

LITMOSPHERE:
THE WORLD OF LITERATURE
(ENG1 A01)
I SEMESTER
COMMON COURSE IN ENGLISH

(2022 Admission)

CBCSS



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

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UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

School of Distance Education

Study Material

I Semester

Common Course in English

LITMOSPHERE: THE WORLD OF LITERATURE (ENG1 A01)

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AIM OF THE COURSE:

This course aims to introduce the nature and types of literature to undergraduate students. This course is envisaged in such a way as to help students gain some insights into the art of creative thinking and writing and also to assist them in approaching literature in an analytical way. This eventually leads to develop the students' ability to understand various perspectives on life and literature. Another major purpose of the course is to familiarise the students with English language and literature so that they can appreciate and embrace the creative side of life too.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop the ability to appreciate life and literature
- To cultivate an interest in society and culture
- To envisage creative approach to life and literature

MODULE 1: Literature- Initiation

1. To Posterity - Louis MacNeice

About the Author

Louis MacNeice was born on September 12, 1907, in Belfast, Ireland to parents originally from Connemara in the West of Ireland. In 1909 they moved to Carrickfergus due to the appointment of MacNeice's father as rector for the Anglican Church in the town. His father later became a Bishop. At the age of ten he was sent to school in Dorset. MacNeice went on to study classics at Oxford, becoming a close friend and poetic contemporary of W.H. Auden. He majored in classics and philosophy.

In 1930, he married Giovanna Ezra and accepted a post as classics lecturer at the University of Birmingham, a position he held until 1936, when he went on to teach Greek at Bedford College for Women, University of London. He earned his living as a university lecturer in Classics. The second world war found him in the United States - not an escaper or refugee, but an invited guest-lecturer in English at Cornell, because by 1939 he was indeed a famous poet, prolific, sought after for poems and opinions. He came back to England in 1941 and joined the BBC, where he spent more than 20 years in the legendary radio features department as writer/producer. Some of his best-known plays, including 'Christopher Columbus' (1944), and 'The Dark Tower' (1946), were originally written for radio and later published.

Despite his association with young British poets Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, writer Christopher Isherwood, and other left-wing poets, MacNeice was as mistrustful of political programs as he was of philosophical systems. He was never a member of the Communist Party or any other political groups, and he was quite candid about the ambiguities of his political attitudes. "My sympathies are Left," he wrote. "But not in my heart or my guts."

Although he chose to live most of his adult life in London, MacNeice frequently returned to the landscapes of his childhood. His poetry is characterised by its familiar, sometimes humorous tone and its integration of contemporary ideas and images. In August of 1963, on location with a unit of the BBC, he went down in a mineshaft. The 'cold' he caught was not diagnosed as pneumonia until too late. He died a month after at 55 years old. He died on September 3, 1963, just before the publication of his last book of poems, *The Burning Perch*. Ironically, Louis MacNeice was born in the month of September (1907) and died in September (1963).

To Posterity (Poem)

When books have all seized up like the books in graveyards
And reading and even speaking have been replaced
By other, less difficult, media, we wonder if you
Will find in flowers and fruit the same colour and taste
They held for us for whom they were framed in words,
And will your grass be green, your sky blue,
Or will your birds be always wingless birds?

About the Poem

Traditionally, a book carved into a gravestone signified the Book of Life, awaiting review by the Heavenly Critic. MacNeice pays poetry and the written word a splendid compliment. When the world is no longer “framed in words,” when the best eyes and ears of the past are no longer consulted, when we presume to confront the world in all our arrogant solitude, what remains? A weirdly mutated world of “wingless birds.” Without words, grass is no longer “green” but something less.

“If you read books of lasting value, you ought to study what you read, and if you study, you ought to take notes. And if you take notes, you owe it to yourself to assemble them into some sort of coherent commentary. What is the point of studious reading if not to evaluate critically what you read, assimilating the good while rejecting the bad? The forming of the mind is the name of the game. This won't occur from passive reading, but only by an active engagement with the material. The best way to do this is by writing up your own take on it.

Summary

The poem “To Posterity” by Louis MacNeice was first published in the volume “Visitations” in 1957. The meaning of the title of the poem “To Posterity” means, next generation. The poem is addressed not only to the generation of the speaker but also to ours. Now books are in their death bed situations, and some books have already gone to their graveyards. The speaker conveys to us the importance of reading good books and he also conveys his anxiety to a generation without reading and without books. MacNeice

focuses on those matters which trouble us a lot, like the advent of the new medias and technology. Books the age-old friend of mankind has already bid goodbye to us. The coming of television and the internet has immersed us in a new world, forgetting our age-old friend the books. Now it's the era of e books.

So, studying literary works, we are the ones to analyse the importance of books in each one of our lives. In the present era library have vanished and if it does exist it is like an old monument. The new generation have already forgotten the importance of books and they have also forgotten the habit of reading which makes them intelligent brave and also provides us the courage to face life rather than running away from the harsh realities of life.

Analysis:

In 1957 MacNeice wrote the short poem To Posterity. A poem strangely professes our diminished world. This poem was written in the middle of 20th century, where the new medias were lightening the world or human minds like a star.

During this time people were very much aware of the death bed situation of books, our age-old companion. As soon as the new medias and culture of globalisation took control of humanity, books and the reading habits went straight away to their graveyards. Here the poet foresees an era where e books and e library will dominate the world, we now live in.

The poet ponders upon the questions like, the greenness of the grass and the blueness of the sky. So, he refers a world without books to that of a wingless bird. He concludes the poem with a lot many questions which the mere future will be able to answer.

Review questions:

Write in one or two sentences

1. In which year was the poem To Posterity published?
2. What do you think is the major theme of the poem?
3. In which year was the work "The Blind Fire Works" published?
4. According to you what are the benefits of books?

Paragraph questions

1. What is the speciality of the 20th century?
2. Do you think the New Medias has captured our lives, how?
3. Do you actually miss the good friendship of books, as said by the poet?

Essay question

Analyse the poem taking into consideration the present situation of e books?

Further Reading

<https://www.jstor.org> › stable

<https://wfupress.wfu.edu> › Louis-MacNeice › poem-of-the...

2. The Rocking Horse Winner (Short Story)

About the Author

David Herbert Lawrence was born in 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, the fourth child of Arthur Lawrence and Lydia Beardsall. After attending Beauvale Board School he won a scholarship to Nottingham High School. On leaving school in 1901 he was employed for a short time as a clerk at the Nottingham firm of Haywoods, manufacturers of surgical appliances, and from 1902 as a pupil teacher at the British School in Eastwood.

He attended the Pupil-Teacher Centre in Ilkeston from 1904 and in 1906 took up a teacher-training scholarship at University College, Nottingham. After qualifying in 1908 he took up a teaching post at the Davidson School in Croydon, remaining there until 1912.

In early 1912, after a period of serious illness, Lawrence left his teaching post at Croydon to return to Nottinghamshire, shortly afterwards eloping to Germany with Frieda Weekley, the wife of Professor Ernest Weekley. They returned to England in 1914 prior to the outbreak of war and were married at Kensington Register Office on 14 July. Confined to England during the war years, the Lawrences spent much of this time at Tregerrhen in Cornwall. In 1919 they left England once more, embarking on a period of extensive travelling within Europe and then further afield to Ceylon, Australia, Mexico, and New Mexico.

His health continued to deteriorate, and Lawrence returned to Europe with Frieda in 1925. During his last years Lawrence spent much of his time in Italy making only brief

visits to England, the last in 1926. He died on 2 March 1930 at Vence in the south of France.

Lawrence was a prolific writer - of poetry, novels, short stories, plays, essays, and criticism. His works are heavily autobiographical and the experiences of his early years in Nottinghamshire continued to exert a profound influence throughout his life.

Summary

The main theme in the story *The Rocking Horse Winner* is greed. The mother and father both had very expensive tastes and their children basically resented them for it. There was never enough money and both parents had small incomes. The children were starting to grow up and would have to begin school soon. But all of the family's money was being wasted on things that were not important. The family believed that their house had become haunted with the unspoken phrase, "There must be more money!" Everyone heard it, but never said or did anything about it. The parents continued to buy unnecessary things. At Christmas time, they heard the phrase when all of the children's expensive toys filled the house. It was believed it was the toys that haunted the house, the mother's greed is what caused her to buy the toys in the first place.

A motif of the *Rocking Horse Winner* could be luck. The mother led her son to believe that they are an unlucky family. She believes this because they have no fortune and are basically poor. She believes that if you have money, you are lucky. She told her son the cause of their unluckiness is because of his father. Since he has a small income, he was unlucky, and since she married him, it made her unlucky as

well. She also told Paul that it is better to be born lucky rather than rich because if you are rich you could lose all of your money, but if you are lucky you will continue to receive money.

The theme and motif seem to tie together to create the tragic outcome of this story. The mother's greed and belief of unluckiness led to her own son's death. Since she told her son about their luck, he began betting on racehorses and winning a lot of money for her, which she still continued to blow on unnecessary things. Paul believed they were finally becoming a lucky family, so he continued to bet. The pressure of trying to pick the right horse made him really stressed out and caused him to basically go crazy and have a heart attack, which led to his death.

Characters

Paul - Paul is a young boy who is troubled by the lack of love and money in his house. He is determined to find luck for his mother.

Paul's mother - Paul's mother, Hester, is incapable of loving others including her children. She is irresponsible with money.

Joan - Joan is Paul's elder sister. She is uneasy about Paul's obsession with his rocking horse.

Bassett - Bassett is the family gardener and Paul's partner in betting on horses.

Father - Father is never named or present in the story. He is unlucky in business because he doesn't make enough money to support Paul's mother's expensive tastes.

The Narrator - The unnamed narrator relates events of the story and provides insight into characters' thoughts and feelings.

Uncle Oscar – Oscar is Paul's uncle and Paul's mother's brother. He uses Paul's tips to make money betting on horses.

The Whispering House - The whispering house acts as a symbol of the family's anxieties about lack of money, voicing these anxieties by constantly whispering, "There must be more money."

Themes

Greed and Materialism

In "The Rocking-Horse Winner," Lawrence exposes greed and materialism as destructive and dangerous. Paul's mother's greed fills the house with anxious whisperings rather than love. Instead of giving her children the love and attention they crave, she buys them expensive toys. She fills the house with luxuries the family can't afford in an attempt to appear as wealthy as the neighbours. When she receives a gift of birthday money, secretly given to her by Paul, she buys more fancy things instead of paying off debts. Instead of quieting the house, it screams more loudly for money. It appears that Paul's mother's greed is never-ending. When she receives more money, she spends it all on expensive things, which leads her to desire more money.

Uncle Oscar seems like a caring uncle in the beginning of the story, but he grows greedy as the story progresses and exploits Paul to make himself richer. When he discovers that Paul and the young gardener Bassett are earning money, he wants to know more. He becomes a partner in the scheme and

encourages Paul to continue to provide them with tips for horses to bet on. Even as Paul lies dying, Uncle Oscar, "in spite of himself," puts a bet on the last horse Paul named. He comforts mother by saying that she is now wealthy, and that Paul is better off dead because he no longer has to ride his rocking horse to find a winner.

Paul, in his own way, is greedy, too. He is greedy for luck to make his mother happy. If he can do that, perhaps he will win her love and attention. However, the more luck or money he gives her, the more she wants. So, Paul greedily pursues more luck for her. Lawrence shows that any greed—even selfless greed—is destructive.

Luck and Money

Paul first confuses luck and money when he hears Uncle Oscar refer to money as "filthy luck." Paul's mother explains that it's "filthy lucre," not luck. Filthy lucre means money earned in a dishonourable way. She explains that luck is what causes you to have money. If you're lucky you can always get more money. If you're unlucky, you'll never have enough. Paul's mother tells Paul that his father is very unlucky, and she is unlucky because she married him.

It's important to note that the family is well-off. They live in a nice house in a good neighbourhood and have servants to take care for them. The reason they don't have enough money has nothing to do with luck. They simply spend too much money to support their lavish lifestyle. Paul's mother wants to appear wealthier than her neighbours. By associating money with luck, rather than hard work, Paul's mother can avoid taking any responsibility for the family's financial situation. In the end money does not bring luck, it brings death.

Mother-Son Relationship

"The Rocking-Horse Winner," like many of Lawrence's works, explores an unhealthy relationship between a mother and a son. Several of Lawrence's novels describe mothers who are overly involved and domineering, and sons who struggle to free themselves to live their own lives. Paul's mother, in contrast, is a distant mother who is unable to love her children. She makes a show of being gentle and adoring, and everyone thinks she is a good mother. But Paul and his sisters know she doesn't love them. Paul also knows that his mother is unhappy because she doesn't have luck, which she believes is the difference between being rich and being poor. Paul's mother explains to Paul that his father is very unlucky.

Though he is just a child, Paul assumes the responsibility for finding luck for his mother. He makes money betting on horses and secretly gives it to his mother. In the process he is replacing his father, who can't provide for his mother as she wants. In the end his obsessive desire to please his mother kills him. This may be a fictional reflection of Lawrence's attempt to please his mother by being a scholar and a teacher. Lawrence got very sick twice while working and almost died.

As Paul becomes tenser throughout the story, Paul's mother becomes increasingly anxious for him. When Paul collapses in a brain fever at the end, his mother sits by his side, heartbroken. Perhaps she has finally learned to love Paul just as she is losing him, or it may be part of her act. It is up to the reader to decide if Paul's mother feels her new wealth is worth the life of her son.

Love

One could say justifiably that this story is about love, the inability of love, or how love comes too late. The story begins with the impossibility of love, specifically of Paul's mother loving her children, due to her self-centeredness. In contrast, Paul intensely desires to get his mother's attention by proving that he is lucky, which is to say that he desires her love. His success and luck in gambling seem to only drive her further into selfish desire, but it turns out that the self-destructive aspect of his obsession begins to catch her attention. However, it is not until this obsession has consumed Paul that his mother makes her first real move of concern and love towards him.

Inner versus Outer

From the very first paragraph of the story, outer appearances are placed in contrast to inner realities. Moreover, although it is assumed that to other people the hidden tensions between the two levels may not be apparent, Lawrence describes all the characters within Paul's family as having a sort of unspoken awareness of what is going on within each other. Although the parents do not seem to complain explicitly about not having enough money, their anxieties come across very clearly and powerfully to their children in the form of the whispering of the house. Paul's mother in particular is not very forthright with her feelings, preferring to keep them bottled up within herself, such as when she does not directly speak of her dissatisfaction with the gift Paul secretly gave her but just says that it was "Quite moderately nice."

Desire

The driving force of the story is desire: desire for money, luck, love, recognition, expression. In other words, there is always something lacking which ends up producing strong, though not always recognized, emotions. Paul's mother desires more money but never speaks so explicitly about this desire; the house does it for her. Likewise, Paul desires his mother's love and recognition. Every desire poses itself as an image of fulfilment, especially for Paul, who imagines a "there" which he can "get" to. However, the fulfilment of this desire - his greatest gambling win and his winning his mother's love - ends up consuming him so entirely that he dies.

Silence

The reaction of almost all the characters towards the tensions between inner and outer in the story is, for the most part, to remain silent. Uncle Oscar takes interest in Paul for his precocity in predicting races, but never tries to figure out how it is that Paul gains his insight; or if he does know, then he says and does nothing about it, despite the destructive path it leads Paul to take. Ironically, this silence makes problems and anxieties even more clear and compelling to everyone in the family. What the characters do not say, the house whispers or shouts to them obsessively, so that they can never escape their problems and anxieties.

Secrets

Although some inner anxieties, which are left unspoken by the characters, end up being articulated by other forces such as the whispering of the house, there are also certain emotional realities which remain unnoticed or only sensed in the dimmest of ways. For the reader and Paul's

mother, it is not until the end that we "catch" Paul in the middle of one of his rides; though we may have seen him "urging" his horse on early in the story, the connection among Paul's gambling insight, his madness, and the rocking-horse is not clearly established until the final revelatory scene. Before then, Paul is anxious to keep what he is doing a secret from everyone, even his gambling partners.

Growing Up

In the beginning of the story, Paul is, along with his sisters, still under the care of their nurse. However, by the end, he is beyond everyone in his family, even his mother, who at last wants to love him. For Paul, it is not so much the school that he ends up being able to attend or the tutors whom he works with, but his desperate and obsessive riding of his horse in order to gain gambling insight which at once releases him from the bonds of childhood while at the same time prevents him from developing in a healthy manner. He ends up a kind of exaggerated child, possessing extreme childlike passions and fascinations, without cuteness and pliability.

Review questions

Write in one or two sentences

1. Who is Frieda Weekley?
2. When Frieda and Lawrence did get married?
3. In which year did Lawrence passed away?
4. The writings of Lawrence focused on which all areas?

Paragraph questions

1. Write a character of Paul in the story?
2. Is this a story of Luck, Money and greed, how would you analyse?
3. What do you think the Rocking Horse represent in the story?

Essay question

Does the story have any connection with the Authors life?

Further Reading

<https://interestingliterature.com> › 2016/12 › a-summary-a...

<https://www.shmoop.com> › study-guides › literature › s...

<https://www.gradesaver.com> › study-guide › summary-the...

3. Memoirs of a Mad Man - Gustave Flaubert

About the Author

Gustave Flaubert, (born December 12, 1821, Rouen, France—died May 8, 1880, Croisset), novelist regarded as the prime mover of the realist school of French literature and best known for his masterpiece, *Madame Bovary* (1857), a realistic portrayal of bourgeois life, which led to a trial on charges of the novel's alleged immorality.

Early life and works

Flaubert's father, Achille Cléophas Flaubert, who was from Champagne, was chief surgeon and clinical professor at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital in Rouen. His mother, a doctor's daughter from Pont l'Évêque, belonged to a family of distinguished magistrates typical of the great provincial bourgeoisie.

Gustave Flaubert began his literary career at school, his first published work appearing in a little review, *Le Colibri*, in 1837. He early formed a close friendship with the young philosopher Alfred Le Poittevin, whose pessimistic outlook had a strong influence on him. No less strong was the impression made by the company of great surgeons and the environment of hospitals, operating theatres, and anatomy classes, with which his father's profession brought him into contact.

Flaubert's intelligence, moreover, was sharpened in a general sense. He conceived a strong dislike of accepted ideas (*idées reçues*), of which he was to compile a "dictionary" for his amusement. He and Le Poittevin invented a grotesque imaginary character, called "le Garçon" (the Boy), to whom

they attributed whatever sort of remark seemed to them most degrading. Flaubert came to detest the “bourgeois,” by which he meant anyone who “has a low way of thinking.”

In November 1841 Flaubert was enrolled as a student at the Faculty of Law in Paris. At age 22, however, he was recognized to be suffering from a nervous disease that was taken to be epilepsy, although the essential symptoms were absent. This made him give up the study of law, with the result that henceforth he could devote all his time to literature. His father died in January 1846, and his beloved sister Caroline died in the following March after giving birth to a daughter. Flaubert then retired with his mother and his infant niece to his estate at Croisset, near Rouen, on the Seine. He was to spend nearly all the rest of his life there. On a visit to Paris in July 1846, at the sculptor James Pradier’s studio, Flaubert met the poet Louise Colet. She became his mistress, but their relationship did not run smoothly. His self-protecting independence and her jealousy made separation inevitable, and they parted in 1855. In 1847 Flaubert went on a walking tour along the Loire and the coast of Brittany with the writer Maxime du Camp, whose acquaintance he had made as a law student. The pages written by Flaubert in their journal of this tour “over fields and shores” were published after his death under that title, *Par les champs et par les grèves*. This book contains some of his best writing—e.g., his description of a visit to Chateaubriand’s family estate, Combourg.

Mature career

Some of the works of Flaubert’s maturity dealt with subjects on which he had tried to write earlier. At age 16, for instance, he completed the manuscript of *Mémoires d’un fou* (“Memoirs of a Mad Man”), which recounted his devastating

passion for Elisa Schlésinger, 11 years his senior and the wife of a music publisher, whom he had met in 1836. This passion was only revealed to her 35 years later when she was a widow. Elisa provided the model for the character Marie Arnoux in the novel *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Before receiving its definitive form, however, this work was to be rewritten in two distinct intermediate versions in manuscript: November (1842) and a preliminary draft entitled *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1843–45). Stage by stage it was expanded into a vast panorama of France under the July Monarchy—indispensable reading, according to Georges Sorel, for any historian studying the period that preceded the coup d'état of 1851. The composition of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* provides another example of that tenacity in the pursuit of perfection that made Flaubert go back constantly to work on subjects without ever being satisfied.

Analysis

Memoirs of a Madman alternates between the narrator's musings on the present and his memories of the past. In the sections that deal with the present, the narrator takes a bleak outlook on life, discussing writing, sanity, and death.

More attention has been given to the memories of his past. In one section, he recalls a summer near the ocean when he is fifteen. There he meets and falls in love with a married woman named Maria (thought to be based on Elisa Schlésinger, who would later influence his *Sentimental Education*). Later in the work, he will remember returning to the seashore many years later to look for her again unsuccessfully. A second episode concerns his meeting two young English girls, one of whom seems to fall in love with him. Still in love with Maria, he cannot return the girl's emotions, and she moves away.

Review questions

Write in one or two sentences

1. When was *Memoirs of a madman* written?
2. Who is Gustave Flaubert?
3. What kind of a work is *Memoirs of a madman*?

Paragraph questions

1. What all experiences are shared by the author in this work?
2. Why do you think more attention is given to the past?
3. Why did the author give bleak outlook to some memories?

Essay question

1. Summarise *Memoirs of a madman*?

Further Reading

[https://www.goodreads.com › book › show › 60698.M...](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/60698.M...)

[https://almabooks.com › uploads › 2016/10 › Me...](https://almabooks.com/uploads/2016/10/Me...)

[https://linguabooster.com › book › memoirs-of-madman](https://linguabooster.com/book/memoirs-of-madman)

MODULE 2: Creative Thinking and Writing

Introduction

Creative thinking is the way of thinking that leads to the generation of valuable and original ideas. All people are capable of engaging in creative thinking and practicing ‘everyday’ creativity (addressing everyday activities in a non-conventional way). Creative thinking can be applied not only to contexts related to the expression of imagination, such as creative writing or the arts, but also to other areas where the generation of ideas is functional to the investigation of issues, problems or society-wide concerns.

Literature is a space where creativity plays a major role in relationships and insights into the world and the self. Literature helps to develop a thinking structure where rigid, set patterns of thinking can be subverted and a more flexible and non-judgemental thought process can be consciously introduced to the readers. Besides, different points of view, social contexts and character types can help the readers to become broad-minded. The readers are tempted to think beyond and behind borders and closed doors to new realms of knowledge and experiences. Even the binaries like right/ wrong, good/bad, fair/ugly, inside/outside, us/them become relative when a reader empathizes with characters who have entirely different experiences than his/her own. The readers are taken to new and completely different realms of existence and imaginary lands which arouse curiosity and interest in life in this universe and other probable universes and hence new possibilities.

1. The Thought Fox (poem)-Ted Hughes

About the Author

Edward James (Ted) Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, in the West Riding district of Yorkshire, on August 17, 1930. His childhood was quiet and rural. When he was seven years old his family moved to the small town of Mexborough in South Yorkshire, and the landscape of the moors of that area informed his poetry throughout his life.

After high school, Hughes entered the Royal Air Force and served for two years as a ground wireless mechanic. He then moved to Cambridge to attend Pembroke College on an academic scholarship. While in college he published a few poems, majored in Anthropology and Archaeology, and studied mythologies extensively.

Hughes graduated from Cambridge in 1954. A few years later, in 1956, he cofounded the literary magazine *St. Botolph's Review* with a handful of other editors. At the launch party for the magazine, he met Sylvia Plath. A few short months later, on June 16, 1956, they were married. Plath encouraged Hughes to submit his first manuscript, *The Hawk in the Rain*, to The Poetry Center's First Publication book contest. The judges—Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, and Stephen Spender—awarded the manuscript first prize, and it was published in England and America in 1957, to much critical praise.

Hughes lived in Massachusetts with Plath and taught at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. They returned to England in 1959, and their first child, Freida, was born the following year. Their second child, Nicholas, was born two years later.

In 1962, Hughes left Plath for Assia Gutmann Wevill. Less than a year later, Plath died by suicide. Hughes did not write again for years, as he focused all of his energy on editing and promoting Plath's poems. He was also roundly lambasted by the public, who saw him as responsible for his wife's suicide. Controversy surrounded his editorial choices regarding Plath's poems and journals.

In 1965, Wevill gave birth to their only child, Shura. Four years later, like Plath, she also committed suicide, killing Shura as well. The following year, in 1970, Hughes married Carol Orchard, with whom he remained married until his death.

Hughes's lengthy career included over a dozen books of poetry, translations, non-fiction and children's books, such as the famous *The Iron Man* (1968). His books of poems include: *Wolfwatching* (1990), *Flowers and Insects* (1986), *Selected Poems 1957–1981* (1982), *Moortown* (1980), *Cave Birds* (1979), *Crow* (1971), and *Lupercal* (1960). His final collection, *The Birthday Letters* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998), published the year of his death, documented his relationship with Plath.

Hughes's work is marked by a mythical framework, using the lyric and dramatic monologue to illustrate intense subject matter. Animals appear frequently throughout his work as deity, metaphor, persona, and icon. Perhaps the most famous of his subjects is "Crow," an amalgam of God, bird and man, whose existence seems pivotal to the knowledge of good and evil. Hughes won many of Europe's highest literary honours, and was appointed Poet Laureate of England in 1984, a post he held until his death. He passed away on October 28, 1998, in Devonshire, England, from cancer.

The Thought Fox (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.

Summary

The fox is described in terms of its nose, its eyes, its paws leaving prints in the snow (the whiteness of the snow similar to the blankness of the white page in front of the poet), suggesting that the poet's imagining of the creature is coming in partial details, much as inspiration often arrives gradually though vividly.

The poem ends with the whole fox becoming fully formed in the poet's mind's eye – or rather not just his eye but his nose too ('sudden sharp hot stink of fox'). The poet successfully writes his poem, as if printing his words across the white page is simply a case of mirroring the paw-prints of the animal across the snow. The window remains 'starless': old-fashioned and clichéd poetic tropes were not required here. The poem is written – as, indeed, 'The Thought-Fox', a truly meta-poem, is now complete.

‘The Thought-Fox’: context and origins

Curiously, the poem had its origins in one of the most significant events of Hughes’s young life. While he was studying English at the University of Cambridge, Hughes found that studying poetry was having a deleterious effect on his own poetry: he was writing virtually no new poetry, because he felt suffocated by the ‘terrible, suffocating, maternal octopus’ of literary tradition.

The main idea of the thought Fox poem is that the poem metaphorically depicts artistic inspiration as a fox—mysterious, twitchy, and unpredictable—that moves slyly through the darkness of the imagination. Through this metaphor, the poem shows that writing requires patience, concentration, instinct, and a bit of luck.

The tone of the thought Fox is the physical setting of the poem in a dark forest and the slow revelation of the fox together create a tone of great suspense and mystery. Furthermore, the imagery of "the dark hole of the head" adds a grotesque element but also indicates that this poem has been largely introspective.

Ted Hughes chose to use the fox as the poetic impulse because it was a creature close to his heart, a symbolic guide. The flow and rhythm of the latter part of the poem capture the silky movements, the light measured skips, the quick trot of the now lively fox.

Analysis

"The Thought Fox" was first published in the British poet Ted Hughes's debut collection, *The Hawk in the Rain*, in 1957. One of Hughes's most popular poems, "The Thought

Fox" is about creativity, inspiration, and the process of writing poetry. The speaker, generally taken to be Hughes himself (or a version of him), sits alone during the dark quiet of a winter night, fingers poised over a blank page. A fox appears outside the window and makes a tentative but purposeful journey across the snow, before leaping and into the speaker's mind—at which point the "page is printed," and the poem is complete. This "thought fox" can be thought of as a metaphor for inspiration and creative thought, which seem to come from a mysterious place separate from the speaker's conscious mind. The poem treats the fox in mostly literal terms, however, and in doing so proves the power of poetry to bring new worlds—and creatures—to vivid life on the page. "The Thought Fox" The speaker sits alone in the middle of the night, surrounded by a forest that may or may not be in his imagination. He senses that something apart from himself is alive, as the clock ticks in the silence and his fingers hover over an empty page. He can't see any stars through the window but feels that something is approaching him from the depths of the darkness, heading towards this isolated scene.

A fox gently touches its cold nose to twigs and leaves in the darkness. Its eyes scan its surroundings, again and again, from moment to moment. The fox leaves tidy paw prints in the snow as it makes its way between the trees. Its shadow trails behind it like an injured animal. The fox's body, however, moves confidently and purposefully through clearings in the forest.

The fox's eye widens, its green colour becoming more intense and vivid as it concentrates on what's ahead—until its scent suddenly becomes immediate and visceral, and the fox enters the darkness of the speaker's mind. The speaker still

can't see any stars through the window. The clock is still ticking, and the poem has been written.

Themes

Creativity, Inspiration, and Imagination

“The Thought Fox” is a poem about writing poetry. The poem metaphorically depicts artistic inspiration as a fox—mysterious, twitchy, and unpredictable—that moves slyly through the darkness of the imagination. Through this metaphor, the poem shows that writing requires patience, concentration, instinct, and a bit of luck. The poem thus emphasizes both the role of the unconscious mind in creativity and the need for the poet to intentionally (or consciously) create the right conditions in order to coax a poem into existence.

For the speaker, writing is a kind of waiting game. Creativity and inspiration might work in mysterious ways, but they can't work their magic at all, the poem suggests, if the creator doesn't sit down and eliminate distractions! The speaker thus sits at a desk in the dark solitude of a wintry night, with only the ticking clock for company. There aren't even any stars in the speaker's window, which implies that he isn't about to be struck with a lightning flash of divine inspiration.

Instead, writing, as depicted here, requires a hunter's stillness and patience. The speaker can sense the presence of "something else [...] alive" nearby, implying that creative inspiration is a mysterious force with its own agency. Yet writers can't force an idea any more than a fox can force its prey—or a human hunter can force a fox—into the open; all they can do is make sure they're ready for it when it comes.

With the stage set, then, the speaker waits for the "thought fox" (again, representing creativity and inspiration) to arrive. And sure enough, step after tentative step, the thought fox makes its way across the dark, snowy forest (perhaps representing the darkness and mystery of the speaker's unconscious mind).

The speaker's vivid description of the fox, with its delicate movements and attentiveness to its surroundings, echoes the creative process. Like a fox on a mission to find prey or a mate, the poet uses instinct to follow the trail of a poem. The speaker implies that a poet doesn't necessarily know what a poem is going to say before it's written, and instead uses a kind of primal intuition akin to a wild animal. Through concentration and a kind of trust in the unconscious mind, a poem, like a fox, can just go "about its own business"—until suddenly it pounces. The fox "enters the dark hole" of the speaker's mind, and the "page is printed"; the poem—this very poem—is complete, seeming to have written itself.

Note how the poem does a remarkable job of bringing what seems like a real fox to life for the reader, and in doing so uses the same imaginative power that the speaker is trying to represent through the fox. The fox is a creature conjured in the speaker's imagination to represent how that very imagination works its magic. In a way, then, the thought fox creates itself! The poem lives and breathes, bringing its creation to life—even as that creature is itself the source of creativity.

The poem, then, depicts creativity as a mixture of deliberate choices on the writer's part (the speaker's willingness to sit down at the desk and wait) and a deeply

mysterious process that takes place beyond the writer's conscious control. And perhaps, in using their own imaginations to bring the poem to life, readers undergo a similar process, encountering a thought fox where, just moments ago, there was nothing.

Review questions

Write in one or two sentences

1. When did Ted Hughes published poems in Anthropology and Archaeology?
2. In 1956 what did Hughes co-founded?
3. Who is Sylvia Plath to Ted Hughes?
4. What is Hawk in the Rain?

Paragraph questions

1. What do you think is the speciality of Hughes writings?
2. Analyse the title of the poem?
3. Analyse Ted Hughes as an animal poet?

Essay question

How would you interpret the metaphor of the fox in the poem?

Further Reading

<https://poemanalysis.com> › Ted Hughes

<https://www.gradesaver.com> › study-guide › summary-lin...

<https://englishsummary.com> › thought-fox-ted-hughes

2. Poetry (poem)-Marianne Moore

About the Author

Born near St. Louis, Missouri, on November 15, 1887, Marianne Moore was raised in the home of her grandfather, a Presbyterian pastor. After her grandfather's death, in 1894, Moore and her family stayed with other relatives, and in 1896 they moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She attended Bryn Mawr College and received her BA in 1909. Following graduation, Moore studied typing at Carlisle Commercial College, and from 1911 to 1915 she was employed as a school teacher at the Carlisle Indian School. In 1918, Moore and her mother moved to New York City, and in 1921, she became an assistant at the New York Public Library. She began to meet other poets, such as William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens, and to contribute to the *Dial*, a prestigious literary magazine. She served as acting editor of the *Dial* from 1925 to 1929. Along with the work of such other members of the Imagist movement as Ezra Pound, Williams, and H. D., Moore's poems were published in *The Egoist*, an English magazine, beginning in 1915. In 1921, H. D. published Moore's first book, *Poems* (The Egoist Press, 1921), without her knowledge. Moore was widely recognized for her work; among her many honours were the Bollingen prize, the National Book Award, and the Pulitzer Prize. She wrote with the freedom characteristic of the other modernist poets, often incorporating quotes from other sources into the text, yet her use of language was always extraordinarily condensed and precise, capable of suggesting a variety of ideas and associations within a single, compact image. In his 1925 essay "Marianne Moore," William Carlos Williams wrote about Moore's signature mode, the vastness of the particular: "So that in looking at some apparently small object, one feels the

swirl of great events.” She was particularly fond of animals, and much of her imagery is drawn from the natural world. She was also a great fan of professional baseball and an admirer of Muhammed Ali, for whom she wrote the liner notes to his record, *I Am the Greatest!* Deeply attached to her mother, she lived with her until Mrs. Moore’s death in 1947.

‘Poetry’ is one of Marianne Moore’s most celebrated literary achievements. It’s a poem that she was never happy with and continued to revise over the decades of her life. The version that this analysis focuses on is only three lines long. But there are several other versions. One of the most popular is a much longer, five stanza version in which the same themes emerge. The poem was first printed in 1919 in *Others* and the poem continued to be printed until at least four different versions were circulated in print. Eventually, Moore cut the poem down to three lines and added the longer, five stanza version as an endnote, complicating the poem further.

Poetry - Marianne Moore

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond
all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one
discovers that there is in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because

they are
useful; when they become so derivative as to become
unintelligible, the
same thing may be said for all of us—that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand. The bat,
holding on upside down or in quest of something to
eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless
wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse
that feels a flea, the base-
ball fan, the statistician—case after case
could be cited did
one wish it; nor is it valid
to discriminate against “business documents and
school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must
make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets,
the result is not poetry,
nor till the autocrats among us can be
“literalists of
the imagination”—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them,
shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand, in defiance
of their opinion—
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness, and
that which is on the other hand,
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

Summary

Marianne Moore was a modernist poet, critic, translator, and editor. Her poetry is characterized by linguistic precision, acute observation, meditative analysis, and philosophical reflection. Her poem titled “Poetry” is one of Moore’s best-known and most discussed poems. It is an investigation into the mysterious art of poetry. Moore reworked on this poem several times and brought out several versions of it. The poem is best known for the shocking first line, in which Moore states that she dislikes poetry. She says that there are many more important things than such nonsense. Even if one reads poetry with “contempt” one might discover something genuine in it. A genuine poetry makes one feel grasping it, his eyes become dilated, and the hair rises. These happen not because of the fancy interpretations one can build on them but because they are useful. People tend not to like things they do not understand. They reject it when they are imitative, or which are beyond their intelligence. She gives examples of things that are rich and vital, such as a bat hanging upside down, an elephant pushing, a rolling horse, and a tireless wolf under a tree. All these are images of animals

engaged in very natural acts. Moore is also known for using animals in her work. Having just decried most poetry as being unintelligible, the poem's speaker argues in favour of using subjects that can easily be understood, which turns out to be animals. Moore's choice of animals and their actions also convey a sense of restlessness to the reader.

The reader may feel the speaker's eagerness to move beyond bad poetry and into the good. Immediately after listing the names of animals, she lists a few people - the "immovable critic," who is compared to a horse bothered by fleas, a sports fan, and a statistician. These are just a few examples of "case after case" that could be cited in poetry. All are equally valid and interesting. She quotes from the diaries of Tolstoy. Tolstoy wrote that poetry is verse, prose is not verse. And poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books. But Moore says that even the most ordinary pieces of text like business documents and textbooks should not be discriminated against the topic of poetry. There should be a distinction made between good poetry and bad poetry. Just writing about the above-mentioned things does not constitute genuine poetry. Any subject, the speaker argues, can make a good poem as long as the poem is written by a real poet, not a "half poet." When "half poets" write of these subjects, they remain trivial; they have not captured the essence of these things. The speaker also states that good poetry will not exist until the "autocrats" (the supposed authorities who determine what makes "good" poetry), become "literalists of the imagination." The expression "literalists of the imagination" is taken from Yeats which means those who make imagination as important as the natural world. That is there isn't any difference between the products of the imagination and reality. When these poets can finally give us "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," then it

will be real poetry. If you defy the half poets and demand poetry consisting of “raw material” and “genuine feeling, firmly rooted in real, everyday phenomena, you can officially be deemed “interested in poetry.” The tone of the poem is like a casual conversation. The poet openly expresses her dislike of poetry. The poet is not actually against poetry as the initial lines indicate. She is indeed of the view that poetry is of such influence and has a substance that someone who is not fond of poetry will also be able to appreciate it. She tries to make a distinction between good poets and half poets and the components of good poetry. The conversational tone is best to convey her thoughts to the readers. Moore's concise language and stanza-long sentences can obscure the poem's meaning during an initial reading. But behind the complexity of language is a simple message.

Analysis

‘Poetry’ by Marianne Moore is a three-line poem in which the speaker, who is likely Moore herself, discusses her feelings about poetry. In the first line, she states quite bluntly that she “too” dislikes poetry. Readers must make the leap, connecting “it” in this line to the title, ‘Poetry’. She goes on, revises her statement, and adding that she does get something out of reading it. She states that it is a place for “genuine” to reside.

Themes in Poetry

Throughout ‘Poetry’ Moore engages with themes of writing and self-expression. ‘Poetry’ is a poem about poetry, something that is less rare than it might seem. In this three-line version of the poem, Moore speaks very briefly on the one quality that poetry has that makes it redeemable and worth

returning to, its means of genuine expression. The poem itself is an expression of the same genuine attitude that Moore finds in other poetic works.

Structure and Form

‘Poetry’ by Marianne Moore is a short, three-line poem that does not make use of a single rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. This is a style of writing known as free verse. But, despite how it sounds, it does not mean that the poem is completely devoid of any structure at all. When glancing at the poem, one of the first things that readers will notice is the unusual use of line breaks. The lines vary greatly in length with the first only containing five syllables, the second, nineteen, and the last line eleven. The poem reads like one long sentence.

Literary Devices

Moore makes use of several literary devices in ‘Poetry’. These include but are not limited to alliteration, caesura, and end-punctuation. Usually, end-punctuation goes unnoticed in a poem. But when the text is this minimal it means that each choice the poet made is all the more important. The use of a period at the end of the first line creates a strong, declarative statement. The content of it requires some context, but it is quite a powerful opening to this short poem.

Caesura is another punctuation-oriented technique which can be seen most clearly in the second and third lines. Here, Moore divides the lines up into short sections separated out by commas. This creates a very choppy, halting rhythm and interrupts any flow that these supposedly poetic lines would have. Moore made this choice very purposefully in order to alter one’s expectations about what poetry is.

Despite the brevity of the poem, there are examples of alliteration in the text. For instance, “perfect” and “place” in lines two and three as well as “dislike” and “discovers” in lines one and two.

Review Questions

Write in one or two sentences

1. Name the magazines where Moore's poems were published?
2. What are the speciality of Moore's poems?
3. When Poetry by Moore was first printed?

Write in a paragraph

1. Analyse the title of the poem?
2. Do you find anything special about the poem, if yes what are they?
3. What are the literary devises used in the poem?

Essay question

Do you think Poetry is the medium to pour out genuine emotions and feelings?

Further Reading

<https://www.owleyes.org> › text › poetry

<https://www.gradesaver.com> › poetry › study-guide › sum...

<https://www.shmoop.com> › study-guides › summary

3. Excerpt from An Autobiography (Prose)-Agatha Christie

About the Author

Agatha Christie was a great crime writer of the 20th century. She was born Agatha May Clarissa Miller on 13 September 1890 in Torquay, Devon, England. Her father was named Alvan Miller and her mother was called Clarissa Margaret. The family was well off. Sadly, when Agatha was 11 her father died. On 24 December 1914 Agatha married an aviator named Archibald Christie. They had a daughter named Rosalind in 1919. During the First World War, she volunteered to work in a red cross hospital. In 1917 she became a dispenser. Agatha turned to writing. Her first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* was published in the USA in 1920 and in Britain in 1921. It introduced the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. Miss Marple appeared in 1927. Agatha was a prolific writer. She wrote many books including *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), *Death on the Nile* (1937) and *Then There Were None* (1939).

In December 1926 Agatha disappeared. She went to Harrogate and booked into a hotel. After 10 days she was recognized. Archie and Agatha Christie were divorced the same year, 1928. On 11 September 1930 Agatha married an archaeologist named Max Mallowan. During the Second World War, Agatha Christie worked as a pharmacist, which gave her a good knowledge of poisons. Agatha Christie died on 12 January 1976. She was buried in a churchyard in Cholsey, Oxfordshire.

An Autobiography is the title of the recollections of crime writer Agatha Christie published posthumously by Collins in

the UK and by Dodd, Mead & Company in the US in November 1977, almost two years after the writer's death in January 1976.

Overview

She wrote this allegedly from 2 April 1950 - 11 October 1965 meaning it took her 15 years. Christie provides a foreword and an epilogue to the book in which she very clearly states the beginning and end of the composition. The book was supposedly started on 2 April 1950 at the expedition house at Nimrud where she was working on the excavation of that ancient city with her second husband, the archaeologist Max Mallowan. The narrative was then completed on 11 October 1965 at one of the Mallowans' homes, Winterbrook House in Wallingford, Berkshire where Christie's death occurred eleven years later. Collins included a preface to the book in which they admitted that repetitions and inconsistencies had been "tidied up" but they continued to impress on readers that the text had been composed over a fifteen-year period and was then left untouched by Christie for the remainder of her life. Christie's official biography revealed that the truth was more complicated and while many notes and short diaries had been made between 1950 and 1965, Christie's intention had been for a more ad hoc series of smaller books in the style of the 1946 publication *Come Tell Me How You Live* (which concentrated fully on her life on one of her husband's digs and the personalities and events involved). In the early 1960s Christie was being approached more and more often for permission to write biographies of her, all such requests being firmly turned down.

In February 1962 she informed her literary agent, Edmund Cork of Hughes Massie, that she did not want any account of her life written, but exactly three years later she

seemed to recognise the inevitability of such works being composed and determined to undercut such efforts, started work in earnest to bring her notes into a more cohesive narrative, although she remained determined that publication would not occur during her lifetime. The writing was finished by the end of 1966 with the draft being sent to Cork for his suggestions and a request for a copy to be typed for Christie's daughter Rosalind Hicks in order that she could offer her opinions. After Christie's death in 1976, the text was edited by Philip Ziegler of Collins in conjunction with Rosalind and her husband, Anthony. There is no record of Christie herself making any further alterations to the text in her lifetime. In the 1965 epilogue she stated that, "now that I have reached the age of seventy-five, it seems the right moment to stop...I live now on borrowed time, waiting in the ante-room for the summons that will inevitably come...I am ready now to accept death." Consequently, there is no mention of her later works, the award of the DBE in 1971 or successes such as the 1974 film of *Murder on the Orient Express*. She also admitted that she didn't follow a strict chronological and detailed order of the events of her life, instead wanting to "plunge my hand into a lucky dip and come up with a handful of assorted memories". The published work does mostly follow a chronological order (although how much of that is due to the work carried out in 1976–7 is not known); however, the book is by no means comprehensive. Upon publication there was an expectation that an explanation would be offered of her famous 1926 disappearance, but none is forthcoming. The publisher's preface anticipates any disappointment felt when they admit to this omission on the first page but state, "the references elsewhere to an earlier attack on amnesia give the clue to the true course of events."

Christie was enamoured all her life with the happiness of her childhood and her loving relationship with her mother and this is reflected in the text of *An Autobiography*. Within the 544 pages, the first appearance of her first husband, Archie Christie, does not take place until page 212 (as opposed to page 57 out of 394 in her official biography) and the death of Christie's mother in April 1926 (an event which triggered the events of that calamitous year in her life and which happened in her thirty-fifth year), does not occur until page 346. Christie deals sympathetically with her first husband, relating details of the initial happiness of their courtship and married life and devoting an entire chapter to the events of their round the world trip between 20 January to 1 December 1922. Christie tells of the events of 1926 with the death of her mother, her slow breakdown, her husband's adultery, and the end of her marriage in just seven pages admitting when she begins the passage that, "The next year of my life is one I hate recalling" and concluding, "So, after illness, came sorrow, despair, and heartbreak. There is no need to dwell on it. I stood out for a year, hoping he (Archie) would change. But he did not. So ended my first married life." In contrast, Christie's official biography devotes three entire chapters out of twenty-six to the events of that year.

Christie confines the events of 1945 to 1965 to just twenty-three pages. Most of her works are mentioned in passing but no great detail is given of any of them apart from the ones that are firm milestones in her career. The *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *The Mousetrap*). Her concentration is on her love of travel and the people in her life. By not writing at length about some of her works she caused some annoyance or disappointment, such as that described by Hubert Gregg, the director of six of her plays who, in his 1980 memoir *Agatha Christie and All That*

Mousetrap, spoke with some disparagement of Christie, stating at one point, "She owed an enormous debt to Peter Saunders yet in her autobiography she gives him scant mention. Speaking of *The Unexpected Guest* (which Gregg directed) she says quite simply that she wrote it. I think perhaps she didn't like to confess – to herself, even – that her theatrical accomplishments could not be achieved without help." However, Janet Morgan, Christie's official biographer, considered the *Autobiography* to be "an enchanting book, fluent, pungent, clear-eyed about the times and circumstances in which she lived, funny about herself and other people".

The first edition contains four pages of colour plates of oil paintings of Christie and her family from the late 19th and early 20th century which do not appear in later editions.

Review questions

Write in one or two sentences

1. Who is Agatha Christie?
2. An *Autobiography* by Christie was published in the year?
3. How many years Christie took to complete the work?
4. Who is the second husband of Christie?

Paragraph questions

1. What is reflected in the text of an autobiography?
2. Summarise what is Christie trying to convey to the readers?
3. Write a short note about Christie's *An Autobiography*?

Essay question

What is the work by Christie all about?

Further Reading

<https://www.agathachristie.com> › Home › Stories

<https://www.goodreads.com> › book › show › 16301.Ag...

<https://www.bookinginheels.com> › 2018/06 › review-ag...

4. Half a Day (Short story)-Naguib Mahfouz

Introduction

Recognized as a prominent author in his own country of Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz was not widely known in the Western world until receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. After receiving the award, he gained international recognition as one of the more important writers of the twentieth century.

In 1989 “Half a Day” was first published in Arabic as part of a short story collection entitled *The False Dawn* in 1991 “Half a Day” was included in an English-language collection entitled *The Time and the Place*.

“Half a Day” belongs to the later phase of Mahfouz’s literary career, which is characterized by a shift from social realism to a more modern, experimental mode of writing. It is a very short (5-page) allegorical tale in which the narrator begins the day as a young boy entering school for the first time but leaves the schoolyard an old man whose life has passed in what seemed like only “half a day.” The central allegorical implications of this tale are a commentary on the human condition; an entire life span is experienced as only “half a day” in the school of life. The story also alludes to the cycle of life, whereby the narrator passes through childhood, middle age, and old age in the course of one day.

Critic Rasheed El-Enany, in Naguib Mahfouz, has called “Half a Day” a “technical tour de force.” El-Enany explains that “brief as it is, the story must count as the author’s most powerful rendering of the dilemma of the gulf between observable time and mnemonic time.”

About the Author

In 1911 Mahfouz was born in Cairo, Egypt, the youngest of seven children in a lower middle-class family. His father was a strict Muslim, and he was raised in a strong religious atmosphere. He earned an undergraduate degree in philosophy from the University of Fuad (now Cairo University) in 1934.

Although his first short story was published in 1932, Mahfouz did not decide to become a writer until two years after graduating from college. He also maintained a career as an Egyptian bureaucrat. His first position was in the Ministry of Waqfs, the body overseeing pious Muslim foundations. He held many bureaucratic positions—primarily in relation to the national film industry, as director of the Censorship Office, director and chairman of the Cinema Support Organization, and counsellor for Cinema Affairs to the Minister of Culture. He retired from bureaucratic work in 1971, after which he has continued to publish novels, short stories, and memoirs.

Mahfouz has travelled abroad only twice in his life: once to Yugoslavia, and once to Yemen, both on government assignment. For many years, he has been part of a close social group of men who congregate in coffeehouses in Cairo, calling themselves “al Harafish” (“common people”). He has published more than thirty novels and fourteen collections of short stories. His first three novels, written between 1943 and 1945, are historical novels set in ancient Egypt. His next three novels, referred to as “The Trilogy,” published between 1956 and 1957, are set in lower middle-class sections of modern Cairo. This series of novels established Mahfouz as the foremost novelist in Egypt and attracted international recognition.

In addition to novels and short stories, he has written many screenplays for the Egyptian film industry. Between 1945 and 1960, he wrote many screen adaptations of the stories of other writers. After 1960 many of his own stories were adapted to the screen by other screenwriters. In 1988 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the first Arabic language writer to be given the prize. As a result, many of his works were translated into different languages and international interest in his work grew.

Analysis

As the story opens, the narrator is a young boy walking to his first day of school. The boy is delighted with the new clothes he is wearing for the occasion but is apprehensive about going to school. As he walks along, holding onto his father's hand, he occasionally turns to ask his father why he must go; he feels that perhaps he is being sent away from home as a punishment.

Although his father reassures him, he is not convinced that "there really was any good to be had in tearing me away from the intimacy of my home." At the gate to the school, the boy hesitates again, and must be gently pushed by his father to enter the schoolyard. Telling him to "be a man," the father explains that "today you truly begin life."

Upon stepping into the yard, the boy sees the faces of the other boys and girls but feels "like a stranger who had lost his way." One boy approaches and asks the narrator who brought him to school; when he replies that it was his father, the other boy states that his own father is dead. The narrator soon becomes one of the group of children, and the narrative

voice changes from the first person singular “I” to alternatively speaking in the third person plural “we.”

The narrator makes friends with some of the boys and falls in love with some of the girls. He describes the school day in a manner which is meant to be interpreted as an allegory for human life, with its ups and downs, trials, and tribulations. When the bell rings to announce the end of the day, the narrator steps outside the gate, but his father is not waiting there for him as promised. He encounters a familiar middle-aged man; they greet one another and shake hands before the man moves along.

The narrator finds that the street and surroundings have completely changed since the morning. These changes are meant to be understood in allegorical terms, as representing the effect of modernization and urbanization in radically changing the face of the city within the lifetime of one man.

He is unable to cross the street because of heavy traffic. Finally, a “young lad” offers to help him across, addressing him as “Grandpa”—the little boy has passed an entire lifetime in what seemed like only half a day, and is now an old man at the end of his life.

The major Theme of the work is:

Life/The Human Condition

“Half a Day” can only be fully understood if interpreted as an allegorical tale, in which each element is symbolic of some greater meaning. The central allegorical motif of “Half a Day” is that a morning spent in school is symbolic of an entire lifetime spent in the school of life.

Everything that occurs in the story represents common experiences of the human condition: birth, childhood, old age, death, the afterlife, religion, love, friendship, pain, fear, joy, learning, memory, and nostalgia, as well as the cycle of life from generation to generation.

Review questions

Write in one or two sentences

1. Naguib Mahfouz is from which country?
2. In which year did Mahfouz received the Nobel Prize for Literature?
3. In which year and which country did Half a Day first published?
4. In which Short Story collection did Half a Day published?

Paragraph questions

1. Comment on the title of the story?
2. What do you think the writer is trying to convey through this story?
3. Can the meaning of the story be applied to our own life, how?

Essay question

What is the hidden meaning of the work “Half a Day”?

Further Reading

<https://www.supersummary.com> › half-a-day › summary

<https://www.slideshare.net> › MaryMiranda › half-a-day-...

<https://www.gradesaver.com> › study-guide › summary

Module 3 - Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is an essential skill that helps us to solve problems or to imagine various possibilities in different contexts. Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. A student who develops critical thinking skills can make use of the information and skills acquired over time to solve problems or to understand situations. We can apply our critical thinking skill to understand literature too. It enables us to discover meaning in a work but also ask questions about what we learn as normal and mainstream, and hence can help break traditional /unnecessary boundaries set between ideas, objects or communities. Critical thinking skill provide a methodological approach to the study of a text that increases self- awareness of our reasoning process and helps us to gain confidence in the interpretation of literary works.

The texts given in this module are intended to help you develop your analytical and reasoning skills because literature can help you imbibe these skills without being very conscious of the process involved in it.

To a Reason

Arthur Rimbaud

Arthur Rimbaud, in full **Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud**, (born October 20, 1854, Charleville, France—died November 10, 1891, Marseille), was a French poet and adventurer who was a part of French Symbolist Movement in the late 19th century and markedly influenced modern poetry. His first published poem had appeared in January 1870 in the French magazine *La Revue pour Tous*. All of the unhappy adolescent's loathing and longing are reflected in his poems. They also express his disgust with the constraints of small-town life, its hypocrisies, its self-satisfaction and apathy. His poems are the embodiment of his intense desire for freedom. In 1872, Rimbaud's first book entitled *New Poems* was published. His next work *A Season in Hell* was published in 1873, and the most popular work *Illuminations* in 1886. In the *Illuminations* Rimbaud reached the height of his originality and found the form best suited to his mysterious style. The innovative use of language used in the *Illuminations* greatly influenced the subsequent development of French poetry. He stopped writing at the age of 20 in the year 1874. He led an adventurous life and travelled a lot and participated many revolutionary movements and later came back to his hometown. In August 1891 he set out on a dreadful journey to Marseille, where his disease was diagnosed as cancer and died at the age of 37.

Text

A rap of your finger on the drum

fires all the sounds

and starts a new harmony.

A step of yours: the levy of new men

and their marching on.

Your head turns away:

O the new love!

Your head turns back:

O the new love!

"Change our lots, confound the plagues,

beginning with time,"

to you these children sing.

"Raise no matter where the substance

of our fortune and our desires,"

they beg you.

Arrival of all time,

who will go everywhere.

About the Poem.

To A Reason is a poem that questions the concept of single reason and refers to the possibility of many reasons. This poem reminds us the story of the Pied Piper and the children who followed him to an unknown place away from the rat – infested village. The Pied Piper has become a metaphor for a person who attracts a following through

charisma or false promise. This poem addresses someone who has immense power to change the present world order. He may be a leader of a political ideology. The Poet asks him to beat the drum and fires all other sounds and starts a new harmony. Poet believes that his single step will be the levy of the new men/children who are marching to the new world. He addresses that changing force as new love and beg him to change their lots and destroy the plague that have been infested them from the beginning of the world. Here the word plague denotes all type of inequalities and exploitations. Rimbaud wrote this poem at the time of colonialism when slave trade was horrible. The plague refers to Colonialism too.

Exercise

1. Answer these questions in a sentence or two

1. According to the poet, what brings a new world order?
2. Why do the children beg?
3. Is there a reference to the historical context of European colonialization in this poem?
4. Can you associate this poem with any other text that you are familiar with?

II Answer in a Paragraph

1. Explain how the poet uses ‘You’ as a metaphor in the poem?
2. Does the phrase “release all sounds” stand for multiplicity?
3. “To a Reason” addresses someone who can create a new world order. Comment

III Answer the following question in about 300 words.

1. Can you connect this poem to the life of any historical figure who has influenced humanity? Explain.
2. Explain Rimbaud's philosophy, 'I' is someone else' in the light of this poem.

The Adventure of the Retired Colourman

Arthur Conan Doyle

Arthur Conan Doyle, in full Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle, (born May 22, 1859, Edinburgh, Scotland—died July 7, 1930, Crowborough, Sussex, England), was a Scottish writer best known for his creation of the detective Sherlock Holmes—one of the most vivid and enduring characters in English fiction. Doyle was not only a writer but also a sportsman, journalist and public speaker. He has written poems, essays, historical novels, romances, children's literature and other non – fictional works.

Conan Doyle, the second of Charles Altamont and Mary Foley Doyle's 10 children, began seven years of Jesuit education in Lancashire, England, in 1868. "A Study in Scarlet", published in 1887, was the first book of Doyle. Sherlock Holmes is the central character in this novel. *The Firm of Girdlestone* (1890), *The Stark Munro Letters* (1895) are Doyle's novels which are autobiographical in nature. *The Crime of the Congo* (1909) and the *Great Boer War* (1900) are two among his non- fictional works. *Memories and Adventures* (1924) is Doyle's Autobiography and he also composed a work detailing his experiences of reading in the work *Through the Magic Door* (1907)

Introduction to the Text

Detective and crime-related stories are one of the most popular genres of fiction. In literary form, detective novels are published enormously and are widely read in every language. Detective/crime-related narratives have become a major part of television programming, with networks basing their entire primetime schedule around crime-related series.

There are many reasons to include a detective story in the curriculum. In her essay “A Pedagogical Approach to Detective Fiction” Agustín Reyes-Torres analyses these reasons. She suggests “three educational goals for the literature course in the Foreign Language classroom: the development of individual mind, for which students must reflect critically on ethical, intellectual and aesthetic models; a knowledge of other cultures which, by comparison, invites students to explore and consider other cultural values and traditions different from theirs; and the development and practice of language skills while reading, discussing and writing about the different literary works”(33-34). While reading this story of Sherlock Holmes, you will get an idea about the ethical and cultural tradition of the place where this story had taken place. Moreover, you are introduced to many colloquial expressions and usages that will help you to improve your language.

Sherlock Holmes is a character in 56 novels and 4 novels. Referring to himself as a "consulting detective" in the stories, Holmes is known for his proficiency with observation, deduction, forensic science and logical reasoning. Holmes is six feet tall, thin, black haired and his most notable feature is his hawk-like nose. He often appears with a pipe in his mouth. He is skilful at disguises. He is interested in music and plays

violin whenever it pleases him to do so. He experiments with chemicals and studios on various subjects.

The short story entitled “The Adventure of the Retired Colourman” is taken from the collection *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*. This story was adapted to the screen by BBC and also presented with changes in the online series “Elementary”. This short story also depicts Holmes’ observation skills and use of logical analysis to deduce people’s character and background.

Summary of the story

This story begins with Dr. Watson, Holmes's devoted friend, associate and the narrator of most of his detective stories, walking into his flat as a man named Mr. Josiah Amberley is walking out. Holmes asked him if he had noticed the old man who had just gone out. He replied that the man seemed pathetic, futile and broken creature. Then Holmes introduced Mr. Josiah Amberley to Watson in brief. Amberley is a retired man who is living comfortably off of his earnings with his wife who is twenty years in junior. Unfortunately, he has come to Holmes with the problem of his wife and best friend's disappearance.

His friend, Dr. Ray Ernest, lived down the street from him. They would frequently play chess together. Amberley suspects that Mrs. Amberley and Ray ran off together, taking Amberley's deeds and a good deal of his money with them. Holmes explains that he has to finish another case and suggests that Watson and he go out to the man's house to meet him in his place.

Watson visits Amberley’s house. Amberley says that he is disappointed that Holmes has not come to see him in

person. He comments that it is probably because he can not afford to pay enough money to get Homles' attention. He says that he passionately loved his wife and did everything to make her happy. He also treated the Dr. Ray Ernest as his son. But now they both have cheated him. In anger he destroys his wife's photograph in front of Watson by saying that he never wants to see her face again. He adds that on that night of the incident, Amberley had taken two tickets for the Haymarket Theatre. But at the last minute, his wife said that she had a headache. So he went alone. He shows Watson that unused ticket. Watson notices that the seat number is B31. Amberley says that when he came back his wife was not at home and seven thousand pounds in cash and share certificates were missing. He shows Watson the strong room where he kept his money. It is a bulger proof room with a metal door and shutters and no one from outside can steal form it. Mrs. Amberley, however, apparently had a duplicate key with her.

Watson returns home to tell Holmes of his mission. He describes Amberley's house, and that he noticed a moustached military man who gave him an odd look when Watson asked for directions.

Holmes and Watson discuss Amberley's outward appearance. Watson describes the unkempt landscape, which seems to mirror the disarray Amberley's life is currently in. It seems Amberley was in the middle of trying to clean up the inside of his house, painting the door and the woodwork of the strong room and that pops up doubts in Holmes.

The next day, Holmes sends Watson along with Amberley to a priest of the Village of Little Purlington, who knows something about what happened. Amberley complains that the journey would be a waste of time and money because

there is no way that the priest could possibly know nothing about his wife's disappearance. He reluctantly agrees to go to meet the priest as Holmes said. Before they leave, Holmes takes Watson aside and tells his friend to make sure that Amberley really does go to Little Purlington. If at any point gets away, Watson should send a message using the single word "Bolted".

The astonished priest has no idea about anything and he thinks that somebody must be misguided them. Watson telephones to Holmes from the village Inn and informs that there are no train back to London that evening so that they will have to stay there in Little Purlington.

On the next day Watson and Amberley return to the house of Amberley in Lewisham. Holmes is there with the man with a moustache, grey sunglasses whom Watson had met earlier. Holmes introduces him as another detective, whose name is Barker. Holmes asks Amberley where he got the bodies of his eloped wife and Dr Ray. Amberley tries to commit suicide by swallowing a pill, but Holmes stops him. Then they take him to the police station and asks Watson to wait in the house.

Holmes comes back with Inspector MacKimmon of the police. Then he reveals the story behind the murder. Mrs. Amberley was fed up with the miserly nature of her husband and became close to his friend. Amberley was jealous and suspected his wife and friend. He made a plan to kill them. To provide an alibi, he has booked three tickets for the Haymarket. Holmes found out that three seats B30, B31 and B 32 were all empty that evening. Amberley confined his wife and Dr Ray in the strong room and turning on the gas. Wondering why Amberley began painting the house at such an

inopportune time, Holmes decided that the smell of paint should have drowned out another smell. Sending Amberley away by sending the telegram in the name of Elman, the Vicar of Purlington, Holmes entered his house and found a gas pipe leading into the room. On the wall of the room there is an inscription: "We were--". It was only a foot above the ground. Holmes assumed that it was Dr. Ray who wrote on the wall when he was dying. He might have lost his sense before he could finish writing "We were murdered".

Apart from these, there was no sign of robbery at all. All these led to the conclusion that Mr Amberley was the real murderer. He killed them by leaving the gas pipe in the strong room and threw their dead bodies into a disused well. To prevent the smell of gas, he painted the room and the passage. When Watson asked why he was painting at this time soon after the tragedy Amberley says, "One must do something to ease an aching heart"?

When asked about Amberley's missing money, Holmes says that Amberley has probably just hidden it somewhere. He would have been planning to eventually say that his wife and Dr Earnest had returned it to him or they had dropped it while they were running away and he found it. When MacKinnon asks Holmes why Amberley agreed to consult him, Holmes replies that he did so to deflect any suspected him of having anything to do with the disappearance of his wife and Dr. Ray Earnest, Amberley could say, "I have consulted not only the police but even Sherlock Holmes.

End of the story we come to know that all the credit of this brilliant investigation goes to Inspector MacKinnon according to the Newspapers. But Holmes comments that the Inspector was a good fellow and he asks Watson to archive this

casefile. He seems very optimistic and comments "Someday the true story may be told".

Characters

Sherlock Holmes

John H. Watson

Josiah Amberley

Mrs. Amberley

Dr Ray Ernest

Lothario

Carina

J. C. Elman

Mr. Barker

Inspector MacKinnon

Coptic Patriarchs

Exercise

1. Answer these questions in a sentence or two

1. What was Mr. Amberley painting?
2. How did Mr. Amberley respond when Watson asked him about the painting?
3. What was written in the scribbles note addressing Watson?
4. How did Amberley distract the investigation?
5. What was Holmes' first clue during the investigation?

6. How did Holmes reach the conclusion that Amberley had not been to the theatre?
7. Who is the tall dark man who helped Holmes?
8. What did Watson think of Josiah Amberley?
9. Who sent a telegram to Amberley?

II Answer the questions in a paragraph

1. Explain how Sherlock Holmes introduces the case of Amberley with the phrase “ A treacherous friend and a fickle wife”.
2. What do you think is the real cause of the murder? What was Amberley’s version?
3. “There are one or two points of contact which I should wish to establish with Mr. Josiah Amberley” – What are the plans Holmes created to trap Amberley?
4. Why did Holmes send Watson and Amberley to Little Purlington? What was his plan?
5. Describe Holmes’s opinion about Amberley’s mentality.

III Answer the following questions in about 300 words.

1. Analyse how Holmes reached the conclusion that Amberley was the murderer?
2. Consider “ The Adventure of the Retired Colourman” as a traditional detective story.

Trifles

Susan Glaspell

Introducing the Author

Susan Keating Glaspell (July 1, 1876 – July 28, 1948) was an American playwright, novelist, journalist and actress. With her husband George Cram Cook, she founded the Provincetown Players, the first modern American theatre company. First known for her short stories (fifty were published), Glaspell also wrote nine novels, fifteen plays, and a biography. Often set in her native Midwest, these semi-autobiographical tales typically explore contemporary social issues, such as gender, ethics, and dissent. Her play “Alison's House” earned her the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1931. The novel *A Jury of her Peers* is the source of her most successful play “Trifles”. In 1909 she published her first novel *The Glory and the Conquered*; her next novel *The Visioning* was published soon after that in 1911. After husband's death in 1924, she published his biography *The Road to the Temple*.

Ambrose Holt and Family (1931), *The Morning is Near Us* (1939), *Norma Ashe* (1942), *Judd Rankin's Daughter* (1945) are her other novels. Glaspell is a writer who made very significant contributions to the American theatre. Most of Glaspell's works deal with the theme of complicated relationships between women including mothers and daughters and female friendships. She depicts women's progress towards independence and selfhood. Other major themes often appear in her works domestic life, American identity, conflicts between conservative and modern ways of thinking and living etc.

Introducing the Text

Trifles is a one-act play by Susan Glaspell. It was first performed by the Provincetown Players at the Wharf Theatre in Provincetown, Massachusetts, on August 8, 1916. The play is loosely based on the murder of John Hossack, which Glaspell reported on while working as a journalist for the Des Moines Daily News. The domestic life of American women in the early Nineties is portrayed realistically in this play. It dismantles the family system and shows as the violence and inhumanity lays in its each layers. That is why “Trifles” is considered as a feminist play. The title of the play “Trifles” signifies the main theme of the play in which men are trivializing women and her efforts in families. This early feminist work knits together a commentary on gender roles and a murder mystery to create a compelling drama. This play is rich in using symbols like the rocking chair, birdcage, quilt, the pretty box with the dead bird in it, the piece of silk etc. All these symbols denote slavery of women in the domestic system and their inner struggles. Trifles is a detective fiction too. It shows women’s brilliant skills of observation and deduction. American literary critic Annette Kolodney writes about the play thus: “The essential crime in the story, we come to realize, has been the husband’s inexorable strangulation over the years of Minnie Foster’s spirit and personality...”. The story of this play set in the time when women were considered inferior to men naturally, intellectually and morally. As we know our society has been changed a lot so as the position of women. But still women are struggling a lot to break the shackles of patriarchy to become independent and to assert their identity as a human being. So this play has its own relevance today. Read the original text before reading its summary

Characters

Mrs. Hale

Mrs. Peters

George Henderson, The County Attorney

Henry Peters . Sheriff

Lewis Hale . A neighbouring farmer

Summary of the play

The play opens on the scene of an abandoned farmhouse of John Wright who was strangled to death by someone. All we can see onstage is the "gloomy kitchen," which is full of signs of "uncompleted work," like unwashed dishes, a random loaf of bread sitting outside of the breadbox, and a dishtowel sitting out on the counter. Five people arrive at the house to investigate the scene of a crime, including the county attorney, George Henderson, the local sheriff, Henry Peters, and the neighbour, Lewis Hale, who discovered a murdered man, John Wright, strangled with a rope in his bed. The men are accompanied by two of their wives, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. Mr. Hale describes for the country attorney the experience of finding John Wright's dead body the previous day. He stopped by his neighbours' house to ask if they'd want to install a party line telephone. He encountered Minnie Wright sitting in her rocking chair. He describes her as looking out of sorts. Mr. Hale asked to see John and Minnie told him that he couldn't because John was dead. When Mr. Hale asked what he died of, Minnie said that he died of a rope around his neck. Minnie claimed that she didn't wake up when her husband was strangled in their bed. Mr. Hale went upstairs to find the body, and left everything in place for the inspection of the attorney and the sheriff.

Mrs. Wright (Minnie) has been arrested for the crime and is being held until her trial. The men do not look closely around the kitchen for evidence of a motive. The county attorney discovers that the mess comes from Minnie's canning jars of fruit, which have exploded. Mrs. Peters says that she knew Minnie was worried about this happening when it turned cold, and her husband laughs over a woman worrying about fruit when she's held for murder. Mr. Hale says "women are used to worrying over trifles." The men criticize Minnie's poor housekeeping, as evidenced by the mess in the kitchen and a dirty towel. Mrs. Hale comes to Mrs. Wright's defense a bit and says that there's a lot to do on a farm. The County Attorney shrugs her off, though, saying that there are plenty of farmhouses in the county that aren't dogged with dirty towels.

The men go upstairs to inspect the bedroom. Mrs. Hale is upset over the men coming into Minnie's space and accusing her of being a poor housekeeper. Mrs. Peters, though, notes that the men are only doing their duty. Mrs. Peters discovers the bread Minnie Wright had left out, but had not baked. Mrs. Hale is sympathetic for Minnie's hard work on her canning jars of fruit having gone to waste. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale collect items from the kitchen that Minnie requested be brought to her at the jail, including clothes and an apron. Mrs. Peters says that Minnie also requested to have an apron brought to her, and thinks this is a funny thing to want. Mrs. Hale remembers the lively girl Minnie used to be when she wore pretty clothes. The women comment on the strangeness of strangling a man to death when the men had pointed out that there was a gun in the house. The women admire a quilt that Minnie was working on, and are wondering if she was going to finish it by "quilting" or "knotting" when the men re-enter and, overhearing the women talking, joke about the women's trivial concerns at a time like

this. Once again left alone by the men, the women notice that some of the stitching of the quilt is very poor, as if Minnie were nervous or upset.

The women then find a birdcage without any bird in it. Mrs. Hale doesn't know whether Minnie had a bird, but remembers that she used to sing very beautifully. They wonder what happened to the bird from the empty cage. Mrs. Hale wonders if the cat got it, but Mrs. Peters knows that Minnie didn't have a cat because she doesn't like them. The women notice that the cage is broken, the door are pulled roughly apart. Mrs. Hale expresses strong regrets having not come to visit Minnie more often, acknowledging that John Wright was a tough man and that it must have been very difficult for Minnie to be alone at her house. She recalls Minnie before she married and how cheerfully she sang in the choir. Mrs. Hale starts to tell her about Minnie as a girl (back when she was Minnie Foster). She says that Minnie Foster was a sweet and timid girl but changed when she married Mr. Wright into a timid and unhappy woman. While searching Mrs. Hale discovers a beautiful red box, and in it, the dead bird that was missing from the birdcage, its neck broken. women realize that someone must have wrung its neck. The men return and Mrs. Hale hides the box containing the dead bird under the quilt. The women hide it from men because they suddenly realize that the dead bird that explains Minnie's motive would be a strong evidence against her. We can assume that Wright might be killed her bird – her only companion in her loneliness—and she might have killed him in return. More broadly, though, Mrs. Hale sees instantly that the dead bird is more than mere evidence of motive: it also shows the pattern of emotional abuse Minnie endured at Wright's hands. She instinctively hides the bird from the men George Henderson asks if they've

decided whether Minnie was going to quilt or knot her quilt, and Mrs. Peters says they think she was going to knot it.

Once the men leave again, Mrs. Peters remembers a boy who killed her childhood pet kitten, and her certainty that she would have hurt him in return if she could have. And yet, Mrs. Peters says, “the law has got to punish crime.” Mrs. Hale scolds herself for what she sees as her own crime of not visiting her neighbor Minnie, crying out, “who’s going to punish that crime?” Their sense of sisterhood is revealed in this scene.

The men return, and the sheriff asks if the county attorney wants to take a look at the items Mrs. Peters is bringing to Minnie at the jail. He says that Mrs. Peters doesn’t need supervising and assumes the things she’s taking aren’t harmful. The women hide the box with the body of the bird. The county attorney jokes that at least they discovered the fate of Minnie’s quilt project, and Mrs. Hale reminds him that she was planning to finish the quilt by knotting it. Actually these two women are really intelligent and clever enough to recognize the real motive behind the murder of John Wright. The metaphor of the knotted quilt proves the women’s certainty that Minnie killed her husband by strangulation, an act suggested by the term “to knot.” The men, meanwhile, still see the quilt as just a “trifle” and don’t at all get the significance of what the women are saying. Here women express their rebellion against the system where women are treated as trivial objects.

Exercise

I answer these questions in a sentence or two

1. What was Mrs. Wright doing when Mr Hale entered their house?
2. What does Mr. Hale mean by ‘queer’?
3. What was Mrs Wright’s response when Mr Hale wanted to see John?
4. What did Mr Wright do when she knew that Mr Hale had gone for the coroner?
5. Why did Mrs. Hale put her hand on her nose while opening the fancy box?
6. Who is Minnie Foster? How did Mrs Hale remember her?
7. Explain how Mrs Peters managed the box before the return of Peters and Henderson?
8. What is the implication of the dead canary (bird) in Mrs. Wright’s fancy box?
9. Does Henderson’s belief “a sheriff’s wife is married to the law” help him in his investigation?
10. Why did Mrs. Hale feel sorry for Mrs.Wright?

II Answer the questions in a paragraph

1. Write a short note on Mrs. Wright's response towards Mr. Hale, when he came to meet Mr. John.
2. How is patriarchal dominance reflected in Henderson's opinion of Mrs. Wright's kitchen?
3. Do you think what Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters have done in the name of justice was right?
4. "It shall just a different kind of the same thng"- How does Glaspell present female experience in the play?
5. Explain the significance of the title "Trifles"?

III Answer the following question in about 300 words

1. 'Trifles' questions the existing notions of law and justice by foregrounding female identity and perspective. Comment.
2. How does Glaspell criticise the essentialist patriarchal notions meant to demean women? Explain.

Module 4 – Perspectives

In Literature the socio-cultural and political concerns of the society are reflected in different ways. It can be read from different perspectives and also enable to rise of questions and problematize often taken-for-granted notions and matters which are usually not seriously thought about and discussed. Literature helps us to see things from different dimensions and gives a plethora of meanings and perspectives addressing the differences and diversities of life. We can read and extract meaning from a literary work in different ways. It depends upon the reader and his socio-cultural background. Thus perspectives in literature are the result of a reaction of the literary world, writers' perspectives, the world outside, the readers' world, and readers' confrontation with the text.

This module deals with five texts from different genres, each providing different perspectives on other and the same subjects. Themes of identities, race, gender, and caste are problematized and stereotypes are questioned and redefined (instead they are non-defined) in each text. The perspectives which the texts provide are non – conventional, radical, and non-conformist. They may dislocate the readers from their comfort zones but make them better human beings ready to accept differences and embrace inclusion.

Body without the “d”

Justice Ameer

About the Author

Justice Ameer is a Black trans poet based in Providence, Rhode Island. Xe (Xe represents a gender-neutral subject pronoun instead of he/she) is a Pink Door fellow and an inaugural Feminine Empowerment Movement (FEM) Slam co-champion. Xe is an abolitionist (abolitionist is a person who wants to stop or abolish slavery or one who protests against racial discrimination), whose works mainly deal with the experience of black trans people living in America. Xyr (Xyr represents the determiner or gender-neutral pronoun instead of his/her) poems give voice to the life of transgender people and their crisis in this gendered society. “After God Herself”, Body Without “d”, “When Supremacy Kills Me”, “T for t”, “Throne /under/bus are some of xyr much appreciated poems. Xyr has participated and represented at various poetry events across America. Xe is a Pink Door fellow, FEM (The Feminine Empower Movement) Poetry Slam Champion, and a two-time Providence Grand Slam Champion.

Xe is a co-writer & producer of the production ANTHEM. In this show, gender construction and gender politics of African American transgender women get represented. Xe has performed at various venues across the country. Justice believes art is a crucial tool for Black queer liberation. Xyr works were published in Glass Poetry Press, POETRY Magazine, Split this Rock, The Nation and the Blackbeat Poets Vol.2, Black Girl Magic Anthology.

Introducing the Text

Who is a transgender? Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. A trans man is a man who was assigned female at birth. Trans men have a male gender identity, and many trans men choose to undergo surgical or hormonal transition, or both (see sex reassignment therapy), to alter their appearance in a way that aligns with their gender identity. A Transwoman is a woman who was assigned male at birth. The poet, Justice Ameer is a transwoman. Poets from the transgender community are known as trans poets. The body has been a recurring theme in trans poetry. The poem “Body without the”d” portrays the identity crisis of a transwoman whose body seems imperfect when compared with an “ideal” female body. As you know our gender is socially constructed. All its performances are according to the so-called stereotype gender forms constructed by society. So trans people are always striving to be like “ideal” male or “ideal” female. This struggle is the main theme of their poems. In this poem, the word body is written as bo’y, but it pronounces ‘body’. The body can be that of a male or female. Boy without ‘d’ always refers to a male. In this poem, the body represents the body of a boy who recognizes that inside his body there is a girl.

The text and explanation

The bo’y wakes up

The bo’y looks at itself

the bo’y notices something missing

there is both too much and not enough flesh on the bo'y
the bo'y is covered in hair
what a hairy bo'y
some makes it look more like a bo'y
some makes it look more like a monster
the bo'y did not learn to shave from its father
so it taught itself how to graze its skin and cut things off
the bo'y cuts itself by accident
the blood reminds the bo'y it is a bo'y
reminds the bo'y how a bo'y bleeds
reminds the bo'y that not every bo'y bleeds

the bo'y talks to a girl about bleeding
she explains how this bo'y works
this bo'y is different from hers
bo'y has too much and not enough flesh to be her
the biology of a bo'y is just
bo'y will only ever be a bo'y

the bo'y is Black

so the bo'y is and will only ever be a bo'y

the bo'y couldn't be a man if it tried

the bo'y tried

the bo'y feels empty

the bo'y feels like it will only ever be empty

the bo'y feels that it will never hold the weight of another bo'y
inside of it

no matter how many ds fit inside the bo'y

the bo'y is a hollow facade

it attempts a convincing veneer

bo'y dresses — what hips on the bo'y

bo'y paints its face — what lips on the bo'y

bo'y adorns itself with labels written for lovelier frames

what a beautiful bo'y

still a bo'y

but a fierce bo'y now

a royal bo'y now

a bo'y worthy of being called queen
what a dazzling ruse
to turn a bo'y into a lie everyone loves to look at
the bo'y looks at itself
the bo'y sees all the gawking at its gloss
the bo'y hears all the masses asking for its missing
the bo'y offers all of its letters
— ' b ' for the birth
— ' o ' for the operation
— ' y ' for the lack left in its genes
what this bo'y would abandon
for the risk of being real

the bo'y is real
enough and too much
existing as its own erasure
— what an elusive d —
evading removal
avoiding recognition
leaving just a bo'y

that is never lost

but can't be found

The summary and analysis of the poem

The body wakes up and looks at itself. It notices something missing. There is not enough flesh on the body. Here the poet mentions the body of a boy who recognizes that his body and his gender affiliation are different. He feels that there is something missing in his body such as flesh and boobs but his body is covered in hair and some makes it look more like a boy and some make it more like a monster. In the transition period from man to woman, the person who undergoes such transformation faces many problems. He/she always compare his/her body with typical male or female body and be conscious about its 'imperfection'. The male body in the poem did not learn to shave from its father as it is natural for a man to grow his beard and moustache. So the body taught itself to remove or cut off the marks of man from its skin. The blood reminds it that it is a just a body. It reminds the body how a body bleeds. It reminds the body that not everybody bleeds in the same way. Here in these lines, "the bo'y talks to a girl about bleeding /she explains how this bo'y works/this bo'y is different from hers", the 'blood' refers to the menstrual bleeding in the female body. But in a transgender body this phenomenon is absent and hence the body is reminded of the fact that it is not an "ideal" female body.

In the next part of the poem, the poet talks about Xyr colour. Since the body is black, it lacks the privilege to be a man even if it tried because of racism. But the body tries to cross all the hurdles to find his real self. Initially the body feels that it is empty which means it is confused of its identity. The

body realizes that it will not accommodate the weight of another body inside it no matter how many (“ds”) identities fit in the body.

In the next stanza, the poet talks about the outward appearance of a trans body. It strives to be an “ideal” woman by attempting to imitate the style of a typical woman like dressing, makeup and styling themselves as a beautiful woman. But the body realizes that it is the same. A trans woman is forced to go behind perfection (of gender) as society demands it.

In the next stanza, the poet says that the real problem lies in the perspective of the society. Despite all the attempts to transform themselves as a woman, the society still questions them about their missing perfection (“the missing “d” in the bo’y”)

The body presents itself as a boy. By birth he is having a male body. Through surgery and Hormone treatment his body transforms into a female body. For being real he risks his life in every way. In the final stanza the poet brings forth the identity crisis of a transformed body. Body has got its real self but it has to prove its gender in documents (legal documents like birth certificate). After all the trials and tribulations, the body underwent in transforming itself, the society is still hesitant to accept it as a “perfect woman”. In short, Identity crisis occurs when the ideals of the person within the body clashes with the ideals of the people around them. It should be in such a way that the choice to present in a certain way belongs to the individual rather than the society. Hence a person being labelled differently (trans) than they present and that evokes the idea that being yourself can be a struggle, especially if the society insists on seeing you differently.

To conclude throughout the entire poem, a common theme is the judgement of the other people around her. Though other people perceive her as a boy, it is her choice whether or not she defines herself as a woman and that is something other people have no control over. The whole poem is written in small letter as a form of protest against gender inequality, power, racism and so on.

Exercise

I. Answer in one or two sentences.

1. Why does the body feel empty?
2. What does the body feel about the hair on it?
3. What is the difference between body and bo'y?
4. How is the body decorated?
5. How does the body become worthy of being called queen?
6. What does the letter 'b' stand for?

II Answer in Paragraph.

1. What does the body lack?
2. Why is the body just a body?
3. What does each letter in the word 'body' stand for?
4. How do people look at the body?

5. “The bo’y is a hallow façade”, Why?

III Answer the following question in about 300 words.

1. What is the relevance of the title ‘Body without the ‘d’?
2. Themes of identity crisis and alienation in the poem?
3. How is the body described in the poem?
4. Think about the gender stereotypes in the society in relation to the issues raised in the poem.

The Sleeping Fool

Suniti Namjoshi

About the Author

The Indo-British author, SunitiNamjoshi was born in Mumbai in 1941. She has several books of verse and fable to her credit. She worked in the Indian Administrative Service and in academic posts in India before moving to Montreal. She earned a PhD from McGill University (with a thesis on Ezra Pound), worked at the University of Toronto, and later at the Centre for Women’s Studies at Exeter University, UK. She now lives in the UK where she works as a full-time writer. Her poetry, fables, articles, and reviews have been featured in various anthologies and journals in India, Canada, the US, Australia, and Britain. A deep engagement with issues of gender, sexual orientation, cultural identity and human rights infuses her work.

Cyclone in Pakistan (1971), *Feminist Fables* (1981), *The Authentic Lie* (1982), *Saint Suniti and the Dragon* (1993), *Building Babel* (1996), *Little I* (2014), *The Boy and the Dragon Stories* (2015) are some of her works.

Introducing the Text

“The Sleeping Fool” is a poem taken from the anthology *The Authentic Lie* published in 1982. This poem is inspired by a painting of the same title by Cecil Collins, a British mystic Artist who was influenced by the works of William Blake and American artist Mark Tobey. The *Vision of the Fool* (1947) was his famous book that explains his philosophy of art and life. The poem “The Sleeping Beauty” is a feminist poem that questions the stereotypical notions about an ideal woman. In a patriarchal society a married woman’s identity is always understood in terms of her relationship with her husband. Her choices are limited and designed by society. Here Suniti portrays a stone bride who refuses to obey or follow her husband’s life.

The Sleeping Fool

The dreamer absconds with his dream,
props his stone bride beside a stream,
where he washes, bathes, and gathers daisies.
These she refuses. He cannot please.
He runs, scampers, leaps and weeps,
He recites his verses; she keeps
her pure silence, her chaste repose. “What

do you want?” he screams. “That which you will not grant: to be, not seem to be, to be the dreamer, not the dream.”

The Summary and analysis of the poem

“The Sleeping Fool” is a poem that symbolically portrays the attitude of a man toward his bride in a patriarchal society. He is always the dreamer. The dreamer runs off with his dream. His dream is to possess a bride and design a life for her according to his vision. She has no choice in it. The bride refers here as a stone bride who is not expressing any emotions. He keeps his stone bride beside a stream where he washes, bathes, and gathers daisies. But he cannot make her happy. She refuses to follow a life offered by him. The stream is the stream of his life, not hers. When she rejects his offers, he runs, scampers, leaps weeps, and recites his verses. But she keeps silent. He gets angry and asks her what she really wants. She says, she wants to be a dreamer like him, not a dream of him.

The title of the poem “The sleeping Fool” is actually a painting by Cecil Collins by the same title. In that painting, we can see a man who is sleeping under a tree on a hilltop, and his muse is sitting near him. They are surrounded by flowers. The fool is seen in many of his paintings. For him, the fool represented a state of innocence and spiritual purity. But as a feminist poet, Suniti looks at this painting in a different way and registers her response in a poetic format. She set the poem near a stream where the man used to wash, bath, and gather daisies for his love. It is a dreamscape. The woman seems disinterested in the man who treats her romantically. He doesn’t care about her personal interests or what she really

wants. In a male-dominated world, women are treated as secondary and are forced to live under men. She is objectified and denies her identity. When she rejects it, his real vulnerability is exposed as anger. The inherent violence of the patriarchy is revealed through his actions. Actually, she wants freedom and also asserts her identity. She does not want his dream. She wants to be a dreamer like him. Here is actually a dreaming fool who thinks that he can satisfy his woman romantically or control her forcefully. It is certainly a feminist poem that highlights the subjectivity of women. You can also find this is antithetical to the folk tale “Sleeping Beauty” since Namita is the writer of the “Feminist Fables”, a feminist rewriting of fables.

Exercise

I. Answer in a sentence or two:

1. What does the dreamer do with his dream?
2. What are the things which he does for the bride?
3. What does he do when she refuses to be pleased?
4. What does he ask her finally?
5. What does the bride want?

II Answer in a paragraph.

1. Describe the dreamer’s actions
2. Explain the bride’s reactions
3. What is the theme of the poem?
4. Is “The Sleeping Fool” a feminist poem?

5. The concepts of dream and dreamer in the poem.

III Answer the following questions in about 300 words

1. Relevance of the title “The Sleeping Fool”.
2. Have you read a similar poem? If so. Attempt a comparison of the two.
3. The language and the stylistic features of the poem

The Cockroach

Luis Fernando Verissimo

About the Author

Luís Fernando Verissimo (born September 26, 1936) is a Brazilian writer. Verissimo is the son of renowned Brazilian writer Erico Verissimo. His father’s professional commitments demanded their family to stay in U S. His crônicas and texts of humor, more precisely satire of manners, published daily in several Brazilian newspapers are very popular. Verissimo is also a cartoonist, translator, and television writer, playwright, novelist, and musician. With over 60 published titles, he is one of the most popular contemporary Brazilian writers. *O Analista de Bage* (1981), *Gula – O Clube dos Anjos* (The Club of Angels) (1998), *Borges e os Orangotangos Eternos* (Borges and the Eternal Orangutans)(2000), *O Jardim do Diabo O Opositor* (2004) are some of his notable works.

About the Translator

Anna Vilner was born in Russia. She is presently known as an American translator. From the University of Arkansas, she took her MFA in Literary Translation. She translated the story “The Cockroach” written by Luis Fernando Verissimo from Portuguese to English

Introducing the Text

“The Cockroach” is a political satire. Satire is a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn. This story sarcastically portrays the limitation of democracy. Actually, democracy upholds the idea of equality but in reality, somebody is always more equal and gets better treatment. This story reveals how a simple incident gets complicated and how the person who points out the problem of the system is treated by the authorities.

Summary and analysis

The story takes place in a restaurant. A customer has found a dead cockroach in the salad and asks explanation from the waiter. The waiter calls the head waiter to pacify the customer. The head waiter asks him to calm down. He would get another salad. The client says he does not want another plate of salad; he needs an explanation. The head waiter replies that it was just an accident.

The client denies the argument of the head waiter that it was an accident. He says, “If a cockroach had come out of its pack, wandered into the kitchen, and landed in the salad, it would have been an accident. But that is not what happened. The cockroach is dead.” He believes that the cockroach was the victim of pesticides used for killing armies of roaches and

other creatures in the kitchen. He demands for an autopsy to know the exact time of the cockroach's death. He suspects that the fumigation might still be affecting the food in the kitchen of the restaurant –not only garnishing the salad with dead insects but seasoning it with invisible poison as well. He asserts that he is a citizen who knows his rights and this is a democracy.

The head waiter calls the manager. He confirms that the kitchen had undergone fumigation, but it had been a month ago. The restaurant was closed during the time of fumigation. There is no chance of food being contaminated. Moreover, there is no evidence that the cockroach was dead as a result of fumigation. Then the client says, “Perhaps it took a while to die. Perhaps it stumbled miserably around the kitchen for a month before it saw my salad and chose this lettuce leaf as its shroud. Believe me, I will spread the word. What kind of establishment is this?”

Then comes the owner of the restaurant and he states that the fumigation of the kitchen had been ordered by the Ministry of Health. To confirm this, the owner has brought along the municipal health secretary and says they had been following the ministry protocol. The head of the ministry is called; when he arrives at the restaurant, he accepts full responsibility for the incident except for the cockroach. In his opinion, the cockroach on the salad could not be a result of the fumigation. Unless someone in the kitchen had kept it, preserve it in ice, and waited for the perfect occasion to put it in the salad. But the customer interrupts the minister's speculation and asks him to bring his superior. The minister calls the president of the republic and he comes there in under half an hour. He enquires about the problem. The customer declares that the President is responsible for this incident and

asks for an explanation. The president apologizes and offers compensation. But the customer does not accept the apology of the president. They call the ministry of the army. The general arrives and asks about the problem. The man points at the salad. The General looks and says “an olive Great!” He takes the cockroach and swallows it. The cockroach is transformed into an olive by the General and the customer has lost his evidence. Later, the customer who complains is arrested and charged for falsely accusing the restaurant. The story ends with a statement that it was a democracy, up to a point.

The story “The Cockroach” by Luis Fernando Verissimo is satirizing Bureaucracy in a democratic republic. The term bureaucracy refers to a complex organization that has multi-layered systems and processes. They are designed to maintain uniformity and control within the organization. The job of a bureaucrat is to implement government policy, to take the laws and decisions made by elected officials and put them into practice. Some bureaucrats implement policy by writing rules and regulations, whereas others administer policies directly to people. . Many of the values we associate with democracy – equality, participation, and individuality – stand sharply opposed to the hierarchy, specialization, and impersonality we ascribe to bureaucracy. The story shows us the limitation of a democratic system where major roles have been taken by bureaucracy and the army. Even in a democracy, the power is always vested in the hands of bureaucracy. In this story, a citizen in a democracy has been falsely accused by the Army of pointing out a mistake. The restaurant in the story is actually a democratic system where the decision makers are always rulers and bureaucrats who are most of the time indifferent to the real issues. The cockroach in the salad turns into a big problem and the customer who ordered the salad did

not get a valid explanation from the authorities. They were trying to nullify the issue and take revenge on the customer who pointed out the issue. Power transformed a cockroach into an Olive and the customer was arrested and sued for falsely accusing the restaurant.

Exercise

I. Answer in a sentence or two:

1. What did the General do with the cockroach?
2. What was the problem of the customer?
3. Why did the customer say it was not an accident?
4. When did the fumigation happen according to the manager?
5. Where was the President when the Minister of Health called him?

II. Answer in Paragraph

1. What did the customer tell the maitre'd?
2. What was the manager's explanation?
3. What was the Health Minister's reaction?
4. Explain the relevance of the title "The Cockroach"?
5. What was the reaction of the customer to the President's negotiations?

III Answer the following questions in about 300 words

1. How does the writer satirise democracy?
2. Who are the officials that are called up on and what are their reactions?
3. How does bureaucracy get satirised in the story?

About Dalit Literature

SharankumarLimbale

About the Author

SharankumarLimbale, one of Maharashtra's pre-eminent Dalit activists is the author of several novels and story collections about Dalit life. He also edited anthologies of Dalit Dalit Literary criticism and the history of the Dalit movement. Limbale's most recent works are *Upalaya* and *Hindu*, novels about Dalit politics. His groundbreaking autobiographical work, *Akarmashi*, appeared in English as *The Outcaste*. Limbale has received numerous honours and awards for his contributions to Dalit literature and Dalit movements. He was honoured with SaraswathiSamman in the year 2020. His *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* (2004) is an outstanding work and a thoughtful account of the debates among Dalit writers on how Dalit literature should be read.

Introducing the Text

The essay "About Dalit Literature" is taken from Limbale's critical work "Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations" translated from the Marathi by Alok Mukherjee. In this book, Limbale explores several crucial questions related to Dalit literature. Before going to read this essay you should know who is a Dalit and what is Dalit Literature. Dalit, according to Limbale, is a term that describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundary of the village, as well as Adivasis, landless farm –labours, workers, the suffering masses, and nomadic and criminal tribes. What is Dalit

literature? Limbale defines Dalit literature as precisely that literature artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule, and poverty endured by Dalits. Dalit literature is recognizing the centrality of the human being and is thoroughly saturated with humanity's joys and sorrows. It regards human beings as supreme and leads them toward total revolution. In the Essay "About Dalit Literature" Limbale redefines the purpose and aesthetics of Dalit literature.

Text Analysis

According to Limbale, Dalit literature is the writings about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit Consciousness. Dalit Consciousness in Dalit literature is the revolutionary mentality connected with struggle. Ambedkarite thought is the inspiration for this consciousness. Dalit Consciousness has made Dalit literature unique. The purpose of Dalit literature is to inform Dalit society of its slavery. We know that the practice of untouchability has been still existing in India. The Hindu religious order considers the Dalit Communities are lower and impure. It has regarded them as untouchable and guilty from birth. You might have heard from the recent news that a nine-year-old boy was killed by his upper caste teacher for drinking water from the pot meant for the upper caste in Rajasthan. For thousands of years, Dalits have been kept deprived of power, property, and position. It was propounded that "god created this hierarchy", so that Dalits may not rebel against this social order. Thousands of Dalits have continued to endure this injustice. So the aim of Dalit literature is to narrate the pain and suffering of Dalits to Upper caste Hindus.

In this Essay, Limbale explores crucial questions like what aesthetic considerations should be taken into account to interpreting Dalit Literature, and how Dalit aesthetics of Dalit

literature is different from other non – Dalit literature? Dalit literature rejects traditional aesthetics and affirms a new real one. Dalit literature's literary value is embedded in its social value. So the role of the Dalit writer is too important in analysing it. Dalit writers are demanding different standards for the assessment of their literary works. If this yardstick change, the concept of aesthetics will change too. Limbale asserts that a careful and detailed reading of Dalit literature should be needed to evolve a separate aesthetics. It must be based on Ambedkar's thoughts of social upliftment for the Dalits.

Limbale proposes some counter values to Satyam (truth), Shivam (goodness), and Sundaram (beauty.), traditional Hindu ideals of Indian aesthetics. But we know that many truths or Satyams promulgated by the upper castes are falsehoods as far as the Dalits are concerned. They have their own stories to show their hegemony in society. They cooked up the stories like Brahmins came from the mouth of Brahma whereas the Sudras, Dalits, and others from his feet. The Brahmins also say that one is born a Shudra because of the sins he committed in a previous life. All these fabricated lies are not at all true.

While considering Shiva (goodness), what kind of goodness can we seek in the life of Dalits who are treated by Hindu Upper casts as untouchables and impure? They are treated as animals and are driven to separate settlements. Nomadic and criminal tribes haven't any home or land and are forced to beg for live. Limbale asks what sort of Shiva is this? How can we expect Sivam from a community that has been tortured by Hindu custom for years? Limbale, then examines the concept of Sundaramie. Beauty in connection with Dalit life. There is no beauty in the life of Dalits who live outside

the village. They should not learn Sanskrit or read Vedas They are forced to live an inauspicious, uncultured life. Limbale mentions Shambuka, a shudra ascetic from Ramayana who was killed due to meditating like a saint, and Ekalavya, the young prince of Nishadhas (Rakshasas) from Mahabharata who chopped his right thumb finger as Gurudakshina for acquiring archery, to show the injustice done by the Brahmins to lower casts people who tried to acquire knowledge. Shivaji the founder of the Maratha Empire was called Shudra when he laid claim to the throne. The dancer women of Kolhati, an Indian nomadic community, were forced to dance in front of the upper caste men and were treated as public property for sexual appeasement with the consensus of their family members.

Satyam ,ShivamSundaram , in the opinion of Limbale, are the fabrications used to divide and exploit ordinary people by upper caste. It is the selfish mechanism of Brahmins. He proclaims that we should replace this conception of aesthetics with one that is material and social. He proposes counter aesthetics instead of Satyam SivamSundaram as follows;

“Human beings are first and foremost human – this is Satyam”

“The liberation of human beings is Shivam”

“The Humanity of human beings is Sundaram”

Limbale suggests new criteria for measuring the quality of Dalit literature, equality, liberty, justice and fraternity. Critics of Dalit literature should consider these qualities while discussing the aesthetics of Dalit literature.

Glossary

Aesthetics: Principles for appreciating of beauty of art.

Yardstick: A standard used for comparison.

Satyam Shivam Sundaram : Truth, Goodness and Beauty, the ideals of Indian aesthetics.

Shambuka: A character from The Ramayana, a Shudra ascetic killed by Rama for performing penance which people from Shambuka's caste was not supposed to do.

Ekalavya: A tribal prince from Mahabharata, who was denied archery training by Dronacharya . When Ekalavya secretly watched Dronacharya's classes and learnt archery Dronacharya demanded his right thumb finger, a token of gratitude to a teacher.

Fabrications: Lies, falsehood

Exercise

I Answer in a sentence or two

1. What is Dalit literature according to Limbale?
2. What is the attitude of upper caste critics to Dalit literature?
3. Who is Shambhuka?
4. What is the plight of Kolhati women?
5. What was the controversy during Shivaji's coronation?

II Answer in paragraph

1. What is the place of ‘Satyam’ in the lives of Dalit?
2. How did the upper caste use the doctrine of ‘Shivam’ to exploit the Dalits?
3. How does Limbale redefine ‘Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram’?
4. What is the purpose of Dalit literature according to Limbale?
5. Which are the instances of punishments and exploitation of Dalits cited in the text?

III Write an essay on the following questions

1. How does Limbale redefine Dalit Literature?
2. Dalit Aesthetics according to Limbale
3. Relevance of SharankumarLimbale’s text in contemporary society

Purl

Kristen Lester

About the Director

Kristen Lester is an American director, story artist, and writer. She made her directorial debut in *Purl*, an animated experimental short film produced by Pixar. It was released on YouTube on 4th February 2019. This film centres on a hardworking and open-hearted ball of yarn who takes a job at a fast-paced, male-centric company, aptly named B.R.O. Capital. The first ball of yarn to work at the company, *Purl* finds herself excluded and discriminated against by her co-workers. She has changed her personality and appearance to fit in with the guys. But *Purl* ultimately realizes that doing so would be doing a harm to herself, and all other employees who stand out as different from the established norm. This film is actually from Lester's own experience in the animation industry. In an interview she says, "It's weird to be part of an industry that is changing so rapidly, and so drastically. I went from being in a situation where, if I was on a story team, I would be the only woman. I would be sitting in a room, and we would be talking about a female character or something, and they'd be doing something that I didn't feel was authentic and true to my experience. And I was the only one in there ranting like, 'They should not be kissing'".

The plot of the Film

Purl, is a humanoid pink coloured ball of yarn. A Humanoid is a non-human entity with human form or characteristics. She starts an entry-level position at a company

named B.R.O Capital. All her co-workers are men and they receive her with a cold shoulder. They simply ignore her presence in the company meetings and invalidate her opinions and suggestions to improve the financial status of their company. After being left alone by her co-workers, she observes from the photos of the company's capital team which is composed entirely of white men in similar power suits and hairstyles. She decides to change her appearance and personality. The next day, she appears in men's attire and wears a serious face that resembles her men co-workers. She also has started to say vulgar jokes, using invectives that are very common among men. Her changes are noticed by men and they wholeheartedly accept her. They invite her out for drinks. Thus she becomes one of them as she manages to get their acceptability. Why Lester did choose a ball of yarn as the central character in the short film is evident in the transformation of Purl. A yarn can really be anything. It can be a sweater, it can be a piece of artwork, and it can be made to look like food. Because of the story, Lester was really interested in this idea of transformation, and the wish fulfilment of being able to knit oneself another identity, and another persona. In a male-dominated society, women are forced to choose the identity of men to prove their abilities.

Then comes Lacy, a yellow-coloured ball of yarn to work in the same company. She is ignored by men when she comes first. She looks so sad and nervous about the strange behaviour of her colleagues. Purl can understand the plight of the newcomer and feels that Lacy is going through the same situation that she had experienced during her joining time in the office. Purl befriends Lacy and invites her to join for drinks. Lacy is relieved because she finds someone who

accepts her in the company. Purl realizes the importance of being oneself. She gets back to her original appearance and realizes her self-worth. She proposes the idea of inclusiveness and in the end, we can see that the office has a mixed group of balls of yarn and men who coexist happily. It's a political short, with a forceful message that shows discrimination between males and females within the work environment.

Exercise

I Answer in a sentence or two

1. Describe Purl's first appearance
2. What kind of reception did Purl get in her office on her first day?
3. What was Purl's joke which made her colleagues laugh?
4. How did Purl change her appearance?
5. Who is Lacy?

II. Answer in Paragraph.

1. What changes did Purl make in her style of speaking and manners?
2. Lacy's first day at office.
3. How did Purl feel about Lacy?
4. How does the film end?
5. Difference between the attitude of Purl at the beginning and end of the film

III. Answer the following question in about 300 words

1. Discuss the different themes in the film.
2. Character of Purl.
3. Relevance of the film in contemporary society.

Further Reading:

Dr. AV Koshy – A Treatise on Poetry.

Rainer Maria Rike – Letters to a Young Poet

Celia Esplugas Margarete Lundwehr - The Use of critical Thinking Skills in Literary Analysis.

Alice LaPlante – The Making of a Story: A Norton Guide to Creative Writing

Michael Michalko – Cracking Creativity.

**FIRST SEMESTER BA/B Sc. /B Com DEGREE
EXAMINATION**

MODEL QUESTION PAPER

(CBCSSUG)

Common Course-English

**ENG1A01- LITMOSPHERE: THE WORLD OF
LITERATURE**

Time: 2 Hours Maximum Marks: 60

**I. Answer the following questions in two or three sentences:
(2 marks each)**

1. What is the theme of the poem “To Posterity”?
2. What was the constant whisper in the house in the short story “The Rocking Horse Winner”?
3. Why did Flaubert decide to write the memoir?
4. What is the tone of the poem “The Thought Fox”?
5. What is the irony in the poem “Poetry” by Marianne Moore?
6. How did working in the dispensary motivate Agatha Christie to write a detective story?
7. What is the nationality of the writer Naguib Mahfouz?
8. What does the drum symbolise in the poem “To a Reason”?
9. Who is a Colourman in Arthur Conan Doyle’s story?

10. What is meant by the title of the play Trifles?
11. What is missing in the bo'y in Justice Ameer's poem?
12. What is the metaphor for women used in the short film "Purl"?

(Ceiling 20 marks)

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph: (5 marks each)

13. What, according to Limbale, is the purpose of Dalit literature?
14. What does it mean to be the dreamer in Suniti Namjoshi's poem?

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15. Explain the symbolic elements in the play Trifles
16. How did Agatha Christie plan her work?
17. Describe the analytical skills of Sherlock Holmes in Doyle's short story
18. Write about the shifting female perspective in the short film "Purl".
19. How do you explain Paul's fixation on the idea of 'luck'.

(Ceiling 30 marks)

III. Answer any one out of the two questions in an essay of 200 words:

20. How does Limbale challenge the notions of ‘Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram’ and declare them as a foolish aesthetic concept in the essay “About Dalit Literature”?

21. Attempt a critical analysis of the short story “The Cockroach”

(1 x 10=10 marks)