

This e-Content is for

B.A. (English): Semester-5th (Third Year)

Classical Literature & History of English Literature (Paper-1)

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Unit – 1 Historical Background

- **The Epic-** An epic (eh-PIC) poem is a long, typically novel-length, poetic work. It is a type of narrative poem which tells a story, typically in third-person point of view, through the typical conventions of poetry. Epics tend to follow a hero who represents a perfect citizen of their culture. These stories are of cultural, historical, and religious importance.
- **Birth of Tragedy-** Aristotle is known to have attributed the origin of Greek drama to the worship of Dionysus and the singing of Dithyrambic Odes, which admittedly, plays a big part in Greek Tragedy in 5th century Athens. Most of the material was derived from the works of Homer and was common knowledge in the Greek communities. So powerful were the achievements of the three greatest Greek dramatists—Aeschylus (525–456 BCE), Sophocles (c.496–406 BCE), and Euripides (c.480–406 BCE)—that the word they first used for their plays survived and came to describe a literary genre that, in spite of many transformations and lapses, has proved its viability through 25 centuries.
- **Comedy and Tragedy in Classical Drama-**According to Aristotle (who speculates on the matter in his *Poetics*), ancient comedy originated with the *komos*, a curious and improbable spectacle in which a company of festive males apparently sang, danced, and cavorted rollickingly around the image of a large phallus. (If this theory is true, by the way, it gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "stand-up routine.") Accurate or not, the linking of the origins of comedy to some sort of phallic ritual or festival of mirth seems both plausible and appropriate.
- **The Athenian City State-** Athens is one of the world's oldest cities, with its recorded history spanning over 3,400 years, and its earliest human presence beginning somewhere between the 11th and 7th millennia BC. According to Greek mythology the city was named after Athena, the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, but modern scholars generally agree that goddess took her name after the city. Classical Athens was one of the most powerful city-states in ancient Greece. It was a centre for democracy, the arts, education and philosophy and was highly influential throughout the European continent, particularly in Ancient Rome.
- **Literary Cultures in Augustan Rome-** Augustan literature refers to the pieces of Latin literature that were written during the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 BC–AD 14), the first Roman emperor. In literary histories of the first part of the 20th century and earlier, Augustan literature was regarded along with that of the Late Republic as constituting the Golden Age of Latin literature, a period of stylistic classicism. Augustan literature produced the most widely read, influential, and enduring of Rome's poets. Lucan, Martial, Juvenal and Statius are their so-called "Silver Age" heirs. Although Vergil has sometimes been considered a "court poet", his *Aeneid*, the most important of the Latin epics, also permits complex readings on the source and meaning of Rome's power and the responsibilities of a good leader.

Unit-2 Prose

- **Plato-The Republic (Book VII)-** The Republic is about justice. In this dialogue, Plato undertakes to show what justice is and why it is in each person's best interest to be just, and he does so in both an ethical and a political context. This book begins as a seamless continuation of Book 6. To discover how enlightened or unenlightened human beings are, Socrates asks his listeners to imagine a group of people imprisoned in an underground cave. Starting with childhood, they have their necks and legs chained so they cannot turn their heads around. Behind them, a blazing fire throws shadowy images on the opposite wall of the cave. Thus the inhabitants of the cave see only shadows, which in their ignorance they assume to be the sole reality of their existence.

Unit-3 Poetry

- **Homer-The Illiad (Book-1)-** Like other ancient epic poems, *The Illiad* presents its subject clearly from the outset. Indeed, the poem names its focus in its opening word: *menin*, or “rage.” Specifically, *The Illiad* concerns itself with the rage of Achilles—how it begins, how it cripples the Achaean army, and how it finally becomes redirected toward the Trojans. Although the Trojan War as a whole figures prominently in the work, this larger conflict ultimately provides the text with background rather than subject matter. By the time Achilles and Agamemnon enter their quarrel, the Trojan War has been going on for nearly ten years. Achilles’ absence from battle, on the other hand, lasts only a matter of days, and the epic ends soon after his return. The poem describes neither the origins nor the end of the war that frames Achilles’ wrath. Instead, it scrutinizes the origins and the end of this wrath, thus narrowing the scope of the poem from a larger conflict between warring peoples to a smaller one between warring individuals.

Unit-4 Drama

- **Sophocles-Oedipus Rex-** **Oedipus Rex**, play by Sophocles, performed sometime between 430 and 426 BCE, that marks the summit of classical Greek drama’s formal achievement, known for its tight construction, mounting tension, and perfect use of the dramatic devices of recognition and discovery. It examines the story of Oedipus, who, in attempting to flee from his fate, rushes headlong to meet it. At the outset of the play, Oedipus is the beloved ruler of the city of Thebes, whose citizens have been stricken by a plague. Consulting the Delphic oracle, Oedipus is told that the plague will cease only when the murderer of Queen Jocasta’s first husband, King Laius, has been found and punished for his deed. Oedipus resolves to find Laius’s killer. His investigation turns into an obsessive reconstruction of his own hidden past when he discovers that the old man he killed when he first approached Thebes as a youth was none other than Laius. At the end, Jocasta hangs herself in shame, and the guilt-stricken Oedipus blinds himself.

Unit-5 English Literature from Chaucer to Renaissance

- **The Age of Chaucer-** The period between 1343 and 1450 is known as the age of Chaucer. The age of Chaucer is the first significant period in the literary history of England. It marks the beginning of new era of English Literature.
- **The Dark Ages-** The period of European history from about A.D. 500 to 1000 - the first 500 years of the Middle Ages. The Dark Ages often humorous or the dark ages : the period of time before things developed into their modern form. In the dark ages before computers, we often wrote our letters by hand.
- **Renaissance and Reformation-** The British Renaissance and Reformation, a period of England’s history marked by cultural renewal and religious turmoil as the country emerged from the medieval period. Scholars debate when the Renaissance in England began, with some pinpointing the establishment of the Tudor dynasty in 1485, while others suggest it didn’t begin until the mid-1500s. The end of the period is also subject to debate, although many scholars pinpoint the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603—which ushered in the Stuart kings Playwright William Shakespeare, who was active between 1589 and 1613, is Renaissance England’s most famous author, but there

were many important English authors working at this time, including fellow playwrights Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson and poets John Donne, John Milton, and Edmund Spenser. The English Reformation, a series of events in 16th-century England by which the Church of England broke away from the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church, had a profound impact on literature and language. One of the most significant influences was the promotion of the English vernacular.

- **Miracle and Morality Play-**

Mystery plays were dramatizations of both the Old and New Testament miracles. Another popular topic was Christ and his crucifixion and resurrection. A huge aspect of Mystery plays was that they neglected to utilize the three unities; place, time, and action.

Miracle Plays, also called Saint's Plays, were plays dedicated to the lives of various saints, rather than Biblical events. Just like Mystery Plays the Miracle play originated to enhance the liturgical services, and was later separated from the church. They were switched to the English language, became less and less religious, and were performed in town festivals in the thirteenth century. Most Miracle plays are performed about either St. Nicholas or the Virgin Mary. The plays about St. Mary regularly involve her in the role of "deus ex machina" (god from the machine), there would usually be a problem that seems unsolvable and the characters call on the Virgin Mary to help. They were performed in Plain-an-gwarry (Cornish Medieval amphitheatre)

- **University Wits-** The **University Wits** is a phrase used to name a group of late 16th-century English playwrights and pamphleteers who were educated at the universities (Oxford or Cambridge) and who became popular secular writers. Prominent members of this group were Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, and Thomas Nashe from Cambridge, and John Lyly, Thomas Lodge, and George Peele from Oxford. Thomas Kyd is also sometimes included in the group, though he was not from either of the aforementioned universities.

- **Elizabethan Poetry-**

The age of Shakespeare or the Elizabethan Age witnessed of the reddest periods in the history of England. The age is considered as "The Golden Age" in the history of English literature. It was the age of Queen Elizabethan 1st (1558-1603) comprising the half of 16th century. It was an age/era of social, political and religious peace. Men were now free to devote themselves to art and literatures. It was also an era of great adventures, travel and discovery which fired the imagination of the people and impelled them to creative activity. It is therefore called a "Golden Age of English Literature."

- **Metaphysical Poetry-**

The term **Metaphysical poets** was coined by the critic Samuel Johnson to describe a loose group of 17th-century English poets whose work was characterized by the inventive use of conceits, and by a greater emphasis on the spoken rather than lyrical quality of their verse. Once the Metaphysical style was established, however, it was occasionally adopted by other and especially younger poets to fit appropriate circumstances. Metaphysical poetry is a group of poems that share common characteristics: they are all highly intellectualized, use rather strange imagery, use frequent paradox and contain extremely complicated thought.

Unit-6 Seventeenth Century & Eighteenth Century

- **Neo-Classicism-** Neoclassicism was born in Rome, largely due to the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann during the rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Its popularity expanded throughout Europe as a generation of European art students finished their Grand Tour and returned from Italy to their home countries with newly rediscovered Greco-Roman ideals. The main Neoclassical movement coincided with the 18th-century Age of Enlightenment, and continued into the early 19th century, eventually competing with Romanticism. In architecture, the style endured throughout the 19th, 20th, and into the 21st century.
- **Growth of the Novel-** A novel (from French "nouvelle" and Italian "novella," which mean new) is an extended, generally fictional narrative in prose. Until the 18th century, the word

referred specifically to short fictions of love and intrigue as opposed to romances, which were epic-length works about love and adventure. During the 18th century, the novel adopted features of the old romance and became one of the major literary genres. Novels as we know them began in England in the early 1700s. The rise of the novel coincides with the rise of the middle classes in Western Europe. Profound social and economic changes brought the novel into popular prominence.

- **Precursors of Romanticism-**

The poets of this period who are generally regarded the precursors or forerunners of Romanticism are Cowper and Crabbe, Thomson and Collins, Gray and Goldsmith, Chesterton and Macpherson and Burns and Blake. William Cowper's (1731-1800) romanticism consists in his direct and realistic look-out of life. Blake's work influenced Romantic poets with themes of good and evil, heaven and hell, knowledge and innocence, and external reality versus inner.

- **French Revolution-** The French Revolution came, bringing with it the promise of a brighter day, the promise of regenerated man and regenerated earth. It was hailed with joy and acclamation by the oppressed, by the ardent lovers of humanity, by the poets, whose task it is to voice the human spirit. William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley all shared the same view of the French Revolution as it being the beginning of a change in the current ways of society and helping to improve the lives of the oppressed. As the French Revolution changed the lives of virtually everyone in the nation and even continent because of its drastic and immediate shift in social reformation, it greatly influenced many writers at the time.

- **Growth of Romantic Literature**

The Romantic Movement in English literature of the early 19th century has its roots in 18th-century poetry, the Gothic novel and the novel of sensibility. This includes the pre-Romantic graveyard poets from the 1740s, whose works are characterized by gloomy meditations on mortality, "skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms". These concepts are often considered precursors of the Gothic genre. Gothic poets include Thomas Gray (1716–71), whose *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) is "the best known product of this kind of sensibility. Byron, Keats and Percy Shelley all wrote for the stage, but with little success in England, with Shelley's *The Cenci* perhaps the best work produced, though that was not played in a public theatre in England until a century after his death.

Unit-7 The Romantic Era 7 Nineteenth Century

- **Growth of Victorian Literature** **Victorian literature** is English literature during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901). The 19th century is considered by some to be the Golden Age of English Literature, especially for British novels. It was in the Victorian era that the novel became the leading literary genre in English. English writing from this era reflects the major transformations in most aspects of English life, from scientific, economic, and technological advances to changes in class structures and the role of religion in society. Famous novelists from this period include Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, the three Bronte sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), Thomas Hardy, and Rudyard Kipling.
- **Pre Raphaelite Poetry-** Pre-Raphaelite poetry, originating in the mid-19th century as part of the wider Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood movement, sought to revive the spirit of medieval art and literature, emphasizing a return to nature, beauty, and spiritual symbolism. Poets associated with this movement, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, and Algernon Charles Swinburne, drew inspiration from medieval themes, classical myths, and religious symbolism to create a distinctive poetic style.
- **Naughty Nineties-** English literature of the last decade of 19th century is termed as Naughty Nineties. Because it was a revolt against the tendencies of early decades of queen Victoria. The Victorian era achieved much scientific knowledge and developed incomes of industry trades and commerce. But at the end of the era a new revolt arose. The publications of two magazines

“Yellow Book” and “The Savoy” gave expression to the revolt-against Victorian ideas. The revolt of the nineties has three aspects. Firstly, they emphasized the old idea of liberty, equality and fraternity. Secondly, they worship power rather than beauty. Thirdly, they challenged the values of art and life and criticize the idea of Victorian compromise.

Unit-8 The Twentieth Century

- **Twentieth Century British Poetry-** *Twentieth-Century English Poetry* contains the poetry of over 280 poets from 1900 to the present day, including W.B. Yeats, Rudyard Kipling, Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, A.E. Housman, John Betjeman, Fleur Adcock, Tony Harrison, Benjamin Zephaniah, Isaac Rosenberg, D.H. Lawrence and Carol Ann Duffy and many others from the lists of Carcanet, Enitharmon, Anvil Press, Bloodaxe Books and other poetry publishers. It also incorporates works by poets such as Sylvia Plath, T.S. Eliot, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Louis MacNeice and Siegfried Sassoon from *The Faber Poetry Library*. Full details of texts included in the collection are given in the bibliography.
- **Twentieth Century Novel- Psychological Novel-** A psychological novel, also called psychological realism, is a work of prose fiction which places more than the usual amount of emphasis on interior characterization, and on the motives, circumstances, and internal action which springs from, and develops, external action. The psychological novel can be called a novel of the “inner man”, so to say. Psychoanalysis began to appear with the late Victorian writers.
- **The Stream of Consciousness Novel-** The stream of consciousness is one of the distinguishing features of a Psychological Novel. It is an important aspect of a Psychological Novel. The term “stream of consciousness” was coined by the American philosopher and psychologist, William James. The stream of consciousness technique has been widely used by many famous 20th century English and American novelists. It is used by James Joyce in his novel *Ulysses*. It is employed in nearly all of Virginia Woolf’s novels, namely; *To the lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Waves*, *Jacob’s Room* and *Between the Acts*.
- **Twentieth Century Drama-** *Twentieth-Century Drama* is a collection of published plays throughout the English-speaking world from the 1890s to the present. It contains the work of authors from North America and Canada, Britain and Ireland, India, Africa, Australia and the Caribbean. Subject categories include: African American drama, American ethnic theatre traditions, off-Broadway, off-off-Broadway, popular successes, women playwrights, The complete works of Bernard Shaw, Irish Theatre, "1956 revolution" at London's Royal Court Theatre, The Royal Court's first era of avant-garde prominence, political plays, historical dramas, alternative and community theatre, global and postcolonial theatre in English, Innovative re-readings of the classics.
- **Drama of Ideas-** *Drama of Ideas*” is a theatrical genre that strongly emphasises the exploration and discussion of complex philosophical, political, or social ideas. This form of drama prioritizes dialogue and exchanging ideas over action or character development. The playwright uses the stage to present and examine intellectual arguments.
- **Epic Theatre-** Epic theatre is distinct from other forms of theatre, particularly the early naturalistic approach and later "psychological realism" developed by Konstantin Stanislavski. Like Stanislavski, Brecht disliked the shallow spectacle, manipulative plots, and heightened emotion of melodrama; but where Stanislavski attempted to engender real human behaviour in acting through the techniques of Stanislavski's system and to absorb the audience completely in the fictional world of the play, Brecht saw this type of theatre as escapist.