



**GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE**

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.)  
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## **STUDY MATERIAL FOR BA ENGLISH**

### **BRITISH POETRY**

#### **SEMESTER – I**



**ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023**

**PREPARED BY**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**



**STUDY MATERIAL FOR BA ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**BRITISH POETRY**

**SEMESTER - I, ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23**

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### UNIT-I

#### **Prothalamion**

**- Edmund Spenser**

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) ranks as the foremost English poet of the 16th century. Edmund Spenser was a man of his times, and his work reflects the religious and humanistic ideals as well as the intense but critical patriotism of Elizabethan England. His contributions to English literature in the form of a heightened and enlarged poetic vocabulary, a charming and flexible verse style, and a rich fusing of the philosophic and literary currents of the English Renaissance.

"Prothalamion" was written by the English poet Edmund Spenser in 1596 in celebration of the engagements of Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset, the daughters of the Earl of Somerset. The poem was innovative and unusual for its time. In fact, Spenser coined the word "prothalamion" specifically for it, modeling the title on the word "epithalamion," or "wedding song." Unlike an "epithalamion," which celebrates a wedding, a "prothalamion" celebrates a betrothal or engagement. The betrothals of the poem were more than matters of the heart, and were politically important events in England at the time. The poem thus meditates on the relationship between marriage, nature, and politics.

Thus, the speaker identifies himself as someone whose political ambitions have been frustrated. These frustrated ambitions form a kind of frame for everything that follows: they're the reason why the speaker goes out onto the bank of the Thames in the first place.

As such, although he doesn't dwell on his own ambitions, they nevertheless form an important contrast to and backdrop for the poem's exploration of nature. Walking along the banks of the river eases the speaker's "pain," which suggests that nature is a soothing and restorative force. At the same time, the poem subtly but consistently blurs the distinction between nature and the human world.

Nature is thus positioned as a restorative space outside the drama of the courtly world. In contrast to the "empty shadows" of the speaker's political ambition, the natural world is precise and concrete. The speaker spends much of the second stanza, for example, listing *specific* flowers that he and the nymphs encounter. Furthermore, as the speaker describes it, the natural world is courteous and responsive to human needs.

As the poem proceeds however, and the swans float down the Thames, the divide between the human and the natural realms loses its distinction. The same river, for instance, that the speaker turns to for solace from political life also runs by brick towers where students study law and by the house where the respected Earl of Essex lives. More importantly, the swans that the speaker encounters on the banks of the Thames are preparing to return to London a city for their marriage.

These moments suggest that nature is not absolutely separate from politics. In fact, they suggest that nature in this poem serves as a metaphor for some of the most important moments of people's lives like the marriages of key political figures. Indeed, the poem was initially written in celebration of their weddings.



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Thus, even though these moments that reference the human, cosmopolitan world seem somewhat out of place maybe even extraneous they still shape the way one reads the poem and its description of a beautiful natural world. Overall, they suggest that nature is not purely a space of comfort and retreat, but that it is also intimately linked to human political life.

#### **On His Blindness**

**-John Milton**

John Milton was an English poet whose popularity in literature heightened only after he went blind at the beginning of the second half of his life. Milton was born on 9 December 1608 in Bread Street, London, and died on 8 November 1674 in Bunhill Row, London. After John Milton went completely blind in 1652, he published his masterpiece Paradise Lost in 1667. For his successors, Milton was a hugely influential poet. Milton also wrote sonnets among which “On His Blindness” best represents his life.

John Milton’s On His Blindness has multiple themes like faith in God, frustration, acceptance, patience, God’s omnipotence, God’s omnipresence, etc.

Despite his blindness and despite the fact that God designed his fate that way, Milton promises to remain faithful to God. He is definitely frustrated with his fate, but he finally accepts his destiny as well. God’s omnipotence and omnipresence are also significant themes of Milton’s poem.

We can do nothing to change God’s creation and wherever we are God comes to help us when we seriously need him. Likewise, patience is a highly important theme “On His Blindness” presents. It imparts that we need to wait patiently for the things to happen in our life as per God’s decisions.

John Milton’s poem “On His Blindness” begins with contemplation of the speaker’s life before and after turning blind. “When I consider how my light is spent ere half my days in this dark world and wide,” means when he thinks of how he lost his eyesight before he had half of his life ahead. It clearly says, Milton spent half of his life in darkness.

The second half of the poem begins with Patience’s reply to Milton’s question. The poet personifies Patience which, in fact, is his own inner-self. Now, we come to know that the speaker has been murmuring so far and Patience wants to “prevent that murmur.” It says: “God doth not need either man’s work or his own gifts; who best Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.” According to Milton’s Patience, God is omnipotent and self-sufficient who does not need man’s work nor his gifts. Instead, whoever accepts their fate as they come are the best servers of God because it means the acceptance of God’s creation.

Patience also reminds Milton that God’s state is kingly in which “thousands at his bidding speed and post o’er land and ocean without rest.” There are thousands who follow God’s order regardless of circumstances and impending results.

However, “They also serve who only stand and wait.” Patience quickly informs the murmuring speaker that those who patiently wait for help will get their wishes fulfilled. The last line might connotatively mean that the speaker is waiting for his death and he cannot



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tolerate life any longer. Nevertheless, he finally decides to wait patiently for the arrival of his death after which he might get rid of life's troubles.

#### **To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time**

**- Robert Herrick**

The English poet and Anglican parson Robert Herrick (1591-1674) invented a fanciful world compounded of pagan Rome and Christian England, of reality and fantasy, which he ruled as his poetic domain. Robert Herrick's 83 years stretched from Elizabethan times. In "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time," a speaker encourages young women to seize the day and enjoy their youth and, more specifically, to have plenty of sex and find a husband while they're young. Youth, the speaker insists, is the best part of life, and it's all too easy to waste one's limited time by being "coy" especially in matters of sex.

The speaker begins by urging listeners to gather a familiar image of both youth and sex: "rose-buds." Those new buds, emerging in the spring and summer, suggest fresh and blooming youth, and they're an old symbol of love and of the female body.

Also note that at the time of the poem's composition, the word "virgins" would have meant young women specifically, rather than just anyone who hasn't had sex. In encouraging "virgins" to gather their rose-buds, then, the speaker points this poem directly at young women and encourages them to take advantage of their youthful sexuality while they still can. Those "rose-buds" also seem to represent both sexual experiences and the young women themselves: while they "smile" today, they'll be "a-dying" tomorrow.

Both sex and youth, the image suggests, are limited-time opportunities for women. The speaker then turns to bigger images that reflect the relentless passing of time, creating a sense of urgency: youth, sexuality, and life itself, the speaker implies that the poem follows the sun as it moves through the sky, getting closer and closer to setting every second.

Then, the speaker gets more literal, stating flat out that the image of warm blood seems to link human bodies to the sun, which also comes to a peak of heat and then steadily diminishes. These lines sound downright ominous, and seem intended to scare the "virgins": the speaker's visions of time's remorseless passage suggest that things are only going to get worse for these young women.

Having made this broader point, the speaker returns to directly addressing the "virgins" in the final stanza and the poem's language here hints that the speaker might have some skin in this game. When the poem urges the young women not to be "coy," the speaker's suggesting that they be sexually free and easy. The speaker follows this up with encouragement to go "marry" the socially-approved way of channeling sexuality in the 17th century.

In the final lines, the speaker takes a frostier tone again, warning the young women that once they're past the prime of their youths, they might not have the chance to take all the sexual opportunities they're refusing now. In that back-and-forth between encouragements to enjoy sexuality while it's freshest and warnings that youth doesn't last forever, the poem's speaker thus does something rather sneaky.



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### UNIT – II

#### **The Ecstasy**

**-John Donne**

John Donne was born into a Catholic family in 1572, during a strong anti-Catholic period in England. Donne's father, also named John, was a prosperous London merchant. His mother, Elizabeth Heywood, was the grand-niece of Catholic martyr Thomas More. Religion would play a tumultuous and passionate role in John Donne's life.

The Ecstasy is one of John Donne's most popular poems, which expresses his unique and unconventional ideas about love. It expounds the theme that pure, spiritual or real love can exist only in the bond of souls established by the bodies. For Donne, true love only exists when both bodies and souls are inextricably united. The poem is an expression of Donne's philosophy of love.

Donne agrees with Plato that true love is spiritual. The poet begins the narration of the event with a typically passionate scene as the backdrop for the lovers to embrace and experience the 'ecstasy'. The setting is natural, very calm and quiet. The scenery is described in erotic terms: the riverbank is "like a pillow on a bed"; it also is "pregnant". The reference to pillow, bed and pregnancy suggest sexuality, though the poet says that their love is 'asexual'. Indeed, the image of asexual reproduction of the violent plant is used to compare the lovers' only 'propagation'.

It is springtime, and violets are in bloom. To a Renaissance reader, the image of violets symbolizes faithful love and truth. In pastoral settings where lovers are sitting together, holding each other's hand and looking intently into each other's eyes.

Their eyes meet and reflect the images of each other, and their sights are woven together. They get a kind of sensation within their hearts and blood, resulting in perspiration and blushing. They become ecstatic because their souls have escaped from their bodies to rise to a state of bliss. When love joins two souls, they mingle with each other and give birth to a new and finer soul, which removes the defects and supplies whatever is lacking in either single soul.

The new re-animated soul made up of their two separate souls gives them the ecstasy. But they cannot forget the body, which is the vehicle, and container, cover and house of the soul.

The lovers' souls leave their bodies, which become mere lifeless figures. Finally, they are united into a single soul. Donne tries to convey the readers that the foundation of spiritual love is the physical attachment; the eyes serve as a gateway to the soul.

Moreover, the physical union has produced an even stronger spiritual bond that is far more powerful than each individual's soul. Donne refers the violet to tell us that the fusion of the lover's soul produces a new "abler soul" like the violet, which doubles its vigour when it is grafted together with another. Then the lovers are now able to seek the spiritual pleasure rather than purely physical pleasure. In this union the two souls find strength like a violet



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when it is transplanted. As such, the single united soul is able to grow with new energy. The united soul is perfect, unchanging and also with new energy.

The united soul is perfect, unchanging and also transcends the "defects of loneliness", or the single soul. The two lovers now understand that true love is the result of their physical attachment provoking spiritual union. Souls are spiritual beings. They move with the help of the bodies. Body is the medium of contact of the two souls. Therefore, the lovers turn to their bodies and try to understand the mystery of love. Body is the medium to experience love. So spirits must act through bodies. If love is to be free, it requires physical as well as spiritual outlets.

As a metaphysical poem this poem brings together (or juxtaposes) opposites; the poet has also reconciled such opposites as the medieval and the modern the spiritual and physical, the scientific or secular and the religious, the abstract and the concrete, the remote and the familiar, the ordinary and the metaphysical. This is largely done through imagery and conceit in which widely opposite concepts are brought together.

#### **To His Coy Mistress**

**-Andrew Marvell**

Marvell was born on March 31, 1621, at Wine stead-in-Holderness, Yorkshire. His father, a Calvinistic Anglican clergyman, became master of the Charterhouse, an alms-house, and preacher at Holy Trinity Church in Hull, where the family moved in 1624; the poet's mother was died in 1638, his father in 1641. In 1633 Marvell began his studies at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he remained until 1641, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1639. By the outbreak of the civil war in 1642 Andrew Marvell's academic career had ended short of his completing a Master of Arts degree, perhaps as a result of his father's accidental death, and he began a 4-year sojourn in Europe, probably tutoring the son of a well-to-do family.

"To His Coy Mistress" is a love poem: it celebrates beauty, youth, and sexual pleasure. However, the speaker of the poem is haunted by mortality. Though he imagines a luxuriously slow love that takes thousands of years to reach consummation, he knows such a thing is impossible: he will die before it can be accomplished.

Death cannot be delayed or defeated; the only response to death, according to the speaker, is to enjoy as much pleasure as possible before it comes. He urges the woman he loves not to wait, to enjoy the pleasures of life without restraint. The poem draws a contrast between two kinds of love: the full, rich love that would be possible if everyone lived forever, and the rushed, panicked love that mortal beings are forced to enjoy.

The speaker, in the poem, addresses his beloved and says that if they had enough time and space in the world to spend, then her coyness (shyness) would be accepted. They would sit somewhere and plan the ways in which they can spend their time. His beloved would sit by the side of the river Ganges and search for precious stones while he (the speaker) would sit at the side of Humber River and would love her silently and wait for her. The speaker, furthermore, adds that even she could refuse him for as much time as she wants. Her refusals will not be annoying, and he will not object to any such action.





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The speaker claims that he would have loved her even before the start of the time only if such a thing was possible. If they were not entrapped in the claws of the swift time, he would have let her refuse his love till the doomsday.

The speaker addresses her beloved that his love for her would be like vegetables that will grow slowly but surely with the passage of time. He mentions his deep love for his beloved by claiming that he would praise each part of her body for a hundred years, and in the end, her heart will get open for him.

He says that he will praise her eyes for two hundred years and then turn to gaze at her forehead. This gaze will last no less than one hundred years. Then, he will take a hundred years to adore each of her breasts. The speaker claims that his beloved deserves this much love, and he would not love less than she deserves. However, the speaker says they don't have enough time as life is limited, and every living being has to die one day. Furthermore, time waits for no one. It flies, leaving everything behind. He says that the afterward is like a vast desert where everything vanishes with time, and the same is the case with beauty. It will also fade.

After mentioning his beloved's beauty, the speaker speaks of her beloved's virginity that she has preserved for a long time. He says that in the grave, her preserved virginity will be attacked by worms, and the honor, for which she has saved her virginity, will turn to dust. At the same time, his lust for her beauty, too, will turn ashes. He says that a grave is an isolated place, and no two persons meet there.

The speaker suggests that youth is the best time of life. They should enjoy their lives just like birds. As long as the young-looking skin of a person is garden-fresh, he/she should take advantage of the youthful moments. During youth, the fire of desire blisters in them, and they have the opportunity to do whatever they want to do.

To the speaker, life is filled with struggle and resentment, while the youth is the greatest chance to cross the arid and dull Iron Gate of life with love and affection. They can't make their bad times wait for them. However, they can make the most of their time with love and unitedness.

### **The Lamb**

**-William Blake**

William Blake was born in London on Nov. 28, 1757, the second son of a hosier and haberdasher. Except for a few years in Sussex, his entire life was spent in London. William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet, engraver, and painter. A boldly imaginative rebel in both his thought and his art, he combined poetic and pictorial genius to explore important issues in politics, religion, and psychology.

William Blake's *The Lamb* is a typical poem of the *Songs of Innocence*, a collection of Blake's poems which give us glimpses of an ideal world free from the deadening influence of social custom, selfishness or jealousy which assails the mind of a man as he grows up; expounds that in the world of innocence (i.e. God) even the meanest creature such as the





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lamb which we consider low and ignoble occupies as high and noble a position as man because of its divinity.

The Lamb is a romantic poem. It reveals Blake's mystical, religious and idealistic view of the world. It is the glorification of childhood which is a great romantic quality, and which registers its highest water-mark in Wordsworth. Here the child is identified with God and shown as familiar with the mystery of creation. The pastoral setting of the poem lends a romantic charm to it.

The picture of the valleys rejoiced by the tender voice of the lamb, and the green, river-side pasture where the lamb grazes is not only romantic, but also anticipates the naturalism of Wordsworth.

The poem also transports us to the far-off days when the earth was a near paradise and when animals spoke like human beings. The poem is a triumph of lyricism which is the hall-mark of romantic poetry. It is characterized by such lyrical qualities as spontaneity, simplicity, sincerity and musicality.

The Lamb expounds that in the world of innocence even the meanest creature such as the lamb which we consider low and ignoble occupies as high and noble a position as man because of its divinity.



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### UNIT III

#### **The Deserted Village**

**-Oliver Goldsmith**

Oliver Goldsmith was born on November 10, (1730-1774). His birth place is disputed, but it is most probably Pallas more, country Long Ford. At the age of eight, he had a B.A Degree in February 1749 from Trinity College Dublin, before he left Ireland in 1752 to study medicine in Edinburgh. The British poet, dramatist, novelist, and essayist wrote, translated, or compiled more than 40 volumes. The works for which he is remembered are marked by good sense, moderation, balance, order, and intellectual honesty.

The Deserted Village, pastoral elegy by Oliver Goldsmith, published in 1770. Considered to be one of his major poems, it idealizes a rural way of life that was being destroyed by the displacement of agrarian villagers, the greed of landlords, and economic and political change.

In this poem Oliver Goldsmith praises his native village, Auburn. He calls it happy time of his age. The villagers were very wealthy and cheerful. It was a fine village where the spring came earlier and which had long summer. The villagers were simple fold and led a very contented life.

The poet had spent his youth in this village. He therefore cannot forget its charms. He remembers that there were green fields where he wandered, the mill, the stream and the church. He remembers that there were shady places for taking rest and enjoying chatting. On holidays villagers enjoy different games. On such occasions many feats of skill and strength were also shown.

While the young men took active part in these games and the old men watched them. The dancing couples performed dances. Sometimes they played a trick on some young farmer. They would smear his face with mud or blacken.

That provided a lot of fun to the whole company. Sometimes a shy girl looked secretly at her lover. Then her mother would reprove her daughter for her attitude. Such were the pleasures of his native village which has been ruined. In the end the poet says that the villages are back bone of country. If they are destroyed once they can never be created again.

Towards the end of the poem Goldsmith invokes Poetry, capitalized to accentuate its personification. It too has been evicted from traditional village life. He was raised in a wealthy family and attended an elite university, and he lived a relatively luxurious life as an adult. Yet by including Poetry as a loss to greed, he allows himself to be cast alongside the impoverished. As the speaker of the poem, he is rendered just as wretched by the destruction of old values and ways of life.



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### Ode to the West Wind

-Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in Horsham, England in 1792. He was tutored at home before entering Syon House in Brentford at the age of ten, moving on two years later to Eton College and eventually to University College, Oxford. He published his first novel while at Oxford, during which time he also wrote and published several radical pamphlets.

He acquired an interest in science, especially astronomy and chemistry, and became an avid reader of juvenile thrillers filled with horrors of various kinds. Shelley reacted to the bullying he was subjected to with violent anger and a determination to devote himself to opposing every form of tyranny.

Ode to the west wind is a poem that shows us the power of the wind which brings a change in the natural world. Similarly, the poet wishes for reform in society. Moreover, the poem has underlying themes of optimism and hope for a better future. The poet wrote this poem in the woods outside Florence, Italy during autumn. The poem begins with the poet appealing to the Wild West wind of autumn. He notices how the wind is scattering the dead leaves and spreading the seeds. This will result in their nurturing in the season of spring.

Thus, the poet labels the wind as a destroyer as well as a preserver. He calls for it to hear him by describing how the wind is responsible for stirring up violent storms. He mentions the unusual exploits of the wind and how it is responsible for waves in the big oceans and seas like the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Once again, the poet calls out to the wind so it hears his appeal.

Ode to the west wind summary explains how the poet recalls his lovely relationship with the west wind in his youth. He desires to be a dead leaf or swift cloud so the west wind would carry him thereby feeling its strength. At last, the poet appeals to the west wind to turn him into a lyre. This way, his words can be scattered all over the world like a dead leaf for everyone through the wind. Moreover, he also asks the wind to become him.

At last, he concludes by asking the question that if winter will arrive, the spring will also not be far behind. Thus, he states a metaphor for birth and death. So, it means that death and decay do not mean the end but rebirth. In other words, he believes winter and spring won't be able to sail on the same boat because both are opposite of each other. In addition, he states that there is nothing new in him decaying as it is inevitable.

Thus, this wind will ultimately bring rejuvenation and rebirth. Further, in ode to the west wind summary, will find how the poet is promoting this rebirth through his poem. He wishes to see the same reform in society. That is to say, in both political and poetic means for a better future of society as a whole.



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#### **La Belle Dame sans Merci**

**-John Keats**

**John Keats**, (born October 31, 1795, London, England died February 23, 1821, Rome, Papal States [Italy]), English Romantic lyric poet who devoted his short life to the perfection of a poetry marked by vivid imagery, great sensuous appeal, and an attempt to express a philosophy through classical legend.

*La Belle Dame sans Merci* is a ballad from the Romantic period. It was part of a literary movement that had arisen to counter the theories of the Age of Enlightenment – to bring back imagination, beauty, and art to a culture that had become science-based, theoretical, and realist. French Revolution as proof of the failure of science and reason, and the suffocation of the human spirit.

John Keats' major themes in "La Belle Dame sans Merci": Illusion versus reality, death, love, and seduction are the major themes of this poem. The lady, with her beauty, enslaved the knight and left him to die at the lake. Also, the knight's dream indicates that was not the first time she trapped a man. In fact, there is a series of ill-fated men to whom she ditched. The poem gives a message that love, beauty, and joy are short-lived and that physical beauty and seduction can mislead a person.

"La Belle Dame sans Merci" as a Representative of Deception: The poem narrates a tragic story of a knight who falls in love with a lady, but she leaves him as falls ill. A stranger meets the knight and inquires about his miserable condition. The knight tells him about the beautiful woman in the meadows. They have been in love as she has walked alongside him and sung beautiful songs for him. Once, she took him to her special place where he kissed her, and the calmness around made him sleep. He then dreamed strange people warning him about that fair lady. He woke up by the cold hillside where the stranger found him. The tragic ballad tells about the sad condition of the knight and the deception of the lady.

The speaker comes across the knight wandering around in the dead of winter when "the sedge has withered from the lake And no birds sing." In this way, Keats depicts a barren and bleak landscape. The knight responds to the speaker, telling him how he met a lady in the meadows who was "full beautiful, a faery's child". Here, Keats' language sweetens. The first three stanzas were bitter and devoid of emotion, but the introduction of the "lady in the meads" produces softness in the language of the knight. He reminisces on the lady's beauty and her apparent innocence – her long hair, light feet, and wild eyes – and on her otherworldliness, as well. Moreover, he describes his sweet memories of the Lady: feeding each other, giving her presents, traveling with her, and being together.

The lady weeps for she knows that they cannot be together as she is a fairy, and he is a mortal. She lulls him to sleep out of which he does not immediately wake. In his dream, the knight sees pale people like kings, princes, and warriors. They tell him that he has been enthralled by the woman without mercy. He wakes up from the nightmare alone, on the cold hillside, and tells the persona that is why he stays there, wandering, looking for the lady. The last stanza leaves the fate of the knight ambiguous.



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### UNIT-IV

#### **Fra LippiLippi**

**-Robert Browning**

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in Camberwell, London. His father, a senior clerk in the Bank of England, provided a comfortable living for his family and passed on a love of art and literature to Robert. His mother, an excellent amateur pianist, gave him a love of music, while her strong and simple piety provided him with an enduring conviction of the existence of God. In 1828 Robert Browning entered the University of London, but he dropped out after half a year. The Brownings were a small, close-knit family and Robert apparently preferred to remain at home, reading in his father's library of over 7,000 volumes.

The poem centres thematically around the discussion of art that takes place around line 180. Lippo has painted a group of figures that are the spitting image of people in the community: the Prior's mistress, neighbourhood men, etc. Everyone is amazed at his talent, and his great show of talent gains him his place at the monastery. However, his talent for depicting reality comes into conflict with the stated religious goals of the Church.

The Church leadership believes that their parishioners will be distracted by the sight of people they know within the painting: as the Prior and his cohorts say, 'your business is not to catch men with show, With homage to the perishable clay Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh. Your business is to paint the souls of men.' In part the Church authorities' objections stem not from any real religious concern, but from a concern for their own reputation: Lippo has gotten a little too close to the truth with his depictions of actual persons as historical figures the Prior's "niece" has been portrayed as the seductive Salome. However, the conflict between Lippo and the Church elders also cuts to the very heart of questions about art: is the primary purpose of Lippo's art and any art to instruct, or to delight? If it is to instruct, is it better to give men ordinary scenes to which they can relate, or to offer them celestial visions to which they can aspire? In his own art, Browning himself doesn't seem to privilege either conclusion; his work demonstrates only a loose didacticism, and it relies more on carefully chosen realistic examples rather than either concrete portraits or abstractions. Both Fra Lippo's earthly tableaux and the Prior's preferred fantasias of "vapor done up like a new-born babe" miss the mark. Lippo has no aspirations beyond simple mimesis, while the Prior has no respect for the importance of the quotidian. Thus the debate is essentially empty, since it does not take into account the power of art to move man in a way that is not intellectual but is rather aesthetic and emotional.

Though anything-goes morality of the Medici's rings equally hollow, as it involves only a series of meaningless, hedonistic revels and shallow encounters. This Renaissance debate echoes the schism in Victorian society, where moralists and libertines opposed each other in fierce disagreement. Browning seems to assert that neither side holds the key to a good life. Yet he concludes, as he does in other poems, that both positions, while flawed, can lead to high art: art has no absolute connection to morality.



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#### The Lotos-Eaters

-Alfred Lord Tennyson

Alfred Tennyson, who is known as Alfred, Lord Tennyson, was born on Aug. 6, 1809, in the rectory of the village of Somersby, Lincolnshire. His parents were the Reverend George Clayton Tennyson and Elizabeth Fytche Tennyson; he was one of eight sons—there were four daughters as well. Dr Tennyson, the poet's father, was the elder of the two sons of a prosperous businessman who favoured his younger son and thus left Dr Tennyson embittered and relatively impoverished. He was an educated man, a country clergyman, and Alfred read widely in his father's library.

Odysseus tells his mariners to have courage, assuring them that they will soon reach the shore of their home. The mariner's sight this "land of streams" with its gleaming river flowing to the sea, its three snow-capped mountaintops, and its shadowy pine growing in the vale. The mariners are greeted by the "mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters," whose dark faces appear pale against the rosy sunset. These Lotos-eaters come bearing the flower and fruit of the lotos, which they offer to Odysseus's mariners. Those who eat the lotos feel as if they have fallen into a deep sleep; they sit down upon the yellow sand of the island and can hardly perceive their fellow mariners speaking to them, hearing only the music of their heartbeat in their ears. Although it has been sweet to dream of their homes in Ithaca, the lotos makes them weary of wandering, preferring to linger here. One who has eaten of the lotos fruit proclaims that he will "return no more," and all of the mariners begin to sing about this resolution to remain in the land of the Lotos-eaters.

The rest of the poem consists of the eight numbered stanzas of the mariners' choric song, expressing their resolution to stay forever. First, they praise the sweet and soporific music of the land of the Lotos-eaters, comparing this music to petals, dew, granite, and tired eyelids. In the second stanza, they question why man is the only creature in nature who must toil. They argue that everything else in nature is able to rest and stay still, but man is tossed from one sorrow to another. Man's inner spirit tells him that tranquillity and calmness offer the only joy, and yet he is fated to toil and wander his whole life.

In the third stanza, the mariners declare that everything in nature is allotted a lifespan in which to bloom and fade. As examples of other living things that die, they cite the "folded leaf, which eventually turns yellow and drifts to the earth, as well as the "full-juiced apple," which ultimately falls to the ground, and the flower, which ripens and fades. Next, in the fourth stanza, the mariners question the purpose of a life of labour, since nothing is cumulative and thus all our accomplishments lead nowhere. They question "what...will last," proclaiming that everything in life is fleeting and therefore futile. The mariners also express their desire for "long rest or death," either of which will free them from a life of endless labour. The fifth stanza echoes the first stanza's positive appeal to luxurious self-indulgence; the mariners declare how sweet it is to live a life of continuous dreaming. They paint a picture of what it might be like to do nothing all day except sleep, dream, eat lotos, and watch the waves on the beach. Such an existence would enable them peacefully to remember all those individuals they once knew who are now either buried ("heaped over with a mound of grass") or cremated ("two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!").





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In the sixth stanza, the mariners reason that their families have probably forgotten them anyway, and their homes fallen apart, so they might as well stay in the land of the Lotos-eaters and “let what is broken so remain.” Although they have fond memories of their wives and sons, surely by now, after ten years of fighting in Troy, their sons have inherited their property; it will merely cause unnecessary confusion and disturbances for them to return now. Their hearts are worn out from fighting wars and navigating the seas by means of the constellations, and thus they prefer the relaxing death-like existence of the Land of the Lotos to the confusion that a return home would create.

#### **The Forsaken Merman**

- **Matthew Arnold**

Matthew Arnold was born at Laleham on the Thames on Dec. 24, 1822. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, one of the worthies whom Lytton Strachey was to portray somewhat critically in *Eminent Victorians*, became the celebrated master of Rugby School, and his ideals of Christian education were influential. The most characteristic work of the English poet and critic Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) deals with the difficulty of preserving personal values in a world drastically transformed by industrialism, science, and democracy.

The Forsaken Merman poem was published in 1849 in *The Strayed Reveller and Other Rooms*, the author's first verse collection. The Forsaken Merman is the creation of Mathew Arnold that tackles the issue of isolation in Victorian Age. It is about a merman who marries a woman Margaret, a mortal and talks about the desertion by his wife. This also highlighted the isolation during the Victorian age in the form of governess where a woman had to leave her family voluntarily to raise her status and make money. A governess puts back her life and starts working in a stranger's house upraising her children without being a part of that family.

Mathew Arnold here depicted the life of the merman with the sterility of the world of humans through the imagery he creates. The merman and his children symbolizes many things. The world beneath the sea illustrated a different story, it is filled with colours, wilderness and has wild nature. The merman and the children lived a carefree life, doing things that made them happy, not reasoning themselves to the societal norms due to which Margaret decided to leave them and wanted her children to grow up as adults as she could not accept this lifestyle. The fact that she left him and made him face a lot of interrogation with oneself has caused a sense of seclusion in the entire poem. The merman is deeply hurt by Margaret's sudden choice of going back to the earthly life without saying a word leaving him and the children has left him in bewilderment which has caused the sense of loneliness setting aside the emotion of anger or sadness which in a way is a strong feeling to make a person lose control over one's mind or soul.

On the other hand, Mathew Arnold has portrayed Margaret's character too by showing her loneliness in the poem where she exits herself from the merman and starts living in the terrestrial life, on her own will. She returns back to the church and never goes back to the merman. She joins a loom over there and starts working without having any free time, moaning over the things she has left behind by expressing through “drop a tear”. The most characteristic work of the English poet and critic Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) deals with the difficulty of preserving personal values in a world drastically transformed by industrialism, science, and democracy.





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#### UNIT-V

#### The Windhover

-Gerald Manley Hopkins

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born at Stratford, Essex, on July 28, 1844, into a talented family which encouraged his artistic nature. In 1854 he entered Highgate School, where he distinguished himself as a gifted student and began to write Keatsian nature poetry. Although the English author and Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) wrote no more than 40 mature poems, he is regarded as one of the major English poets.

The windhover is a bird with the rare ability to hover in the air, essentially flying in place while it scans the ground in search of prey. The poet describes how he saw one of these birds in the midst of its hovering. The bird strikes the poet as the darling “minion” of the morning, the crown prince “dauphin” of the kingdom of daylight, drawn by the dappled colours of dawn.

It rides the air as if it were on horseback, moving with steady control like a rider whose hold on the rein is sure and firm. In the poet’s imagination, the windhover sits high and proud, tightly reined in, wings quivering and tense. Its motion is controlled and suspended in an ecstatic moment of concentrated energy. Then, in the next moment, the bird is off again, now like an ice skater balancing forces as he makes a turn. The bird, first matching the wind’s force in order to stay still, now “rebuff[s] the big wind” with its forward propulsion. At the same moment, the poet feels his own heart stir, or lurch forward out of “hiding,” as it were moved by “the achieve of, the mastery of” the bird’s performance.

The opening of the sestet serves as both a further elaboration on the bird’s movement and an injunction to the poet’s own heart. The “beauty,” “valour,” and “act” like “air,” “pride,” and “plume”, “here buckle.” “Buckle” is the verb here; it denotes either a fastening (like the buckling of a belt), a coming together of these different parts of a creature’s being, or an acquiescent collapse like the “buckling” of the knees, in which all parts subordinate themselves into some larger purpose or cause. In either case, a unification takes place. At the moment of this integration, a glorious fire issues forth, of the same order as the glory of Christ’s life and crucifixion, though not as grand.

The windhover spiritual striving is man’s most essential aspect. At moments when humans arrive at the fullness of their moral nature, they achieve something great. But that greatness necessarily pales in comparison with the ultimate act of self-sacrifice performed by Christ, which nevertheless serves as our model and standard for our own behaviour.



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#### The Hound of Heaven

**-Francis Thompson**

The poem "The Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thompson is one of the most loved and powerful poems of English literature. Noted for the vivid imagery in his poems, Thompson shares his own personal story in these poetic verses. Francis Thompson (1859–1907) lived a difficult life before he found hope in God. He had studied to be a priest, but never finished. He studied medicine, but flunked out of medical school. He joined the military, but was let go after one day. Eventually he became an opium addict in London. But he couldn't get away from God's persistent love for him. In the midst of his despair, someone who recognized his poetic gifts befriended and helped him write his experiences in verse.

"The Hound of Heaven" is a poem cantering on the pursuit of a sinner by a loving God. Written in a lofty, dignified style that expresses deep feelings, it is classified as an ode. It first appeared in *Poems*, a collection of Francis Thompson's works published in 1893.

In "The Hound of Heaven," the speaker runs from God in order to maintain the pleasures of his dissolute life. One can imagine the speaker's real-life counterpart, Thompson, doing the same as he pursued the groggy pleasures of his opium habit. Meanwhile, he contracted tuberculosis. Though he fought his drug habit, he eventually succumbed to TB, dying a month short of his forty-eighth birthday.

The speaker is running from God, as do many people caught up in the world. But God pursues him. Although aware of God's love for him, the speaker continues to run, believing that submitting to God means giving up worldly pleasures.

The speaker runs from place to place and even troubles "the gold gateway of the stars" in his effort to escape his pursuer. He pleads with dawn to be brief so that darkness may come to hide him. He asks the evening to cover him. But God still pursues him, when the speaker sees little children, he thinks they cheer him on. But he finds no haven with them. Instead, he hears the voice of his pursuer: God.

His days pass swiftly when he swings "the earth a trinket at my wrist," but eventually his youth stands "amid the dust o' the mounded years." The happiness he sought in the things of the world has eluded him.

A trumpet sounds from the battlements of eternity through the confounding mist of time. Then follows a loud voice: "Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliesme!" It asks the speaker whether he has earned the love of another human, then answers,

God explains that what He took from the speaker the pleasures that led him in the wrong direction was not intended to hurt him but to help him find his way to the right path. The happiness that you think you lost, God says, is not lost but "stored for thee at home." The speaker wonders whether the gloom he feels is nothing more than the shade cast by the hand of God reaching out to him. God tells him that the happiness he sought by running away was following him all the time.



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#### Next, Please

- Philip Larkin

“Next, Please” by Philip Larkin, a famous English poet, librarian, and writer, is a thought-provoking poetic piece. Published in 1951 in his collection, *The Last Deceived*, the poem criticizes the tendency of people to always look to the uncertain future while neglecting the glory of the present life. This greedy nature of mankind makes them experience the worst in life. Although the poem’s subject matter touches various hearts, yet it leaves its readers to desire more from the poet, a hallmark of Larkin’s poetry

Major Themes in “Next Please”: Criticism on man’s nature, death, and romanticizing the future are the major themes of the poem. Throughout the poem, the speaker tries to highlight that humans are so impatient. They run after the future that is actually approaching us with every passing day. Although we know that this expectancy and desire of wanting more direct us to an uncertain path, we love to waste our time, chasing false hopes and desires. Unfortunately, before the arrival of a once desired future, death comes and puts a stop to our lives. To clarify it, he discusses two types of people in this poem. One who waits for what the future brings for them and others who want to unfold the unseen future beforehand. However, those who show patience and live in the present remain satisfied at the end, and those who waste time remain disappointed, sad, and regretful.

“Next Please,” A Criticism on Man’s Nature: This poem is an irrefutable comment on our life full of hollow approaches. It begins with a satiric tone as the poet talks about the human propensity to look beyond the present. The objective is to gain more. Due to this expectancy, we waste a lot of time and deprive ourselves of the pleasures of the present glory. Although we know that the always approaching future will surely knock at our doorstep, yet we intend to unfold the hidden mysteries of time beforehand. To elevate the beauty of this poem, the poet compares the beauty of the future with a sparkling and dazzling ship – a ship that never docks. However, it deceives people and lets those bear false hopes in their hearts. Unfortunately, those who run after the future end up in depression and despair. By doing this ill practice, they get closer to the death that arrives before the arrival of their expected future.