dark hole" of the speaker's head, echoing the dense forest beyond his window.

Darkness (motif)

Darkness pervades "The Thought Fox." The speaker is alone at midnight, no stars shine in the sky, and the speaker's mind feels as dark and deep as the forest beyond his window. Even the *SNOW* is dark. Darkness ultimately represents the fecundity of a writer's mind, but it also represents the mind's sinister depths. In the beginning of the poem, the speaker can't say for sure what lurks just beyond his window, or just beside his own loneliness; at the end, the stars are still absent, but the speaker's "page is printed," which means the darkness, if not brighter, is less lonely, less void-like.

UNIT – II PROSE

An Apology for Idlers- R.L. Stevenson

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Louis Stevenson, in full Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson, (born November 13, 1850, Edinburgh, Scotland—died December 3, 1894, Vailima, Samoa), Scottish essayist, poet, and author of fiction and travel books, best known for his novels *Treasure Island* (1881), *Kidnapped* (1886), *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

ABOUT THE ESSAY

In his essay *An Apology for Idlers*, R.L. Stevenson, the famous **English writer argues that idleness is as good as diligence in life.....** But on the other hand, an idle man is not worried about such things because he is not working hard and he enjoys life wandering along the street, hills and valleys and meadows.

Summary

An Apology for Idlers is a thought-provoking essay. It is full of humour, wit and irony. It is written by Robert Louis Stevenson. He was a great traveller and writer. His famous novels are *Treasure Island* and *Black Arrow*. This essay is a fine example of Stevenson's scheme of values opposed to modern ideas such as working hard, reading books, education in schools and colleges. He says that education of the streets is even better than education in the class rooms. Stevenson does not believe that books are indispensable. He argues that books can never be substitute for life. Most of the great men including Charles Dickens, Shakespeare and Balzac learned lessons from the streets. They enjoyed Nature, the flow of the rivers, the waves of the sea, the blue sky, the meadows and hills and valleys give man more wisdom than what he gets in the class rooms. Parents and elders usually advise young men to study books with diligence to obtain knowledge. But R.L Stevenson visualises a Worldly Wiseman angry with a young truant because he runs away from class room to enjoy Nature. The young man tells the Wiseman that he wants peace and contentment. The Wiseman is again angry with him and asks him to go back

to school. But R.L. Stevenson supports the truant. The author says that knowledge can be obtained from the streets and Nature too. This knowledge is better than that of school or college. A truant is wandering along open places, because Nature is an open book. It is full of knowledge and wisdom. One can obtain wisdom by enjoying the beauty of Nature. The sweet songs of birds, the rustle of leaves and the murmuring sound of the flowing river and the breeze can give you food for thought. Saint Beuve the great French writer said that experience of life is a single great book. R.L. Stevenson himself was a voracious reader and he loved books. But books are not proper substitute for life. If a young man completely depends on books for knowledge, he is as fool as Lady of Shallot. In Lord Tennyson's famous poem Lady of Shallot, the beautiful lady is under a curse, weaving a web day and night looking at a mirror. She can see only shadows. She cannot see the real life. Similarly a bookworm is also like the Lady of Shallot, and he can never enjoy life which is full of experience and beauty of Nature. R.L. Stevenson says that busy people are not efficient in vitality. Idleness helps a man to develop a strong individuality and he is very sociable and takes interest in mankind. He is a man of great experience in life and he knows how to make others happy. He has practical wisdom and can solve problems of life with a smiling face. On the other hand a man of industry is selfish and narrow-minded. He has no curiosity and he is very dull. In school or college, these people had set their eyes on medals and after leaving college, they think of only themselves. After a long period of hard work, they are very tired. On the other hand, the idler is energetic and happy. So he can make others happy. Stevenson says that this is not success in life. R.L. Stevenson says that many people complain that idlers don't do any work and it is a national waste. But it is not true. Society is full of young men and women and they can do every work. Even if a man dies, another man does his work. In the fifteenth century when some people told Joan of Arc, the great French heroine that she should work at home washing and spinning. She told them that there are plenty of women at home who can do such work. Joan of Arc was very young when she became a soldier and fought wars and won victories for France. She is the great patriot of France. R.L. Stevenson says that an idler can give more pleasure than a busy industrious man because the mind of the busy man is full of many plans and works to be done. Pleasures are more beneficial than duties because pleasure is natural, but duty comes from force or responsibility. Secondly pleasures give happiness to both the giver and the receiver. So the author says that an idler is wiser than a book-worm (man of industry). Stevenson says that an idler makes others happy with his smiling face and kind words. The presence of such people at a dinner or at a meeting in the streets makes everyone happy. Falstaff is preferable to Barabbas. Falstaff is not very honest and a drunkard. Yet all people love this Shakespearean character because he makes audience laugh and they enjoy his presence on the stage. We can forget our sorrow and pain when we see Falstaff on the stage merry making. On the other hand Barabbas is a character in Marlowe's play -The Jew of Malta. The Jew was greedy for money and did not help anyone even with a smile. So no one liked him. Finally Stevenson points out that Nature does not care for the life of a single individual. No one is so important in the society. Even if Shakespeare had never lived, the world would not have been different. There are millions and millions of people in the world. Everyone wants a smiling face and kind words from others

2. On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History

Lecture III-Shakespeare

Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881)

About the Author:

Thomas Carlyle (4 December 1795 - 5 February 1881) was a **Scottish historian, satirical writer, essayist, translator, philosopher, mathematician, and teacher** The influence on American literature of his 1836 *Sartor Resartus*, a novel both satirical and philosophical, has been described as "difficult to overstate".

On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History is a book by Thomas Carlyle, published by James Fraser, London, in 1841. It is a collection of six lectures given in May 1840 **about prominent historical figures**. It lays out Carlyle's belief in the importance of heroic leadership.

Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* remains one of the best repositories in English of the development in late Romanticism called heroic vitalism. The book, a series of six lectures that Carlyle delivered to London audiences in 1840, represents not so much soundly based ideas about the making of history as it does Carlyle's view of how the world would be if powerful and inspired people were to have the power he thought they deserved. The book thus became England's contribution to the nineteenth century cult of the "great man," a dream that was most seductively attractive to intellectuals forced to put their ideas in the marketplace with all the other merchants, but closed off from the real power that was being exercised in the newly industrialized world by economic entrepreneurs.

Summary

Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, On, by Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle's Hero-Worship made its first appearance as a series of lectures delivered orally in 1840. They were well attended, and were so popular that in book form they had considerable success when published in 1841.

There are five lectures in all, each dealing with some one type of hero. In the first, it is the Hero as Divinity, and in this the heroic divinities of Norse mythology are especially considered. Carlyle finds this type earnest and sternly impressive.

The second considers the Hero as Prophet, with especial reference to Mahomet and Islam. He chose Mahomet, he himself says, because he was the prophet whom he felt the freest to speak of.

As types of the Poet Hero in his third lecture, he brings forward Dante and Shakespeare. —As in Homer we may still construe old Greece; so in Shakespeare and Dante, after thousands of years, what our modern Europe was in faith and in practice will still be legible.¶

In the fourth lecture he considered the Hero as Priest, singling out Luther and the Reformation, and Knox and Puritanism. —These two men we will account our best priests, inasmuch as they were our best reformers.¶

The Hero as Man of Letters, with Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns as his types, forms the subject of Carlyle's fifth lecture. —I call them all three genuine Men, more or less; faithfully, for the most part unconsciously, struggling to be genuine, and plant themselves on the everlasting truth of things.¶

Finally, for the Hero as King he selects as the subject of his sixth lecture Cromwell and Napoleon, together with the modern Revolutionism which they typify.

—The commander over men—he is practically the summary for us of all the various figures of Heroism; Priest, Teacher, whatever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here.¶

Carlyle eulogizes his heroes for the work that they have done in the world. His tone, however, is that of fraternizing with them rather than of adoring them. He holds up his typical heroes as patterns for other men of heroic mold to imitate, and he makes it clear that he expects the unheroic masses to adore them. The style of Hero-Worship is clearer than that in most of the other masterpieces of Carlyle, and on this account is much more agreeable to the average reader. There is less exaggeration, less straining after epigram.

3. PICKWICK PAPERS: Chapters 1 & 2

Charles Dickens

About the author

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, on February 7, 1812, to John and Elizabeth Barrow Dickens and grew up poor but happy, passing adventurous years exploring the English countryside with his seven siblings.

However, when Dickens was 12, his father, who struggled constantly to make ends meet, was sent to debtors' prison because he was unable to pay a bakery bill he had run up. His mother, too poor to maintain a home on her own, had no choice but to move herself and the younger children into the prison with their father. Young Dickens, old enough to work, was sent to make a living in a boot-blackening factory. So instead of studying or playing with friends, he spent 10 hours a day pasting labels onto jars in a filthy, rodent-infested factory. He made a trifling amount each week, which was used to help pay off his father's debt.

When he turned 15, Dickens pursued work as a clerk in a legal office. Soon after, he became a newspaper reporter who covered legislative actions and debates in Parliament. This experience sharpened Dickens's skill as a writer, especially in regard to writing believable dialogue. Dickens also acquired a dislike for the law and the government.

His experiences in debtors' prison, in a legal office, and covering politics gave him strong opinions, particularly about the treatment of the lower classes. He began to write short stories while also working as a court reporter. He was offered the job of writing short captions to accompany the sporting works of a popular illustrator, but the illustrator committed suicide after the first three installments. Dickens then filled the space with a serial, written in 20 parts, under the title *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. Dickens not only described the entertaining experiences of Samuel Pickwick and his friends, but he offered a startling view of life in debtors' prison. The serial was a tremendous success, and Dickens's career as a writer was launched.

Dickens continued writing and publishing literary classics, most in serial form, such as *Oliver Twist* (1837–39), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Great Expectations* (1860–61), *David Copperfield* (1849–50), and *Little Dorrit* (1855–57) until his death on June 9, 1870.

The Pickwick Papers, Charles Dickens's first novel, began as a simple comedy. As it grew in popularity, however, he took the opportunity to make strong statements about the flaws he saw in society and the obligation of people to address those problems.

Chapters 1-2 Summary

On May 12, 1827, the members of the Pickwick Club gather to hear Mr. Samuel Pickwick present a paper, "Speculations on the Source of the

Hampstead Ponds, with Some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats." These observations are met with great applause, and it is moved that a Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club be formed. The members will be Samuel Pickwick, founder of the Club; Tracy Tupman, a great fan of the ladies; Augustus Snodgrass, a poet of little note; and Nathaniel Winkle, a sportsman. It is further moved that these four gentlemen shall pay all their own expenses and report at times to the Club on their travels, all costs of postage being paid by the four gentlemen. Mr. Pickwick rises to the occasion and accepts the Club's designation despite the current dangers for travelers in England. Some member of the Club objects to this. Mr. Pickwick takes offense and implied insult to the objector. It is discovered that it is Mr. Blotton of Aldgate who has disagreed with Mr. Pickwick, though he resents Mr. Pickwick's accusation and calls Mr. Pickwick a humbug. The Chairman asks Mr. Blotton if he meant the term "humbug" in the common sense. Mr. Blotton replies that he meant it in the Pickwickian sense. All are satisfied and the meeting comes to a close.

Mr. Pickwick arises the next morning and takes a cab to meet the other members. The driver regales him with ludicrous facts about his horse, which Mr. Pickwick writes down. When they arrive at their destination, the driver accuses Mr. Pickwick of being an informer. The three other members join the fight, which is soon broken up by a stranger. This stranger suggests that they go for a drink to recover, which in the end is paid for by Mr. Pickwick.

On the way to Rochester, the stranger joins the four Pickwickians and tells them of his many (though doubtful) adventures. When they arrive at the inn, the members invite the stranger to dine with them. At the dinner, Pickwick, Snodgrass, and Winkle become drunk and fall asleep. Mr. Tupman wants to go to a ball being held in the inn. The stranger agrees to go with him, but he must borrow an appropriate coat, which is bright blue and bears the Pickwick Club badge. Tupman lends him one of Winkle's. At the ball, the stranger cuts in to dance with an elderly widow, offending her partner, Dr. Slammer of the 97th. When Dr. Slammer presents the stranger with his card, the stranger refuses to give one in return. Dr. Slammer then challenges him to a duel that he will arrange in the morning.

Dr. Slammer's second arrives at the inn the next morning and demands to talk to the gentleman in the bright blue coat. Winkle comes down and learns the details of the duel. Winkle assumes he was drunk the evening before and offended someone. He arranges for Snodgrass to be his second, though he tries to get him to stop the duel. Snodgrass does not interfere because he feels intrigued with the whole idea. When Winkle and Snodgrass arrive at the duel, Dr. Slammer stops the event when he sees that Winkle is not the man

who insulted him. He invites the two men to dine with him that evening, and it is arranged that they will all join Tupman and Pickwick at the inn.

Analysis

Although the book begins with a celebration of [Mr. Pickwick](#)'s great accomplishments, the reader is repeatedly informed that Mr. Pickwick does not appear to be an unusual or extraordinary man, but that club members are awed by his intellect. In fact, Mr. Pickwick's "awesome" achievements are silly, rather than profound. Mr. Pickwick is a good man but not a great intellectual. The chapter's style is elaborate, even florid; [Dickens](#) treats the pronouncements of this small and not-very-important club as if they are the proceedings of Parliament. The tone is deliberately ironic. This chapter also introduces four of the main characters. Dickens had to create short, vivid characterizations of the four men so that readers could remember them over the next 20 months.

Dickens enjoyed giving his characters names that are suggestive of their identity. Mr. Pickwick's name, for example, includes the word *wick*, as in a candle's wick. This suggests that Mr. Pickwick is a source of light or goodness. His first name, Samuel, is that of a Biblical prophet, which seems appropriate, since his friends treat his pronouncements as if he is a source of wisdom. [Mr. Tupman](#)'s name sounds like "tub" or "tubby," which fits his description. For a poet [Mr. Snodgrass](#) is a particularly unmelodious name, and [Mr. Winkle](#) is a weak and foolish-sounding name for a man who claims to be an ardent lover of the masculine pursuits of hunting, riding, and so on. Even more obvious is the name of Mr. Blotton, Mr. Pickwick's antagonist inside the Pickwick Club: "blot on." Mr. Pickwick's argument with Mr. Blotton provides additional insight into Pickwick's character. Mr. Pickwick is a benevolent man, but he does not dismiss or ignore Blotton: he argues with him and is prepared to take it further until Mr. Snodgrass and the Chairman intervene.

[Mr. Pickwick](#) and his friends set off on their travels and immediately run into trouble. Mr. Pickwick may be highly esteemed by the members of his club, but he is shockingly naïve for an older man. He realizes that his notetaking has led the cab driver to believe he is an "informer," but he is unable to combat the charge or extract himself or his friends from the angry crowd. This incident also contrasts with the argument in the last chapter: Blotton and Mr. Pickwick, while speaking forcefully, are both willing, even eager, to withdraw their statements and end the fight. The cabman and the mob that supports him won't be satisfied without a physical battle. This won't be the last time that Mr. Pickwick is surprised by the realities of life outside his sheltered world.

This chapter introduces [Mr. Jingle](#), although he is known only as "the tall, thin man" for some time. Mr. Jingle is an extraordinary creature: he wears once-elegant clothes that are now old and dirty, and the clothes were clearly designed for a smaller man. At first Mr. Jingle seems heroic: he rescues the Pickwickians from the mob, after all. A careful reading of that incident shows that Mr. Jingle is, in fact, adept at using the situation to his advantage. He calls for brandy and water to soothe the Pickwickians' nerves, but he drinks plenty of it himself and claims he doesn't have the right change to pay. Notice the name "Mr. Jingle"—it sounds harmless and inoffensive, but it also brings to mind the sound of coins clinking together. By the time of the incident at the ball, most readers of [Dickens](#)'s time would be aware that Mr. Jingle is behaving inappropriately.

Duels come up repeatedly in *The Pickwick Papers*, but this is the closest any Pickwickian ever gets to fighting. Duels had been a more common practice in the England of earlier days, but by the 1800s they were falling out of favor. Duels usually were held to avenge an insult to someone's honor. Each person in the duel had a "second," a friend who was responsible for trying to negotiate a peaceful settlement, but also made arrangements for the weapons and for a doctor to be present at the site of the duel. [Mr. Winkle](#)'s reluctance to duel also provides some insight into his character: someone who is an excellent hunter and sportsman might be less perturbed at the idea of a duel. Fortunately for Mr. Winkle, Dr. Slammer realizes his mistake and the entire duel scenario ends up being more of a farce than a tragedy. In case the farcical qualities of the duel weren't obvious enough, in a fight

between someone named Slammer and someone named Mr. Winkle, who seems likely to win? Dickens uses the doctor's name to convey his nature.

4. You and the Atomic Bomb

George Orwell

About the Author

George Orwell was an English novelist, essayist and critic most famous for his novels 'Animal Farm' (1945) and 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' (1949).

He was a man of strong opinions who addressed some of the major political movements of his times, including imperialism, fascism and communism.

Summary & Analysis

While many people have written about the Atomic Bomb and its effects on world peace and unity, Orwell's essay tackles the subject from a different angle. The essay is sarcastic as well as analytical and highlights some serious issues related to the possession of an atomic bomb. Critics consider 'You and the Atomic Bomb' a background to Orwell's famous novel '1984'. This fantastic essay highlights the devastating power of the Atomic Bomb and discusses how it could change the balance of power and the future course of humanity. Rather than seeing it just as a menace to people's lives and states' sovereignty, Orwell considers it a threat to world peace and order. Even if the bomb could not be mass-manufactured, its possession merely was a major threat and for whatever end they used it, the loss was always going to be double. The idea of the atomic bomb was devastating in the sense that whether it was for war or to extract peace, it was going to make humanity suffer in every way. In a way, he highlights that the destructive power of the Atom Bomb had been miscalculated and misunderstood. The world's picture was not the same as it was before the dropping of the atom bomb. Orwell's work was published in the Tribune in 1945 within two months of the dropping of the atom bombs by the U.S. on Japan. Orwell had already written a lot about the bomb but this article contained excellent insights on how devastating this idea could be and how it was the biggest human-created suffering. He marveled at the little coverage of the bomb by media despite the potential of devastation it held. He asks if the world map and course of humanity's future had not changed already with Japan bombings.

Considering how dangerous a weapon the atomic bomb was, it had failed to rouse the kind of discussion it must have. Orwell notes that the information and diagrams the newspapers had published including that of protons and neutrons and how atomic bombs worked were of no

meaning to the common man. There had been a lot of useless reiteration of the same statement that the atomic bomb instead of being under the control of a nation must be controlled by an international body. However, the one question media and others had purposefully avoided was that how easy or difficult it was to make these bombs. Orwell notes that governments and media were raising questions unrelated to the main topic. The public was either misguided or confused over the topic and this could cause more fear and confusion. Whatever little information people had was by virtue of President Truman's decision to keep secrets from USSR.

Some months earlier than America dropped the bomb on Japan, there were rumors that physicists had split the atom and a devastating weapon was soon going to be within every nation's reach. People thought it would be easy to produce one and some lunatic could blow the entire civilization any time and then have a laugh in some lonely corner as if he had lit off fireworks.

If any of these rumors were true, the bomb was going to change the course of civilization forever. It was not just going to blur the distinction between small and large states because every nation that owned the bomb was powerful, but it could also weaken the control states exercised over people. Truman said that producing the bomb was an expensive affair and very few nations in the world were capable of making it. Orwell notes that this is the most important point because, in this manner instead of changing the course of history, the weapon was only going to add momentum to the dangerous trends that had been growing intense for the last dozen years.

Another important problem that Orwell highlights in his work is that the atomic bomb was never going to empower the people. He cites examples from history where simple weapons have empowered the weak but the more complex weapons have mainly helped the strong. He cites the connection between the discovery of gunpowder and the overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie. Even if people can cite a few exceptions, one can easily tell that the ages in which the dominant weapon is complex, tends to be an age of nepotism. Common people get a chance when the dominant weapon is simple. In this way, the modern weapons of warfare like planes, bombs, and airplanes are fundamentally tyrannical whereas crossbows and muskets are fundamentally democratic. This was in the sense that the weapons that are out of the reach of the common man tend to weaken him and his control over his own affairs. So while the making of the atom bomb meant the emergence of new loci of power, it also meant control leaving the hands of the common people. The increased power of the states has decreased the control common man held in the state of affairs and his ability to wage a war for his freedom.

As Orwell further clarifies in the next paragraph, advanced military technology took power and control from people's hands to the hands of state and government. It always left people with no power and control. Before the recent advances in military technology, things were simple and people used simple weapons to wage a war for freedom against their oppressors. Increased efficiency of the military structure has always given people less space to mind their affairs freely. He makes it more clear in his novel 1984 that a powerful military state could mean little or no freedom for the common people. It was the musket that made the American and French revolutions a success. Even the breech-loading rifle that came afterward was complex yet helped Boers, Bulgars, Abyssinians, Moroccans — even Tibetans to wage a war for their independence many times to a large extent of success. However, all the developments in the military technique

that followed afterward have favored the military against the people and industrialized nations against backward ones. The locus of power has kept shifting and by 1939, there were just five nations with the capability to wage a large scale war. There are now just three (by 1945) or maybe only two. Some observers had highlighted this trend even before 1914.

There was no other way to reverse it but make a weapon or method of fighting that did not depend on industrial plants. Orwell was trying to indicate a dangerous trend that was making people surrender all their personal control and bargaining power to state agencies. Since a few states controlled large industries and war, weaker states stood no chance. This was a dangerous imbalance creating a kind of gap that common people will not be able to fill at any cost unless as he pointed out, a method to fight back was found which did not need large investment, mass production, and industries. While Orwell could see that the Russians yet did not have access to the atomic bomb, they were going to gain access to it in a matter of years. Atomic bomb offered each nation a kind of power that nothing else did. Each of these monstrous nations that possessed this weapon having the capability to not murder but wipeout millions off the face of the earth in a matter of seconds will be considered a center of power. Orwell's essay keeps getting interesting and engaging but frightening. Especially because Orwell has highlighted all those hidden concerns that multiply the destructive strength of the atomic bomb which did not just have the capability to end an entire civilization but whose mere presence on the earth was a threat to peaceful coexistence on earth. The main concern was how weakened it will leave the poor. In such circumstances, if two nations decide not to use it against each other but against them who do not possess an atomic bomb, it will mean hope shifting away from weaker nations. There will be no change in the situation except that oppressed classes will grow even hopeless.

Orwell points some facts about Burnham's Managerial Revolution and that many of its predictions failed but one. It seemed Germany was going to lead Europe and Japan was going to master East Asia. Even if Burnham had miscalculated a few things, the geographic picture he drew was correct. Orwell writes about three great empires ruling the earth and each of which is controlled by a self-elected oligarchy. The confusion over where to draw their frontiers was going to continue for some time, while the third of the empires, China was not a real picture by then, there was an unmistakable drift happening and it was gaining pace with every new scientific discovery. So, what Orwell is trying to point out is that the scientific discoveries expected to take humanity ahead were taking it backward. He makes this point clearer in the last three paragraphs. While it was roughly easier to imagine where the world was moving, the atomic bomb had blurred the picture of a beautiful future. Before the dust could settle in Hiroshima, it was known that a demon was born which will control the focus of power in the future.

With the coming of the airplanes, it was understood that frontiers were abolished. However, these same weapons created new and dangerous frontiers with their devastating capabilities. Radio was no more the means of cooperation but insulated one country from the other. Erosion that began with these advancements became complete with the release of the atomic bomb and now there were no more frontiers to be scaled. The bomb had ripped the exploited classes of their power to revolt and at the same time, those who had the bomb brought them on a level of equality in terms of military power. Orwell's predictions may seem pessimistic to some.

However, too much military power confined in the hands of few can be dangerous. Orwell has highlighted this several times in his essays. Technological advancements have changed things a little worldwide but the fundamental picture Orwell and Wells drew remains true and became obvious in the case of Iraq and Tibet.

It is not difficult to imagine that man can cause his devastation to the extent that some other species will take over the world. This notion does not seem so unfamiliar when you visit the ruins of those German cities. H. G. Wells kept trying to warn people against this phenomenon for long. Orwell too highlights these scientific and technological advancements as a double-edged sword that whichever end you handle it from or whatever it achieves, whether war or peace, will not be beneficial. In the end, he writes, that peace achieved by virtue of atomic bombs and battleships is not peace and in its shadow lurks fear. In all those years, the world had not drifted towards anarchy but towards the reintroduction of slavery. Those slave empires of history could become a reality again. Orwell highlights the ideological implications of Burnham's theory that this kind of world view, social structure, and beliefs which are only possible in a state that cannot be conquered and remains engaged in a cold war with its neighbors. While the atomic bomb, if it could be mass-produced, would have taken us back to the barbaric era, on the other hand, it could have meant the end of national sovereignty and that of a centralized police state. It is a rare and costly object, it is more likely to put an end to large scale wars by the fear it induces but then the peace it can coerce is not peace but a threat bigger than war itself.

One important theme in Orwell's essay is the erosion of power in the hands of the people. However, there are other themes too like science as a double-edged sword which Orwell highlights and the third is the rise of a new locus of power. He keeps talking of the drift and these new trends that were being shaped by these technological advances. However, one important thing that people fail to notice is how much things have drifted from their hands with these advances whether it was an airplane, a battleship or the atomic bomb itself. Even other advancements, scientific and technological that followed benefitted government or the other large bodies, private and public but not people and society. Years later than Orwell wrote his essay, his words sound truer than ever today.

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Filed Under: [George Orwell](#), [Literature](#) Tagged With: [George Orwell](#)

UNIT 3- DRAMA

IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST- by Oscar Wilde

About the author:

Oscar Wilde, in full **Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde**, (born October 16, 1854, [Dublin](#), Ireland—died November 30, 1900, [Paris](#), France), [Irish](#) wit, poet, and dramatist whose reputation rests on his only [novel](#), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and on his comic masterpieces *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (1892) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). He was a spokesman for the late 19th-century [Aesthetic](#) movement in England, which advocated [art for art’s sake](#), and he was the object of celebrated civil and criminal suits involving homosexuality and ending in his imprisonment (1895–97).

Wilde was born of professional and literary parents. His father, Sir William Wilde, was [Ireland’s](#) leading ear and eye surgeon, who also published books on archaeology, folklore, and the satirist [Jonathan Swift](#). His mother, who wrote under the name Speranza, was a revolutionary poet and an authority on Celtic [myth](#) and folklore.

After attending Portora Royal School, [Enniskillen](#) (1864–71), Wilde went, on successive scholarships, to [Trinity College](#), Dublin (1871–74), and Magdalen College, Oxford (1874–78), which awarded him a degree with honours. During these four years, he distinguished himself not only as a Classical scholar, a poseur, and a wit but also as a poet by winning the coveted [Newdigate Prize](#) in 1878 with a long poem, *Ravenna*. He was deeply impressed by the teachings of the English writers [John Ruskin](#) and [Walter Pater](#) on the central importance of art in life and particularly by the latter’s stress on the [aesthetic](#) intensity by which life should be lived. Like many in his generation, Wilde was determined to follow Pater’s urging –to burn

always with [a] hard, gemlike flame.¶ But Wilde also delighted in affecting an aesthetic pose; this, combined with rooms at Oxford decorated with objets d'art, resulted in his famous remark, –Oh, would that I could live up to my blue china!¶

The Importance of Being Earnest opened at the St. James's Theatre in London on February 14, 1895, only a month after Wilde's previous success, [An Ideal Husband](#). The packed-in audience rollicked with laughter at the on-stage caricatures. Considered Wilde's best play, many hail it as the greatest stage comedy of all time.

Summary

[Algernon Moncrieff](#) prepares for the arrival of his aunt, [Lady Bracknell](#), and her daughter, Gwendolen, in his stylish London flat in 1895. His butler, [Lane](#), brings in "Ernest Worthing" (who is listed as "John Worthing" in the cast list and "Jack" in the body of the play, although both Lane and Algernon believe his name is Ernest), who has just returned from the country. Jack reveals he has come to London to propose to Gwendolen. Algernon ridicules the notion of marriage, and says that before Jack can marry Gwendolen, he has to clear up the issue of Cecily. Algernon orders Lane to bring in Jack's cigarette case and shows the inscription: "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." Jack says his name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country. Algernon says he has always suspected Jack was a "Bunburyist," and now he has proof.

Jack explains that Thomas Cardew, who adopted him, willed Jack to be guardian to his granddaughter, Cecily. Cecily now lives at Jack's place in the country under the guidance of her governess, [Miss Prism](#). Since Jack must maintain a high level of morality to set an example, he needs an excuse to get into town. He has invented a ne'er-do-well younger brother named Ernest who lives in Albany, and whose problems frequently require Jack's attendance. Algernon confesses that he has invented an invalid in the country, Bunbury, for when he needs to get out of town. Jack insists that he is through with "Ernest," but Algernon maintains that he will need him more than ever if he marries.

Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen arrive. Algernon tells Lady Bracknell that he will be unable to attend her dinner tonight, as Bunbury is ill. They go into the music room. Jack confesses his feelings to Gwendolen, and she admits that she likes him, too, especially since she has always wanted to love someone named Ernest. Jack asks if she would still love him if his name were not Ernest. She would not, she maintains. He proposes to her, and she accepts. Lady Bracknell comes in, and Gwendolen informs her of their engagement. Lady Bracknell says that only she or her father can engage Gwendolen, and orders her to wait in the carriage. After she leaves, Lady

Bracknell learns from Jack that he was an orphan, found in a handbag on a train. She is aghast and says she will not allow her daughter to marry him. She leaves and Algernon enters.

Jack tells Algernon what happened, and promises to "kill off" his brother Ernest later in the week. Algernon expresses interest in meeting Cecily, but Jack does not want this to happen, as she is young and pretty. Gwendolen returns. She tells Algernon to turn his back. She asks Jack his address in the country, and Algernon slyly writes this down and checks a train timetable. Gwendolen promises to write Jack daily when he returns to the countryside, and Jack escorts her out. Algernon informs Lane that he will be going Bunburying tomorrow.

In the garden at Jack's country house, Miss Prism and Cecily discuss Jack's seemingly serious demeanor; Miss Prism believes it is due to his anxiety over his reckless brother.

Dr. [Chasuble](#) enters the garden. He and Miss Prism leave for a walk together. [Merriman](#), their butler, announces the arrival of Ernest Worthing. Algernon enters, pretending to be Ernest. He and Cecily briefly discuss his "wicked" reputation. When he learns that Jack will be back Monday afternoon, Algernon announces that he must leave Monday morning. He flirts with Cecily and they exit into the house.

Miss Prism and Chasuble return. She urges him to get married to a mature lady. Jack enters the garden, dressed in black. He tells Miss Prism he has returned earlier than expected, and explains that he is dressed in black for his brother, who died in Paris last night. Jack asks Chasuble if he would christen him this afternoon. He agrees, and Cecily emerges from the house. She tells him that his brother is in the dining room; Jack says he doesn't have a brother. She runs into the house and brings out Algernon. Jack refuses to shake Algernon's hand, but Cecily says that "Ernest" has been telling him about his friend Bunbury, and that someone who takes care of an invalid must have some good in him. Everyone but Jack and Algernon leaves. Jack orders Merriman to get the dogcart, as Ernest has been called back to town (he wants to get rid of Algernon). Jack tells Algernon he must leave, while Algernon expresses an interest in Cecily. Jack exits.

Cecily enters the garden. Merriman tells Algernon that the dogcart is ready, but Cecily says it can wait. Algernon compliments Cecily to her great delight. She then tells Merriman that the dogcart can come back next week. He asks Cecily to marry him, and she points out that they have been engaged for three months. "Ever since [she] heard of Jack's wicked brother Ernest" she has loved him. Cecily shows him the box of letters he "wrote" to her (which she really wrote to herself). She also admits that she loves him because his name is Ernest. Upon promptin, she doubts she would be able to love him were his name Algernon. He says he needs to see Chasuble quickly about "christening...I mean on most important business." Algernon exits.

Merriman announces that Gwendolen has asked to see Mr. Worthing (Jack). Cecily informs him that he has gone off to see Chasuble some time ago, but invites her in. Gwendolen immediately takes to Cecily, but wishes Cecily were not so young and alluring, as "Ernest," despite his moral nature, is still susceptible to temptation. Cecily tells her that she is not Ernest's ward, but his brother Jack's. Rather, she is going to marry Ernest. They compare diary entries. Gwendolen feels she has the prior claim, since Ernest asked to marry her yesterday. The girls argue and insult each other.

Jack enters the garden, and Gwendolen asks if he is engaged to Cecily; he laughs and denies it. Cecily says the man before them is her Uncle Jack. As Gwendolen goes into shock, Algernon

enters, and Cecily calls him Ernest. She asks if he is married to Gwendolen; he denies it. Gwendolen says that his name is Algernon. Cecily is shocked, and she and Gwendolen hold each other and make up. Jack confesses he has no brother Ernest, nor any brother at all. The women retire to the house. Jack is angry at Algernon for stirring up trouble with his Bunburying. They have both arranged for Chasuble to christen them "Ernest" later that evening. Jack tells Algernon to go, but he refuses.

Jack and Algernon join Gwendolen and Cecily inside the country house. The women tell the men their "Christian names are still an insuperable barrier." The men reveal that they are to be re-christened this afternoon, and the couples hug. Lady Bracknell arrives, and Gwendolen informs her of her engagement. Lady Bracknell tells Jack that he may not speak any more to her daughter.

Jack introduces Cecily to Lady Bracknell, and Algernon says that he is engaged to her. Only when Lady Bracknell discovers Cecily has a large personal fortune does she give her consent for their marriage. However, Jack claims that, as his ward, Cecily may not marry without his consent until age 35. He declines to give the necessary consent. He says that he suspects Algernon of being untruthful. He recounts this afternoon's events, in which Algernon impersonated Jack's brother. Jack tells Lady Bracknell that if she consents to his marriage with Gwendolen, he will consent to Cecily's with Algernon. Lady Bracknell refuses and tells Gwendolen to get ready for the train.

Chasuble enters and announces that he is prepared for the christenings. Lady Bracknell refuses to allow Algernon to be baptized, and Jack tells Chasuble that the christenings will not be necessary any more. Chasuble says he will leave, and mentions that Miss Prism is waiting for him. Lady Bracknell asks to see Miss Prism. When she enters, she goes pale upon seeing Lady Bracknell, who accuses her of kidnapping a baby boy from her house 28 years ago. Under Jack's questioning, Miss Prism reveals that she accidentally left the baby in a handbag on the Brighton railway line. Jack leaves excitedly.

Jack returns with this very handbag. Jack tells her he was the baby. Lady Bracknell informs Jack that he is the son of her sister, making him Algernon's older brother. Jack asks Lady Bracknell what his original name was. She says he was named after his father; after locating his name under the Army Lists, they learn his full name is Ernest John Moncrieff. All three couples, Chasuble and Miss Prism, Algernon and Cecily, and Jack and Gwendolen, embrace. Jack tells Lady Bracknell that he has realized, for the first time in his life, "the vital Importance of Being Earnest."

The Importance of Being Earnest as a Comedy of Manners

The Importance of Being Earnest is an enlightening example of comedy of manners as it makes fun of the behavior of Victorian aristocracy which attaches great value to hypocrisy, frivolity, superficiality, artificiality and money mindedness. The Victorian upper class society judged things by appearance and the present play makes us laugh at those values by turning them upside-down through a language which is satirical, funny and witty.

Different characters in the play embody those values and provide us insight into the upper-class society of the Victorian period. The play centers on the questions of identity, love, marriage and money.

Wilde's basic purpose in writing the play was to expose and prove as a sham the norms and values of the Victorian aristocracy. That society stressed respectability, seriousness and decency, but it was very different from what it appeared to be. What needed to qualify for marriage was wealth and good family background. Lady Bracknell rejected Jack as the candidate for Gwendolen, after she knew that he was a foundling. While asking him questions she gave last priority to his abilities and education and gave importance to family background. When she came to know that there is a handsome amount of money in Cecily's account she is ready to get her married to Algernon. The two female characters Cecily and Gwendolen love their respective boys just for the beauty of their name 'Earnest'. They find everything in the name and love for the name. The boys prefer the name Earnest but they lack seriousness. It is a satire on the society that gives priority to appearances and surfaces. It is hypocrisy of the concerned people. The dialogue used in the play is funny and witty. The clever exchange between the characters are beautiful on the surface and hollow inside. The artificiality and paradox embedded in the dialogue well matches the sham and hypocritical values and pretensions of the people targeted by satire.

Thus, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a comedy of manners as it uses light hearted language to evoke laughter at the false values of the Victorian upper society.

UNIT IV – SHORT STORY

1. THE DEAD

By JAMES JOYCE

About the author:

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was an Irish novelist, short story writer, poet, teacher, and literary critic. He contributed to the modernist avant-garde movement and is regarded as one of the most influential and important writers of the 20th century.

Early Years and Education

James Augustine Joyce was born on February 2, 1882, in Dublin, Ireland. At the age of six and a half, he was enrolled at Clongowes Wood College, a Jesuit School for Boys in

Ireland's County Kildare. Eventually his family withdrew him from Clongowes, lacking the tuition. From 1893 to 1898 Joyce studied at Belvedere College, another private boys' school, and in 1898 he enrolled at University College, Dublin. He graduated in 1902 with a degree in modern languages. During 1903 he studied medicine in Paris and published reviews; receiving a telegram saying that his mother was deathly ill, he returned to Dublin in time for her death. The following year he met Nora Barnacle, a country girl from the west of Ireland who would become his lifelong companion; their first date took place on June 16, 1904: the day on which Joyce's masterpiece, *Ulysses*, would be set.

Literary Writing

Also in 1904, while teaching school in Ireland, Joyce published stories in *The Irish Homestead* and began a novel, *Stephen Hero*, that would eventually metamorphose into *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. Though unmarried to Nora Barnacle, he left Ireland with her and they traveled together to Europe, where he taught languages in the Berlitz School in Yugoslavia and then in Trieste, Italy, where their son Giorgio was born. In 1906 Joyce, Nora, and Giorgio moved to Rome, where he worked in a bank, and the following year his collected poems, called *Chamber Music*, were published in London. Also during this time, his daughter Lucia was born.

In 1909 Joyce visited Ireland, where he opened a movie theater in Dublin with the help of some European investors; he also signed a contract for the publication of *Dubliners*. In 1912 he visited Ireland again, this time with his family; the book would not be published until two years later, in London. Also in 1914, Joyce's first completed novel, *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*, was serialized in the London magazine *The Egoist*. He began writing *Ulysses* at this time.

Summary

At the annual dance and dinner party held by Kate and Julia Morkan and their young niece, Mary Jane Morkan, the housemaid Lily frantically greets guests. Set at or just before the feast of the Epiphany on January 6, which celebrates the manifestation of Christ's divinity to the Magi, the party draws together a variety of relatives and friends. Kate and Julia particularly await the arrival of their favorite nephew, [Gabriel Conroy](#), and his wife, Gretta. When they arrive, Gabriel attempts to chat with Lily as she takes his coat, but she snaps in reply to his question about her love life. Gabriel ends the uncomfortable exchange by giving Lily a generous tip, but the experience makes him anxious. He relaxes when he joins his aunts and Gretta, though Gretta's good-natured teasing about his dedication to galoshes irritates him. They discuss their decision to stay at a hotel that evening rather than make the long trip home. The arrival of another guest, the always-drunk Freddy Malins, disrupts the conversation. Gabriel makes sure that Freddy is fit to join the party while the guests chat over drinks in between taking breaks from the dancing. An older gentleman, Mr. Browne, flirts with some young girls, who dodge his advances. Gabriel steers a drunken Freddy toward the drawing room to get help from Mr. Browne, who attempts to sober Freddy up.

The party continues with a piano performance by Mary Jane. More dancing follows, which finds Gabriel paired up with Miss Ivors, a fellow university instructor. A fervent supporter of Irish culture, Miss Ivors embarrasses Gabriel by labeling him a –West Briton|| for writing literary reviews for a conservative newspaper. Gabriel dismisses the accusation, but Miss Ivors pushes the point by inviting Gabriel to visit the Aran Isles, where Irish is spoken, during the summer. When Gabriel declines, explaining that he has arranged a cycling trip on the continent, Miss Ivors corners him about his lack of interest in his own country. Gabriel exclaims that he is sick of Ireland. After the dance, he flees to a corner and engages in a few more conversations, but he cannot forget the interlude with Miss Ivors.

Just before dinner, Julia sings a song for the guests. Miss Ivors makes her exit to the surprise of Mary Jane and Gretta, and to the relief of Gabriel. Finally, dinner is ready, and Gabriel assumes his place at the head of the table to carve the goose. After much fussing, everyone eats, and finally Gabriel delivers his speech, in which he praises Kate, Julia, and Mary Jane for their hospitality. Framing this quality as an Irish strength, Gabriel laments the present age in which such hospitality is undervalued. Nevertheless, he insists, people must not linger on the past and the dead, but live and rejoice in the present with the living. The table breaks into loud applause for Gabriel’s speech, and the entire party toasts their three hostesses.

Later, guests begin to leave, and Gabriel recounts a story about his grandfather and his horse, which forever walked in circles even when taken out of the mill where it worked. After finishing the anecdote, Gabriel realizes that Gretta stands transfixed by the song that Mr. Bartell D’Arcy sings in the drawing room. When the music stops and the rest of the party guests assemble before the door to leave, Gretta remains detached and thoughtful. Gabriel is enamored with and preoccupied by his wife’s mysterious mood and recalls their courtship as they walk from the house and catch a cab into Dublin.

At the hotel, Gabriel grows irritated by Gretta’s behavior. She does not seem to share his romantic inclinations, and in fact, she bursts into tears. Gretta confesses that she has been thinking of the song from the party because a former lover had sung it to her in her youth in Galway. Gretta recounts the sad story of this boy, Michael Furey, who died after waiting outside of her window in the cold. Gretta later falls asleep, but Gabriel remains awake, disturbed by Gretta’s new information. He curls up on the bed, contemplating his own mortality. Seeing the snow at the window, he envisions it blanketing the graveyard where Michael Furey rests, as well as all of Ireland.

Analysis

In –The Dead,|| Gabriel Conroy’s restrained behavior and his reputation with his aunts as the nephew who takes care of everything mark him as a man of authority and caution, but two encounters with women at the party challenge his confidence. First, Gabriel clumsily provokes a defensive statement from the overworked Lily when he asks her about her love life. Instead of apologizing or explaining what he meant, Gabriel quickly ends the conversation by giving Lily a holiday tip. He blames his prestigious education for his inability to relate to servants like Lily, but his willingness to let money speak for him suggests that he relies on the comforts of his class to maintain distance. The encounter with Lily shows that Gabriel, like his aunts, cannot tolerate a

–back answer,|| but he is unable to avoid such challenges as the party continues. During his dance with Miss Ivors, he faces a barrage of questions about his nonexistent nationalist sympathies, which he doesn't know how to answer appropriately. Unable to compose a full response, Gabriel blurts out that he is sick of his own country, surprising Miss Ivors and himself with his unmeasured response and his loss of control.

Gabriel's unease culminates in his tense night with Gretta, and his final encounter with her ultimately forces him to confront his stony view of the world. When he sees Gretta transfixed by the music at the end of the party, Gabriel yearns intensely to have control of her strange feelings. Though Gabriel remembers their romantic courtship and is overcome with attraction for Gretta, this attraction is rooted not in love but in his desire to control her. At the hotel, when Gretta confesses to Gabriel that she was thinking of her first love, he becomes furious at her and himself, realizing that he has no claim on her and will never be –master.|| After Gretta falls asleep, Gabriel softens. Now that he knows that another man preceded him in Gretta's life, he feels not jealousy, but sadness that Michael Furey once felt an aching love that he himself has never known. Reflecting on his own controlled, passionless life, he realizes that life is short, and those who leave the world like Michael Furey, with great passion, in fact live more fully than people like himself.

The holiday setting of Epiphany emphasizes the profoundness of Gabriel's difficult awakening that concludes the story and the collection. Gabriel experiences an inward change that makes him examine his own life and human life in general. While many characters in *Dubliners* suddenly stop pursuing what they desire without explanation, this story offers more specific articulation for Gabriel's actions. Gabriel sees himself as a shadow of a person, flickering in a world in which the living and the dead meet. Though in his speech at the dinner he insisted on the division between the past of the dead and the present of the living, Gabriel now recognizes, after hearing that Michael Furey's memory lives on, that such division is false. As he looks out of his hotel window, he sees the falling snow, and he imagines it covering Michael Furey's grave just as it covers those people still living, as well as the entire country of Ireland. The story leaves open the possibility that Gabriel might change his attitude and embrace life, even though his somber dwelling on the darkness of Ireland closes *Dubliners* with morose acceptance. He will eventually join the dead and will not be remembered.

The Morkans' party consists of the kind of deadening routines that make existence so lifeless in *Dubliners*. The events of the party repeat each year: Gabriel gives a speech, Freddy Malins arrives drunk, everyone dances the same memorized steps, everyone eats. Like the horse that circles around and around the mill in Gabriel's anecdote, these Dubliners settle into an expected routine at this party. Such tedium fixes the characters in a state of paralysis. They are unable to break from the activities that they know, so they live life without new experiences, numb to the world. Even the food on the table evokes death. The life-giving substance appears at –rival ends|| of the table that is lined with parallel rows of various dishes, divided in the middle by –sentries|| of fruit and watched from afar by –three squads of bottles.|| The military language transforms a table set for a communal feast into a battlefield, reeking with danger and death.

–The Dead|| encapsulates the themes developed in the entire collection and serves as a balance to the first story, –The Sisters.|| Both stories piercingly explore the intersection of life and death and cast a shadow over the other stories. More than any other story, however, –The Dead|| squarely addresses the state of Ireland in this respect. In his speech, Gabriel claims to lament the present

age in which hospitality like that of the Morkan family is undervalued, but at the same time he insists that people must not linger on the past, but embrace the present. Gabriel's words betray him, and he ultimately encourages a tribute to the past, the past of hospitality, that lives on in the present party. His later thoughts reveal this attachment to the past when he envisions snow as –general all over Ireland.¶ In every corner of the country, snow touches both the dead and the living, uniting them in frozen paralysis. However, Gabriel's thoughts in the final lines of *Dubliners* suggest that the living might in fact be able to free themselves and live unfettered by deadening routines and the past. Even in January, snow is unusual in Ireland and cannot last forever.

2. A Haunted House

by Virginia Woolf

About the author

Adeline Virginia Woolf was an English writer, considered one of the most important modernist 20th-century authors and a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness as a narrative device. She was best known for her novels, especially *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). She also **wrote pioneering essays on artistic theory, literary history**, women's writing, and the politics of power.

Introduction

"A Haunted House" was first published in 1921 as a part of Virginia Woolf's short story collection *Monday or Tuesday*. The collection, which contained eight short stories, was meant to emphasize Woolf's philosophies surrounding modernist literature, as outlined in her 1919 critical essay "Modern Fiction." Woolf believed that writers should focus less on trying to please sales-oriented publishers and the fickle public and instead write what inspired them. In her view, literature should focus on the mysteries and complexities of life rather than the material components. "A Haunted House" explores this philosophy by turning what initially appears to be a straightforward ghost story into a rumination on the nature of love, memory, life, and death. Woolf employs a stream-of-consciousness narrative style as the myriad thoughts and impressions of the narrator flow together with minimal separation. This style contributes to the sense that the story exists outside of a set timeframe, suggesting that the haunting of the house and its inhabitants is an ongoing occurrence.

Plot Summary

"A Haunted House" offers a brief glimpse into daily life in a house occupied by two couples: one living and one dead. Told from the perspective of the living couple, the story presents the ghostly couple's search for something they left in the house. They travel from room to room, "lifting" and "opening" things as quietly as they can so as not to wake the house's current inhabitants. The narrator cannot see the ghostly couple, but their search intrigues her, and she wonders what they are looking for. Sometimes, the narrator will stop whatever she is doing and search for the ghostly couple as they move about the house. However, her search always comes up empty.

[link: Themes](#)

Summary and Analysis

'A Haunted House', by Virginia Woolf, both is and is not a ghost story. In less than two pages of prose, Woolf explores, summons, and subverts the conventions of the ghost story, offering a modernist take on the genre. 'A Haunted House', which first appeared in Woolf's 1921 short-story collection *Monday or Tuesday*, can be read [here](#).

'A Haunted House' is at once easy and difficult to summarise; how we analyse the story depends on which aspects we emphasise. In summary, the narrator describes the house where she and her partner live. Whenever you wake in the house, you hear noises: a door shutting, and the sound of a 'ghostly couple' wandering from room to room in the house. The narrator (whom we can assume, tentatively, is female) claims to be able to hear this ghostly couple talking to each other. It's clear they're looking for something:

'Here we left it,' she said. And he added, 'Oh, but here too!' 'It's upstairs,' she murmured. 'And in the garden,' he whispered. 'Quietly,' they said, 'or we shall wake them.'

Next, the narrator describes reading a book outside while hearing the ghostly couple, in the background, hunting for this mysterious *thing* around the house. But as soon as she drops the book and goes to look for them, there is no sign of the ghostly pair – just the sound of the wood pigeons and the threshing machine.

The narrator confides that you could never *see* the ghosts, just reflections of apples and leaves in the sunlit windows. The house itself seems to be speaking, saying something about buried treasure. The light is fading, and the rooms are darkened. The narrator imagines the male ghost leaving the female one behind for some reason. It is now night-time, and the ghostly coupling

continue to seek their joy'. They appear to reminisce over the bed (where the living, present-day couple now sleep) where they once slept, centuries ago.

The narrator then imagines the ghostly couple standing over her as she sleeps, and, holding a lamp over the bed of the living couple, the ghosts pause, still seeking their hidden joy'. Then, the narrator wakes up and feels that she has solved the mystery, and now understands what this buried treasure' is what the ghostly couple have been seeking: the light in the heart'.

A Haunted House' seems to be Woolf's attempt to convey the feeling of *sensing* something just on the edge of hearing or sight: something you cannot see head-on but which you sense in the house with you, just on the periphery of your vision. We can probably all relate to the experience of being alone in a house and feeling that every creak, every hum, every far-off sound betokens something – a ghost, or an intruder, for instance. Woolf's story seeks to encapsulate that experience. That title, A Haunted House', is ripe with potential irony. And it is only potential' – for all we know, there may have been a ghostly couple in the house with the story's narrator.

But it's suggestive that the narrator seems most attuned to the presence of the ghosts' when she's in states of semi-consciousness or her mind is somewhere else: just waking up, or engrossed in a book, for instance. Consider the very first sentence of the story: Whatever hour you woke there was a door shutting.'

Three things suggest themselves here, at least. First, the use of the second-person pronoun you' attempts to involve us in the narrator's experiences, as if to suggest that we have all felt something similar to this, things on the margins of our conscious experience. Second, the fact that she begins by talking about just waking from sleep – something that will come again at the end of the story – suggests waking from a dream. Third, the fact that she mentions waking at any hour is indicative of someone who might fall asleep at any moment – someone who daydreams in the most literal sense, falling asleep during daytime, and therefore (arguably) more prone to confusing dreams with reality.

A Haunted House' might be described as a short story – and, in one way, as a ghost story – but its language is almost that of a prose-poem. The rhythmical prose beats like a heart with the repeated refrain: Safe, safe, safe, the pulse of the house beat softly.' This mantra reappears later, with softly' changed to gladly', and then again in the final paragraph as the couple are reunited, with the adverb changed to proudly' and pulse' upped to heart' – and, suggestively, the tense shifted from past to present, as beat' morphs into beats':

'Safe, safe, safe,' the heart of the house beats proudly. 'Long years—' he sighs. 'Again you found me.' 'Here,' she murmurs, 'sleeping; in the garden reading; laughing, rolling apples in the loft. Here we left our treasure—' Stooping, their light lifts the lids upon my eyes. 'Safe! safe! safe!' the pulse of the house beats wildly. Waking, I cry 'Oh, is this your buried treasure? The light in the heart.'

Was it all a dream? The pulsing sound that beats through the prose in its almost poetic rhythms could almost suggest the quickening heartbeat of the narrator as s/he awakes. The accumulation of active present participles, of sleeping', reading', laughing', rolling', and stooping', only

intensifies the here-and-now of the moment being crystallised in prose. That final phrase, ‘The light in the heart’, looks back to the use of both ‘heart’ and ‘light’ earlier in the same paragraph. Woolf’s ‘story’ positions itself neatly between dream-vision and ghost story, reinventing both using the new style of modernism and that movement’s interest in shifting tense and perspective. As with much modernist fiction, perception, rather than objective reality, is foregrounded.

In an essay on Henry James’s ghost stories, published in 1921 – the same year as ‘A Haunted House’ – Virginia Woolf called for new writers to find fresh and original ways of arousing fear and terror in readers of ghost stories:

To admit that the supernatural was used for the last time by Mrs. Radcliffe and that modern nerves are immune from the wonder and terror which ghosts have always inspired would be to throw up the sponge too easily. If the old methods are obsolete, it is the business of a writer to discover new ones. The public can feel again what it has once felt—there can be no doubt about that; only from time to time the point of attack must be changed.

Woolf sought to do this with ‘A Haunted House’, a story which is both a ghost story and a riposte to, or analysis of, the conventional ghostly tale. But, given that final phrase, ‘The light in the heart’, it is also a love story, and – given its relative plotlessness, its brevity, and its prose-poetry style – barely a ‘story’ at all.

3. The Facts of Life

by W. Somerset Maugham

William Somerset Maugham CH was an English playwright, novelist, and short-story writer. He was among the most popular writers of his era and reputedly the highest-paid author during the 1930s. Both Maugham's parents died before he was 10, and the orphaned boy was raised by a paternal uncle, who was emotionally cold.

The comedy «The facts of life» is about how sometimes **kind fate can be**. Gambling, money and women were the things that Henry Garnet had forbidden his eighteen years old son Nicky to have deal with when he decided to set off for the tennis tournament in Monte Carlo

This is pleasant, light-hearted comedy; fluff, if you will. Problem is, it’s not really all that funny. I wouldn’t even say it’s all that pleasant, as the father and son at the heart of the story prove fairly unlikeable. Meanwhile, Maugham’s writing never veers far enough in any one direction - sympathetic or satirical - to make any kind of larger point.

‘The Facts Of Life,|| provides a window into the world of early 20th century upper-crust English society. It’s easy to feel like Wodehouse created out of whole cloth

an absurdist universe of his own. Look at all these goofy rich people playing Baccarat, obsessively worrying about their reputations. Surely, that can't be real.

Ah, but it was real. Maugham approaches the same world with a greater sense of reality, albeit still with a comic touch. The story, on its own, doesn't do much for me. But as a means toward even greater appreciation of Wodehouse's gentle satirical bite, "The Facts Of Life" works wonders. And that's quite a trick on Maugham's part.

The selection:

The players were protected from the thronging bystanders by a brass rail; they sat round the table, nine on each side, with the dealer in the middle and the croupier facing him. Big money was changing hands. The dealer was a member of the Greek Syndicate. Nicky looked at his impassive face. His eyes were watchful, but his expression never changed whether he won or lost. It was a terrifying, strangely impressive sight. It gave Nicky, who had been thriftily brought up, a peculiar thrill to see someone risk a thousand pounds on the turn of a card and when he lost make a little joke and laugh. It was all terribly exciting.

A distinctive feature of the works of Maugham is the simplicity of the text. He does not describe everything in detail and tries to carry the text to any reader. Thus his works are always live and natural.

The comedy «The facts of life» is about how sometimes kind fate can be. Gambling, money and women were the things that Henry Garnet had forbidden his eighteen years old son Nicky to have deal with when he decided to set off for the tennis tournament in Monte Carlo. Henry knew what he was talking about as he himself was a gambler. He didn't want his son, pride of the family and University, to take the wrong way. But, of course, the young man turned out to be not as well-behaved when he got into one of the casinos of the city.

The story is very interesting because the author only describes lives and feelings of the characters but he does not evaluate their actions and thoughts. And, this is very important stylistic feature that helps the reader in the perception of the story.

On the one hand, the plot is very simple and elementary but on the other hand things are developing dynamically and that's why the reader cannot be bored. The beginning of the story is relatively easy but when Nicky begins losing after the winning, that's when things start to get interesting. I thought he would lose all his money and would have to deal with it. But the guy is very lucky and even hit the jackpot. Then, when he decided to spend the night with a strange woman in the hotel, and that she would rob him and run away with his money. But Nicky was twice lucky and he got his money back and even stole from the woman although he didn't want to. The interesting thing is that against his father's warnings, it was Nicky who wiped everyone's eye. Henry told his son do not gamble but he did and won a lot of money. Father forbade his son to deal with women and lend anyone money, but

luck's always been with Nicky. However, the boy considerably regretted that he hadn't listened to his father when he saw how the woman was hiding his money into the flowerpot.

As said the stranger that Nicky had met in the club «It's idiotic to leave Monte without having tried your luck. Of course, it's better to know when to stop. But at the age of eighteen when you only getting ready to leap into adulthood, it's natural to have a sense of adventure.

UNIT V- FICTION

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

By Thomas Hardy

About the author:

Thomas Hardy, (born June 2, 1840, Higher Bockhampton, Dorset, England—died January 11, 1928, [Dorchester](#), Dorset), English novelist and poet who set much of his work in Wessex, his name for the counties of southwestern [England](#).

A Victorian realist in the tradition of George Eliot, he was influenced both in his novels and in his poetry by Romanticism, including the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Early life and works

Hardy was the eldest of the four children of Thomas Hardy, a stonemason and jobbing builder, and his wife, Jemima (née Hand). He grew up in an isolated cottage on the edge of open heathland. Though he was often ill as a child, his early experience of rural life, with its seasonal rhythms and oral [culture](#), was fundamental to much of his later writing. He spent a year at the village school at age eight and then moved on to schools in Dorchester, the nearby county town, where he received a good grounding in mathematics and Latin. In 1856 he was apprenticed to John Hicks, a local architect, and in 1862, shortly before his 22nd birthday, he moved to London and became a draftsman in the busy office of Arthur Blomfield, a leading [ecclesiastical](#) architect. Driven back to Dorset by ill health in 1867, he worked for Hicks again and then for the Weymouth architect G.R. Crickmay.

At the beginning of the novel, Bathsheba Everdene is a beautiful young woman without a fortune. She meets Gabriel Oak, a young farmer, and saves his life one evening. He asks her to marry him, but she refuses because she does not love him. Upon inheriting her uncle's prosperous farm she moves away to the town of Weatherbury.

A disaster befalls Gabriel's farm and he loses his sheep; he is forced to give up farming. He goes looking for work, and in his travels finds himself in Weatherbury. After rescuing a local farm from fire he asks the mistress if she needs a shepherd. It is Bathsheba, and she hires him. As Bathsheba learns to manage her farm she becomes acquainted with her neighbor, Mr. Boldwood, and on a whim sends him a valentine with the words "Marry me." Boldwood becomes obsessed with her and becomes her second suitor. Rich and handsome, he has been sought after by many women. Bathsheba refuses him because she does not love him, but she then agrees to reconsider her decision.

That very night, Bathsheba meets a handsome soldier, Sergeant Troy. Unbeknownst to Bathsheba, he has recently impregnated a local girl, Fanny Robin, and almost married her. Troy falls in love with Bathsheba, enraging Boldwood. Bathsheba travels to Bath to warn Troy of Boldwood's anger, and while she is there, Troy convinces her to marry him. Gabriel has remained her friend throughout and does not approve of the marriage. A few weeks after his marriage to Bathsheba, Troy sees Fanny, poor and sick; she later dies giving birth to her child. Bathsheba discovers that Troy is the father. Grief-stricken at Fanny's death and riddled with shame, Troy runs away and is thought to have drowned.

With Troy supposedly dead, Boldwood becomes more and more emphatic about Bathsheba marrying him. Troy sees Bathsheba at a fair and decides to return to her. Boldwood holds a Christmas, to which he invites Bathsheba and again proposes marriage; just after she has agreed, Troy arrives to claim her. Bathsheba screams, and Boldwood shoots Troy dead. He is sentenced to life in prison. A few months later, Bathsheba marries Gabriel, now a prosperous bailiff.

The title *Far From the Madding Crowd* comes from Thomas Gray's famous 18th-century poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard": "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, Their sober wishes never learned to stray; Along the cool sequestered vale of life They kept the noiseless tenor of their way." By alluding to Gray's poem, Hardy evokes the rural culture that, by Hardy's lifetime, had become threatened with extinction at the hands of ruthless industrialization. His novel thematizes the importance of man's connection to, and understanding of, the natural world. Gabriel Oak embodies Hardy's ideal of a life in harmony with the forces of the natural world.

The novel also contemplates the relationship between luck, or chance, and moral responsibility: Why should we live a morally upright life if tragedy strikes us all equally anyway? While some characters, like Gabriel, are always responsible and cautious, others, like Sergeant Troy, are careless and destructive. Hardy was very much influenced by the ideas of Charles Darwin, who maintained that the development of a biological species--and, by extension, of human society and history--is shaped by chance and not by the design of a god.

Another theme is the danger and destruction inherent in romantic love and marriage; Hardy exposes the inconsistencies, irrationalities, and betrayals that often plague romantic relationships. Bathsheba begins the novel an independent woman, but by falling in love with Troy, she nearly destroys her life. Similarly, Hardy presents us with many couples in which one partner is more in love than the other, and he shows what disastrous events result from this inequality.

Bathsheba Everdene has the enviable problem of coping with three suitors simultaneously. The first to appear is Gabriel Oak, a farmer as ordinary, stable, and sturdy as his name suggests. Perceiving her beauty, he proposes to her and is promptly rejected. He vows not to ask again.

Oak's flock of sheep is tragically destroyed, and he is obliged to seek employment. Chance has it that in the search he spies a serious fire, hastens to aid in extinguishing it, and manages to obtain employment on the estate. Bathsheba inherits her uncle's farm, and it is she who employs Gabriel as a shepherd. She intends to manage the farm by herself. Her farmhands have reservations about the abilities of this woman, whom they think is a bit vain and capricious.

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