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Department of Distance Education

American Literature
E-204

Notes

M. A. English – Part 2

INTRODUCTION

The scope of the Distance Education System is unlimited. It has opened avenues of higher education for those who had been denied the opportunity. In the present era when constant updating is the need of the hour, Distance Education is doing wonders with the fast developing communication technology. Although the students are at distance, a complete learning experience is provided to them through the Self Learning Material, developed by our expert faculty.

We are very happy to hand over to you learning material of M.A. - English for Part II. This year our thrust areas are - 1. Literary contribution of a great British author William Shakespeare as a special author 2. Contribution of American authors in modern times, 3. Selective English literature of a few Indian authors and 4. A very interesting, but analytical field of Literary Theory and Criticism.

We are sure that you will find this learning material useful as a base for your studies and as a guideline from the examination point of view, too. More over we hope that this material would arouse in you interest for further reading of American and Indian literature, in writings of William Shakespeare other than the ones prescribed in the syllabus and would develop in you a critical approach towards literature.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude towards Hon'ble Vice-chancellor Dr. Deepak Tilak, Dean - Faculty of Distance Education Shri. Ratnakar Chandekar and the Registrar Dr. Umesh Keskar for encouragement, support and guidance provided by them.

We are thankful to Prof. / Dr. Rajashri Kulkarni for preparation of this study material.

Wish you all the best!

Prof. Neelima Mehta
Head, Faculty of Distance Education

About the Subject

Though American literature is comparatively new, it is not only prolific, but also has variety in form and genre. The works prescribed for study include poetry, drama, as well as the novel, and have been written in the period from the early nineteenth century, to the sixties in the twentieth century. Though the works display the trends of their respective times, the artists retain their distinct individuality. An attempt is made to introduce the student to these works without imposing any opinion or criticism of the work. The student should regard this only as a guideline which will indicate the direction of study. Critical works are an essential part of study, but it is very important to remember that a close study of the text is indispensable to the student of literature.

- Author -

American Literature

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CHAPTER I

ROBERT FROST

Poems : 1. Mending Wall

2. Birches

3. Home Burial

4. The Gift Outright

5. Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost was born in 1874, in San Francisco, California. His father was a native of New England, and his mother was a Scots woman, an emigrant from Edinburgh. His father had developed a dislike for New England and moved to seek his fortune in San Francisco. When he died, he left in his will the request that his remains be taken back to New England for burial. Thus it happened that Robert crossed the continent with his mother and younger brother. Since funds were not available for the return trip to California, the widow and her children settled in the village of Salem, New Hampshire. After his schooling, he enrolled at Dartmouth College, but soon left. During the next few years, seemingly without ambition, he tried his hand at various ways of living, like working in mills, newspaper reporting, and teaching. Meanwhile, his fondness for writing poetry occupied his leisure hours. After his marriage to Elinor White in 1895, he tried his hand at teaching, but could not settle down in it. Frequent illness, and failure in attempts at the business of poultry farming, made him decide to go to Buckinghamshire, England, and risk everything on poetry. The gamble was very successful. His first book of lyrics, A Boy's Will (1913), and his book of dramatic dialogues, North of Boston (1914), were a great success, but being extremely shy, he avoided public attention. But due to economic reasons, he could not long refuse invitations to give public lectures and readings. He became one of the first American poets to make arrangements with various institutions to live on campus as poet-in-residence, for a few months or years. At the same time, Frost managed to indulge in his liking for the life of a farmer, particularly during vacation months. The poems in Mountain Interval (1916) show a combination of lyric vision and narrative contemplation along with

poetic subtlety and versatility. New Hampshire (1923) is a venture into the humorous, witty, relaxed world of gentle social satire. West-running Brook (1928) contains some of his best lyrics. Though his volumes, A Further Range (1936), A Witness Tree (1942), and Steeple Bush (1947), contain some excellent lyrics, they have unimpressive editorials which do not add to Frost's stature. In 1940, he bought a two-acre plot of land in Florida, where he set up two small cottages amidst citrus trees, indicating his feeling for the soil and for living things that remained a passion with him throughout his life. Robert Frost died in 1963, from the after-effects of an operation for cancer.

Frost's "Mending Wall" is the opening poem of his North of Boston. It is a poem in which the brief narrative represents two opposed attitudes towards tradition. The poet imaginatively challenges the literal and therefore meaningless rituals, symbolized by repairing a wall at a point where there is no need for a wall. While the opposed views of the two neighbours are presented with playful seriousness as foils, the conclusion resolves the conflict in favour of the poet's view, as he shows the neighbour's blindness through dramatic dialogues. The wall is not only a physical wall, but also a mental one and the gaps in it are the possible meetings of the minds of the two people. There are many references to the cycle of the seasons in nature, and spring embodies warmth and the poet's wish for a close and friendly relationship, while winter represents cold reserve. "Birches" first appeared in Mountain Interval and is a familiar favourite with readers. It is beautifully varied in tone and rhythm and begins by evoking the image of birch trees and the farm youth swinging up and down against the background of a dark wooded landscape, recalling the childhood of the poet. The swinging of the boy is the movement of the imagination away from the dark wood and into freedom, and by the end of the poem a balance is restored between imagination and common sense reality.

As the title suggests, "Home Burial" is a narrative about the death of a child – the first child of a couple on a New England farm, and about how they both handle grief in their own way. The wife gazes from the window at the child's mound which is not yet marked with a stone and refuses her husband's concern for her sorrow. Her continued withdrawal and insistence that he cannot say the right thing, makes him reflect that she does not want to discuss her troubles with him. The woman's

angry reticence and rejection also implies that she has repulsed his sexual advances and that their marriage is cold and empty. Frost's well-known poem, "The Gift Outright" was read by him at the inauguration ceremony of President John F. Kennedy. He talks as the spokesperson of the Americans to express his deep love for his land and the need to give themselves "outright" to their country. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" records a moment of pure delight in mid-winter, which is a transitory moment of contemplation of the beauty of snow-covered woods before he must go on with his duties. The lyric is an interior monologue, and the first line establishes the tone of a person musing quietly to himself on the situation before him. He transforms an apparently commonplace scene into something deeply convincing, and again suggests that there is the world of the woods, which offers perfect quiet and solitude, which exists side by side with the world of people and social obligations.

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CHAPTER II

WALLACE STEVENS

- Poems :
1. **Of Modern Poetry**
 2. **Sunday Morning.**
 3. **The Idea of Order at Key West**
 4. **The World as Meditation**
 5. **Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Bird**

Wallace Stevens was born in Pennsylvania in 1879. His father was a lawyer who enjoyed writing in his spare time, and his mother was of Dutch origin. He went to Harvard, but left without a degree in 1900, and joined the New York law school. He was admitted to the bar in 1904, and in 1916 joined the legal department of Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, of which, in 1924, he became vice president. While in New York, he became acquainted with Marianne Moore, E.E. Cummings and Carlos Williams. Throughout his later life, Stevens managed to lead a double life: to be at once a poet, a lawyer, a man of letters and a family man. His collections, Harmonium (1923), Idea of Order (1936), The Man with the Blue Guitar (1937), and Parts of a World (1942), and Transport to Summer (1947), attracted much notice, and Auroras of Autumn won him the Bollingen prize in poetry. His Collected Poems were published in 1954, and he won the Pulitzer prize and the National Book Award in 1955.

Wallace Stevens was an insurance man and a poet and he scrupulously kept both his sides apart. He was very much an American, and though he had rather conservative views in politics, he was quite daring and innovative in poetry.

Critics have praised his "Sunday Morning" for its grandeur of rhetoric and complexity of ideas. The poem is a statement of personal belief and conducts a meditation through the persona of a woman about the choice between the vision of

paradise proposed by the Christian faith and the vision of an earthly paradise. In “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”, the blackbird is the focus which brings out meaning from the context. The interdependence of meaning and context, and the relationship between imagination and reality is highlighted. His poems show great variety in form and experimentation in metre.

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CHAPTER III

EMILY DICKINSON

- Poems :**
- 1. I Tasted Liquor Never Brewed**
 - 2. After Great Pain a Formal Feeling**
 - 3. I Died for Beauty**
 - 4. I Heard a Fly Buzz**
 - 5. A Narrow Fellow in the Grass**

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1830., where she lived in their family house until her death from Bright's disease in 1886. Her parents belonged to a well-known and respected family, and whatever social and intellectual life was possible then, was available to her. But she chose not to avail herself of it, and preferred retirement from society, which was carried to extreme and bewildering heights. She concealed her mind and her persona from all but a very few friends, and it was with great difficulty that she was persuaded to publish three or four poems during her lifetime. It was suggested that this seclusion was the result of a disappointed love affair, or that it was caused by a mental breakdown. Feminists interpreted this not as a retreat but as a strategy so that her remarkable capacity to live intensely would not be diluted through contact with the external world. Whatever the reasons for her seclusion, Dickinson made a conscious choice and did not see it as a limitation of her activities. Her sense of herself as a complete and self-sufficient world is a prominent feature of her poems. Many of her poems are supposed to have been written after she experienced a psychic catastrophe. Yet none of them are the products of a distraught mind – they are the creations of well-controlled artistry.

Dickinson's "I Tasted Liquor Never Brewed" is a self-exploratory poem which tries to distinguish between subtle internal differences within the mind itself. "After Great Pain a Formal Feeling" describes a state of mind, which, though vaguely

related to the overall ceremony of a funeral, shows these as all external manifestations enacted in a trance as though they were some part of a meaningless rite. Dickinson's "I Died for Beauty" is one of her best-known poems on the theme of death, as also her "I Heard a Fly Buzz". In the latter poem, she imagines her own death-bed scene, and ironically says that all that she can hear in the stillness of the room is the buzz of the fly. Among her lyrics on the natural world, "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass", which is about the snake, is one of the best. It displays her ability to capture in a few phrases, the essence of the creature she describes.

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CHAPTER IV

SYLVIA PLATH

- Poems :**
- 1. Daddy**
 - 2. Lady Lazarus**
 - 3. Tulips**
 - 4. Love Letter**
 - 5. Ariel**

Sylvia Plath was born in Boston, in 1932, and the family moved to Massachusetts, where she attended public school. In 1940, her father died due to complications after a leg amputation. For Sylvia, the death came to signify a traumatic disturbance of her childhood experience. She often suffered from depression, which she had inherited from her father's family, and had to undergo treatment for it. She began writing poems and short stories, for which she won many contests and prizes. She won a scholarship and began attending Smith College, from where she graduated in 1955, and went to Cambridge on a Fullbright scholarship. In 1956 she met Ted Hughes and married him. They came to America, but went back to England, where they began to live in Devon. Their marriage was in trouble, and they separated in 1962, and Sylvia began to live in London with her two children. She went into depression and committed suicide in 1963.

Plath's poems have a distinctly autobiographical element in them. They reveal her restlessness and frustrations at unfulfilled love and broken relationships. "Daddy", "Lady Lazarus", and "Ariel" are confessional in tone and display the scars of her childhood trauma. "Tulips" and "Love Letter" are also autobiographical in tone and reveal her innermost feelings and insecurities. Her poems always show mastery over metre and form.

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CHAPTER V

EUGENE O'NEILL : DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS

Eugene O'Neill : his life and work

Eugene O'Neill was born in 1888 in New York. His parents were devout Catholics, and his father James O'Neill was an actor-manager. The family travelled round the country with James O'Neill, but their home was unsettled in more ways than this. None of them were in good health, the father drank heavily and the mother took drugs. His education at Princeton University was cut short in 1906, when he was suspended before the final examination. In 1909, he married Katherine Jenkins, and was divorced in 1912. He lived a dissolute life, drinking and gambling, until his illness during the same year. In 1918 he married Agnes Boulton, and they had two children. In 1928, after his divorce, he married his third wife, Charlotte Monterary, an actress with whom he lived happily until his death in 1957.

It was during his months of convalescence, around 1912, that he wrote the first short plays, eleven of which were published together. His plays, The Emperor Jones (1920), The Hairy Ape (1922), All God's Chillun Get Wings (1923), were intellectual and stylistic experiments. In Desire Under the Elms (1924), he used a simple, naturalistic form to achieve the highest imaginative peak of his career. His next play, The Great God Brown (1928), is an allegory between the artist and the materialism of society, which O'Neill expresses through the use of masks that the characters take on and off as the situation requires. Lazarus Laughed and Marco Williams (both 1928), were purely intellectual in concept and demanded extravagant productions. Strange Interlude (1928) is three times the length of a normal play, chiefly because the characters speak their thoughts as well as their words. His next attempt, Mourning Becomes Electra (1931), was a trilogy – his version of the Greek story of Orestes. His Days Without End and Ah, Wilderness! (both 1934), are not particularly interesting. O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh appeared in 1946, is naturalistic, projects the fears and weaknesses of man, and the futility of human existence. Among his remaining plays, the only one of any significance is

Long Day's Journey Into Night (1940-41), in which he presents multiple aspects of personality and relationships within the circle of the family.

Desire Under the Elms : A Summary

Desire Under the Elms is a story of greed on a New England farm in the middle of the last century. The farmer, Old Cabot, married his second wife twenty-five years ago purely in order to get the title-deeds of the farm into their own hands. Their son, Eben, knows this and also believes that his father killed his mother by overworking her. Not surprisingly he hates his father and is determined to get possession of the farm himself as soon as possible. Then Old Cabot marries a third wife, Abbie – partly to spite Eben. Abbie is only a few years older than Eben and now her greed is added to the others'. She makes Old Cabot promise that if she bears him a son he will leave the farm to him entirely, cutting Eben out of his will. She then sets about seducing Eben, hoping to have a son by him and to pass it off as Old Cabot's. At this point the tight mesh of ambition turns to one of passion, because Abbie is also genuinely attracted to Eben. Her scheming ends in a deep and genuine love for him. He feels the same for her and is content to comply in the pretence that his newly born son is really his father's, until one day his father gloatingly tells him of the promise which Abbie made him give. Abbie, in a mad attempt to prove her love for Eben by removing the object of her original plot, now kills her baby. Eben doubly maddened by this, fetches the sheriff to her and then suddenly, at the last minute, maintains that he killed the child with her. Old Cabot is left alone on his farm as the sheriff takes them off. And the sheriff's last words, looking around as they leave, are: "It's a jimdandy farm, no denyin'. Wish I owned it."

The stark simplicity of this play, both in the writing and in the strict concentration on the theme, raises a plot that could have become melodrama into tragedy. But the play also contains a sense of doom which, without ever seeming extraneous, does help to give it a classical quality. Eben's mother, for example, haunts the play like a figure of ill-omen because of Eben's conviction that his father killed her. So his father's harsh treatment of her looms like a crime in the past, awaiting expiation: she becomes the Thyestes or the King Hamlet of the plot. Fate

too is easily suggested by the superstitions of these country people. Old Cabot is convinced for two reasons that it is his destiny to stay on this bleak farm. First, he left it as a young man for richer land out West and yet, when he was already prospering there, something about New England pulled him back to the harder life. And secondly, at the end of the play and after the disaster, when again he plans to leave, he finds that his sons (he also had two by his first wife) have long since taken the horde of money which he had hidden under a floorboard. This is enough to convince him that it is God's will that he should stay where he is and that God sent him evil grasping sons so that His will should be effected. As with the oracle in Greek tragedy, all that matters is that the characters involved believe it. So O'Neill's use of superstitions fatalism becomes a much more effective modern version of Fate than any specific Greek echoes or freaks of physiognomy can be.

In Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill made a temporary break with his intellectual and stylistic experiments. Using a simple naturalistic form he achieved in this play the highest imaginative peak of his career. His other plays of a comparable stature were all direct and painful distillations of his own experience, and they are at their best when they come nearest in every detail to that experience. Desire Under the Elms is pure imaginative creation, and the psychological patterns present in the play are an integral part of the dramatic situation.

Some Observations on the play

Desire Under The Elms is a tale of ancient desire and violence structured around many centres of meaning. All the conflicts in the play arise from the self-centred, exploitative desires of the characters ambushing each other in a game of outwitting each other. Ephraim Cabot, the synoptic centre of all these desires of greed, lust, authority and acquisitiveness, stalks over his New England farm like a giant under whose power the rest of the characters look very small. His real rival is his dead wife, demanding the restitution of an ancient wrong, unleashing the invisible fury of her vengeful, violated maternity. She is symbolized by the elm trees described at the outset of the play. She is symbolized by the elm trees described at the outset of the play.

If the elms represent growth and fecundity, the rocky soil of the farm and the stone fences built by Ephraim, stand for man-made values, which seem to thwart the free, aspiring spontaneity of the life-force. As Peter complains, the father has slaved everybody to death so that the farm may live and yield. Thus both the living and the dead, in combat of their evenly matched powers, bring remote, explosive forces out of the darker regions of the racial unconscious to converge on their helpless forbears. Ephraim, the patriarch of the primitive kind, is intensely feared and hated by his sons, who struggle against his omnipotent will and desire to steal his farm, his mistresses, his gold, in short, everything that belongs to him. Simeon and Peter, the two elder sons, are somewhat unequal to the task, and lacking logistic subtlety, try to achieve a symbolic slaying of the father by themselves fleeing to California. But Eben, wily like his father, whom he resembles physically, too, and, protected by the guardian spirit of his mother, combines the two primal lusts of possessiveness and revenge into an effective strategy for the usurpation of Ephraim.

The themes of possession and revenge are unfilled in Eben's quest for a harmonious adult life. He is the victim of an Oedipus complex, because he is caught between the father's desire to possess and the mother's desire for revenge. The incest with his step-mother is an outlet for this double fulfillment, as well as a means of normalizing his psychic urges. Abbie's marriage to Ephraim is in itself the mother's first act of revenge, because she marries Ephraim for exactly the same reason as he had married Eben's mother - the possession of the farm. Furthermore, the mother obtains her natural fulfillment of sex through the adultery of Abbie, her symbolic incarnation. For the lovers themselves, their coming together results in a self-knowledge, and a transfiguration of their initial desires. Eben's desire for revenge, and Abbie's for the farm, change concomitantly into a desire for each other. By killing her child, Abbie proves that her lust has become love; and, by unconsciously sharing her crime, Eben achieves the murder of the primordial father, whose symbolic surrogate the child really is. Their mutual sacrifice constitutes a consecration of selfhood, and a liberation from the dragons of adolescence, so that they can both now grow freely into a meaningful adulthood.

The mother and son 'belong' to each other, as well as the lovers, because the experience of growth, once feared, is now accepted through an edification of desire. A mark of their acceptance of adult life is that they are free from guilt feelings. But

the world belongs to Ephraim. His identification with the universe is aided, rather than destroyed by his pride. He remains unvanquished, if not victorious, because he is severe, immutable and lonely, the very centre of a perpetual, indestructible power. In Ephraim, O'Neill has modernized the portrait of the Puritan, in that he has traced the ambiguities of Puritan spirituality and Puritan sensuality alike. Ironically enough, the most positive quality of power is essentially negative, and consists in the denial of power, and possibly life, to others. A similar truth says that the Puritan is one who fears that someone somewhere might be happy. Ephraim's spirituality is in fact reduced purely to the level of passion. He finds himself more at home among his cows and horses and fowls than among men. Ephraim is also a prisoner of the farm and the homestead, over which the sinister serenity of the dead wife's motherhood broods, torturing him with a tyrannical love that makes him guilty. The father and mother, interlocked in a continual contest for power and authority, have no escape from each other. They prevail as opposites, for they are the archetypes into which all life is divided. Man is torn between the father's love for power and the mother's power of love. This duality of primal nature is the moral and psychological conditioning of man's being, an insight which O'Neill reinforces in Desire Under the Elms by integrating into a single complex, Puritanism, naturalism, primitivism and Freudianism. The realism of the play is in fact an artistic simplicity in depth striving towards a wider universality of vision. The characters in Desire Under The Elms accept with ascetic abandon their 'heroic knowledge' of the human condition, the mystic undercurrents of which are controlled by purely naturalistic symbols which the elm sheds its mythic shades.

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CHAPTER VI

ARTHUR MILLER : A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Arthur Miller : his life and work

Arthur Miller was born in Manhattan in 1917 in a conventional, well-to-do Jewish family. As a boy, he was a good athlete, interested in sports, and decidedly nonintellectual by nature. When he was thirteen, economic conditions forced his father to give up his business and to move the family to a small house in Brooklyn. During the next ten years, he worked as a delivery boy for a bakery, a dishwasher, a waiter, a warehouse clerk, a truck driver, a factory labourer, a singer at a local radio station, and a writer of over thirty radio plays. All this experience left him with a great respect for hard work. After his schooling, Miller began reading works of Shakespeare, Brecht, Shaw, O'Neill, Ibsen and others and was deeply influenced by them. In 1934, Miller enrolled in journalism in the University of Michigan, and eighteen months later, began writing plays. His first play, Honors at Dawn, a piece written in four days, won the Avery Hopwood Award, and gave him great confidence in his ability to write plays. During the next few years, he wrote several radio plays, most of which were very successful. His No Villain (1937), They Too Arise (1938), and The Man Who Had All The Luck (1944), were all well-acknowledged by contemporary critics. Miller's All My Sons (1947) won the New York Drama Critics Circle award, and he was given the Pulitzer Prize for his Death of a Salesman (1949) and the Antoinette Perry Award for The Crucible (1953). Miller's A View from the Bridge was first a Broadway production, which he later turned into a full-length play.

His most successful plays are carefully planned with powerful characters and usually depict how the pressures of society distort and destroy human relationships. All My Sons, is a story of guilt from the past permeating and destroying the present, and central to it is the theme of betrayal. Joe Keller, an industrialist, has committed the double crime of firstly selling the government a batch of faulty cylinder heads during the war, which cause the death of twenty-one pilots; and later laying the

blame on his innocent manager, Deever, who has to serve a prison sentence. The emotional tangles of the situation are concentrated by the fact that the Keller and Deever families have always been close friends: young Chris Keller and Ann Deever are even in love. So the parallels and contrasts provide frequent dramatic opportunities. In Death of a Salesman, the whole life of the Loman family is dominated by Willy Loman's idea of "success", which he sees as a ladder leading from a brilliant athletic career at school to a good job and a life surrounded by scores of influential friends and admiring neighbours. The play is an admirable blend of pathos and satire, and there has been much argument about whether or not it is a tragedy. A glance at Miller's works shows that his output has been small but it has maintained a very high standard, and that he is a dramatist of passion, conviction and intelligence.

A View from the Bridge : A Summary

Miller's characters function more intelligibly as fathers, sons, husbands, or wives in a family setting than as citizens in society. Of course, the protagonist of A View from the Bridge acts in a specific social milieu that conditions his sense of guilt and his sense of dignity. Yet for Eddie Carbone guilt and dignity derive from an intimate attachment: his fatherly concern for his niece is obsessive. For the first time, in this play sexual desire and jealousy become the dominant components of reality. Eddie's fervent insistence on his niece's loyalty carries with it an implication of physical attraction. Eddie refuses to accept such an implication and involuntarily bears his emotional secrets with his words and actions. From the beginning of the play his extreme possessiveness suggests his strength of a passion he will not acknowledge. The thought that Catherine could be contaminated by the world's wickedness or subjected to another man's authority is intolerable to him. Morbidly sensitive about her claim to adulthood, he dislikes her short skirts, her clacking high heels, her wavy walk, her chats with Louis, and her plan to get a job. Though she is almost eighteen, he insists that she is a baby. But Catherine has grown up and her feminine maturity represents a potential threat to the innocent, affectionate rapport between uncle and niece. Beatrice, Eddie's wife, detects this threat. She feels obliged to warn the naïve girl not to throw herself at him as if she was twelve years old or appear in front of him when she is half dressed. Alfieri, a

lawyer refers more directly to Eddie's motives. Eddie's agitated responses to such statements attest to his unwillingness to admit the presence of this motive.

Miller was particularly interested in the destructiveness of his hidden but irresistible passion. The rivalry in the situation rises upon the entrance of Rodolpho and Marco, brothers who have illegally entered the United States from Sicily. At first Rodolpho dominates the conversation and impresses Catherine with his exuberant charm. Eddie had addressed his first remarks mainly to Marco. But he is soon eclipsed by his brother and speaks progressively fewer lines. This reticence, together with the defensive nature of his occasional comments, subtly indicates his growing uneasiness and resentment. Later, Eddie's responses reveal the death of his turmoil. He insists that Rodolpho is an irresponsible thief, who breaks into a home and wants to marry Catherine only to obtain American citizenship. This accusation, however inaccurate, is not nearly so far-fetched as the next, that the blond Rodolpho must be a homosexual as well as a thief. Eddie entangles himself in his delusion and tries to prove it to his niece by kissing Rodolpho before her. The grossness of this act and the irrationality of his accusations, further alienates Catherine and indicates the intensity of his desperation. Shame and hopelessness drive Eddie to a still more irrational deed, seeking to protect his family's integrity, he destroys it. He violates the code of honour of his social world by betraying his brothers, and unintentionally, the relatives of a friend, to the immigration authorities. Disgraced now both in his neighbourhood and his home, he is delivered from humiliation by death.

A View from the Bridge may be seen as a psychological study that shows the self-destructiveness of an inflexible, passionate individual, but Miller hoped to enlarge his scope beyond that of psychological analysis. Eddie's behaviour is seen to be idiosyncratic, erratic and shameful, and he is as fanatic and as uncompromising as a Greek tragic hero. There is a vendetta situation in which Marco avenges Eddie's disloyalty, and Eddie in turn feels injured by Marco's insults. Miller explains that he introduced the feud idea to broaden the ethical frame of reference and to highlight the interior dilemma of family loyalty. Miller's play seems an attempt to utilize the austere technique of Sophocles in a modern setting.

The play is strongly effective on stage, yet except in the broadest sense as a story of a man driven by a secret passion it has lesser relevance than the story of Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman. Like Willy, Eddie does not fully understand or at least admit the force that is destroying him, and is only concerned with saving his name. He is destroyed by his need to secure a place in society. Eddie is proved morally wrong for denouncing the illegal immigration. In the play, Miller presents the characteristics of actual speech as when he shows Rodolpho, the young Italian talking in idiosyncratic English. Miller is also very good at building up warmth in his characters, as in the case of Catherine.

Some observations on the play

A View from the Bridge is the story of a New York longshoreman, Eddie Carbone, and of his jealous love for his niece and ward, Catherine. He is sheltering two Italian immigrants, relations of his wife, who have entered the country illegally. Rodolpho, the younger of them, and Catherine fall in love. Eddie fights their engagement with everything he can think of. He tries to prove that Rodolpho is a homosexual, and he argues that he wants an American wife only for the sake of an American passport. He refuses to admit the real reason for his opposition – that he himself loves the girl. Finally he tips off the police about the immigrants. When Marco, the older one, is arrested, he spits in Eddie's face and accuses him of betraying them. Eddie calls him a liar, demands an apology, fights him and is killed.

The power of the play is in the wild power of Eddie himself. He is a man possessed, a man who refuses to 'settle for half', and he reveals yet another recurrent theme of Miller's – that of the tragic force of obsession. In his Preface to his Collected Plays, Miller used precisely the same phrase of Willy Loman, that of refusing to 'settle for half', and also said that if he wrote The Cubicle he would make the judge's obsession with his holy and wholly evil task much more central.

A View from The Bridge contains all the familiar themes too – of loyalty, of betrayal, and of the need for a name, for public esteem. Eddie, the central figure, is a magnificent animal. The other characters, too, are very realistic and represent different aspects of modern man.

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CHAPTER VII

EDWARD ALBEE : WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

Edward Albee : his life and work

Edward Albee was born in 1928. He was abandoned at birth by his natural parents, and a week later, he was adopted by Reed Albee, a millionaire, whose wealth came from a chain of theatres started by his father. The mixed blessings of his adoption were insufficient to compensate for his abandonment: feelings of resentment and anger formed his maturing mind and personality. He lived in a privileged but eccentric milieu (Reed Albee had married a woman twenty years younger and a foot taller than himself), and therefore lacked a sense of belonging. The only person he could connect with, was Mrs. Albee's mother because he felt that she was a fellow outsider like him. The alienation and conflict that he experienced in his early years are a part of his writing. His poor grades and general performance caused his expulsion from several schools, until he joined Choate School, where he stayed until he was eighteen, when he left for the university. He attended three universities in all, but could not continue in any of them, and had left by the time he was nineteen. Throughout his school and university years, he experimented with writing, particularly poetry. The next few years, when he left home to live in New York and tried his hand at odd jobs, were necessary because this was a period of exploration and experiment. He came into contact with literary figures like W. H. Auden and Thornton Wilder, who gave him useful advice and urged him to turn to drama. His family connections with the theatrical milieu and early experiments in writing plays stood him in good stead.

His first play was The Zoo Story (1958), and tells of an encounter on a park bench between a young beatnik called Jerry and a typical middle-class American called Peter. The play marks an important stage in Albee's development of technique. His dependence on monologue to reveal off-stage action is hazardous but generally considered a success. These long narratives of off-stage action were later

to be a distinctive feature of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and are crucial to the play's power of conviction. His The Death of Bessie Smith concerns an incident in which the life of a coloured singer, Bessie Smith, might have been saved after an accident but for the fact that the nearest hospital took whites only. Albee's The Sandbox and The American Dream were performed respectively in 1960 and 1961, and the characters in the former are drawn from his childhood experiences while social criticism is an important element in the latter. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf was first performed on Broadway in 1961, and was nominated for the Pulitzer prize. It was for a later work, A Delicate Balance, that Albee finally received the honour in 1967. His plays are often said to belong to the category of absurd drama because their inconsequential dialogues and action convey a sense of lack of communication. But his plays have a conclusiveness that absurdist drama does not allow, and therefore we can say that Albee's plays have some mannerisms of absurdism but do not accept its philosophic basis.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf : A Summary

The play is set in a small American university on the East Coast. It is concerned with the events of one night, during which two couples stay up drinking after a party given by the President of the University for the teaching staff. For both couples the quarrels and revelations of the night bring to a head many issues which had been unresolved in their respective relationships. The upheavals both marriages undergo are so violent and destructive that neither can be the same again. Although it is clear that the future for both couples will be difficult, Albee implies that they are free to build upon a foundation more solid than the pretences and deceptions which have supported their marriages so far. The characters whose marriage is the main subject of the play are George and Martha. George is in his late forties, a history professor at the university. He is disillusioned and unsuccessful in his career. His wife is the daughter of the President of the university, and it had originally been the President's plan to groom George as his successor. George, however, is inadequate for this role and has failed even to become the head of the history department. His wife, Martha, who is some years older, is disappointed by his failure and nags him all the time. They have no children. Both drink heavily and seek sexual adventures outside their marriage. This unpromising relationship is held

together in two ways. One is that George and Martha seek stimulus in quarrelling and psychological cruelty. They do this deliberately, as a kind of game. The other is that they pretend that they have a son, concerning whom they converse and make imaginary plans. The other couple is Nick and Honey. Although their relationship is not the main focus of the play, it duplicates some of the features in that of George and Martha. Like George and Martha, they have no children. For them, too, the events of the night expose old deceptions and illusions, thereby freeing them to make a new start. Nick and Honey are new to the university, and are meeting George and Martha for the first time. The two couples are in strong contrast. Nick is young, vigorous and full of ambition: he has a record of precocious academic success behind him and is a formal athlete of distinction. His wife is infertile and drinks heavily, and is only partially aware of what happens around her.

When the play begins George and Martha are set for a quarrelsome evening as they wait for their guests to arrive. The only hint of restraint comes in an unexpectedly serious warning by George not to reveal their fantasy about having a son. Martha, in a defiant mood, appears to reject the warning. Nick and Honey arrive in the middle of the quarrel, which George and Martha do not attempt to conceal. Although the former are embarrassed and make half-hearted attempts to leave, they are persuaded to stay, and are drawn into the quarrel. It is clear that the restraints of ordinary politeness will have no place in this encounter, and the scene is set for the upheavals which are the main concern of the play. The play is divided into three acts, which are entitled: "Fun and Games", "Walpurgisnacht", and "Exorcism". These titles are an indication of the course of action of the play. In the first act the characters expose each others' weak points. In this act Martha reveals George's failure and flirts with Nick, openly contrasting him with her husband. George refuses to be provoked, pretending indifference. He reacts to Nick with controlled hostility, expressing a distaste for Nick's subject which is biology. Meanwhile he has noted that Nick has no children and his wife is not the maternal type. Martha speaks to Honey about their "son", thus forcing them both to sustain the pretence publicly. Martha is older than George, a heavy drinker and aggressive in manner while George is passive, indifferent and cynical about his wife's outrageous behaviour. A quarrelsome tone is habitual between them and they criticise each other without restraint. Although Martha and George meet their guests

for the first time, they make no attempt to avoid embarrassing them with their quarrel. This sets the tone for the evening which is uninhibited by ordinary politeness. It is particularly hard for Nick and Honey to know how to react to George's open dislike of the President of the university, his father-in-law. The women go out for some time and George and Nick are alone in conversation. George is deliberately offensive. His motives are not explained and we may guess that it is part of his quarrelling with Martha to insult guests whom she has invited. George recognises a threat in Nick, whose youth, energy and optimism contrast with his own premature senility, apathy and disillusion. There is a symbolic force in the different subjects they teach. George's subject is history which is concerned with the past, while Nick's subject is biology which is concerned with a future. George as a historian, can only record and reflect on human life, while Nick as a biologist, can control it. George fears and resents this aspect of Nick's work. He also realises that Martha finds Nick attractive and this suspicion is confirmed when she reappears, seductively dressed in different clothes. George uses every possible means to put Nick at a disadvantage and deliberately embarrasses him but prevents his leaving. When he discovers that Nick and Honey have no children, he refuses to say whether he and Martha have any. Martha's first act of war is to return dressed with deliberate seductiveness, thereby revealing her intentions towards Nick. Then she reveals the existence of her "son" to Honey, who speaks of him in front of them all and forces George to sustain the pretence along with her. She tells the story of a boxing incident in which she knocked George down, which shows him in a ridiculous light. George retaliates dramatically with a realistic pretence of attempted murder, in which he shoots a gun that merely emits a parasol. While the others are temporarily shocked, Martha's reaction illustrates the sado-masochistic nature of their relationship, in which both partners relish violence and enjoy subjecting each other to pain, fear and humiliation. She starts to make up to George, but when he rejects her, by way of revenge she resumes her flirtation with Nick. Deliberately she flatters him for the very thing which George dislikes, namely, his subject biology. George retaliates by forcing Martha to answer Honey's questions about the "son". Martha humiliates George further by saying that George is uncertain that he is the father, and also by telling about her courtship of George and his inadequacy for the role she and her father had planned for him. Her narrative is halted when George

smashes a bottle and drowns her voice by singing “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”. Honey departs and the act ends.

In Act II, when the curtain opens, Nick and George are alone together again while Martha attends to Honey who has just been sick. They drink and talk inconsequently, but their hostility continues and George is the more alert of the two. He tells Nick a story of his schooldays in which he and his friends got drunk, and about one of the characters who killed both father and mother in separate accidents. Nick admits how he came to be married and how he proposes to advance his career in the university, and we learn that his relationship with his wife is built upon inadequate and discreditable foundations. Honey had exhibited all the symptoms of being pregnant and Nick had been obliged to marry her. After the marriage the “pregnancy” had proved to be a false alarm. Nick appears to have been reconciled to this by the consideration that Honey had inherited a considerable fortune from her father, a travelling evangelist of evidently dubious character. These circumstances and Honey’s habits and character preclude any real passion in the marriage, and it is not surprising that in such a marriage Nick should be prepared to be unfaithful, especially in the interests of his career. George leads him to admit that he proposes to sleep with those women whose influence might further his ambition, and makes use of these admissions later, to Nick’s great embarrassment.

When the four characters are together again an argument arises between George and Martha, each blaming the other for the ‘son’s’ supposed sickness and delinquencies. George accuses Martha of continual sexual assaults on him. Martha raises the topic of George’s novel, unpublished because of her father’s objection to it but Honey intervenes with the suggestion that they should dance. Martha welcomes this idea because it will further her flirtation with Nick, but George sabotages it temporarily by putting on a Beethoven symphony, which, however, does not deter Honey from dancing absurdly on her own. When stopped, she sulks, so it is left to Martha and Nick to dance together, which they do, with increasing intimacy. During the course of their dance Martha enlarges, in impromptu verse, on the subject of George’s unpublished novel. The subject of this novel is the story which George told Nick about a boy who had killed both his father and mother in separate accidents. George, enraged, stops the record, but fails to stop Martha telling Nick that it was supposed to be autobiographical.

In George's earlier account of this incident the character concerned could not have been George himself because after the second accident the boy had become chronically dumb. In Martha's account, the implication in George's claim that the novel was autobiographical is that George himself had killed both parents. Certainly Nick so understands it. George attacks Martha; after a scuffle, Nick restores order.

George, seriously unnerved, tries to re-establish himself by suggesting further 'games'. 'Humiliate the Host' is over: he now proposes 'Hump the Hostess', referring to Nick and Martha's flirtation. When everyone is embarrassed, he proposes instead 'Get the Guests'. He surprises Martha by talking of another unpublished novel and immediately launches into a satirical account of Nick's marriage. He tells how they were childhood friends and that they had played 'doctors'; he tells how her father came by his money; and he tells how Nick married her, mistakenly supposed to be pregnant. Honey's vagueness and naivete make her slower than Nick to realise whom the story is about. She encourages George to continue. Nick is unable to stop him and Honey eventually recognises herself in the story, and naturally is disgusted at Nick for revealing the matter to strangers. Honey leaves the room to be sick again and Nick goes to attend to her.

When Nick returns from looking after Honey, the 'total war' agreed upon begins to take shape. For Martha it takes the form of resuming her seduction of Nick while George is momentarily out of the room. For George it takes the form of pretending not to care at all. This makes Martha first suspicious, and then, when he calmly settles down to read, furious. She sends Nick to wait for her in the kitchen and tries to shake George out of his pose of indifference. He continues to be indifferent, so she goes to the kitchen to make love with Nick. When she is out he gives way to the fury he really feels, and flings the book away. It hits the doorbell the sound of which brings Honey back. She is drunk and half asleep, and reveals that she is scared to have children. George realises that she has been secretly aborting and accuses her of it. She refuses to understand what her husband is doing and continues to ask about the bells. This gives George an idea: he decides to tell Martha that the bells rang when someone called with a telegram announcing their 'son's' death. He tells Honey, and practises announcing it to Martha as their next act of war.

Martha returns to the stage, talking to herself. It appears that Nick has proved too drunk to succeed in making love to her. Nick joins her and she mocks him for his failure. She expresses disgust with herself and her sexual adventures and tells Nick that her husband, despite appearances, is the only man who ever made her happy. Nick doesn't believe her. She regards his disbelief as an indication of his superficiality of outlook. She is, in fact, perfectly sincere in her remarks about George, and her revelation of this fact prepares us for the new understanding that is established at the end of the play. As a reward for his failure she appoints Nick 'houseboy' and sends him, in this capacity, to answer the doorbell when it rings. It is George with some flowers: 'for the dead', he says (in Spanish) but no one notices or takes it up. He embarrasses Nick by pretending to mistake him for his son. Martha and George engage in a more or less meaningless argument, but unite against Nick, humiliating him by discussing and debating his status as 'houseboy'. George proposes a final game, 'Bringing up Baby'. Both Nick and Martha try to dissuade him but George insists and sends Nick to fetch Honey for it. Martha seems surprisingly afraid of the game, but agrees nonetheless.

As a part of the game proposed by George, Martha gives a long and sentimental account of their 'son's' birth and childhood. As she proceeds, George starts to recite the words of the Requiem Mass of the Roman Catholic church. As this is a service for the dead, it implies that their 'son' is dead though no one understands at first. Honey interrupts, touched by Martha's account of mothering to say she would like a child – a radical change in her outlook. Martha tries to stop, but George forces her to continue by blaming the 'son's' adult problems on her: she, in turn, blames him. George starts to recite the Requiem again, and in spite of an attempt by Honey to stop the game, announces that the 'son' is dead. It has the desired effect. Martha is furious, saying George has no right to do this. George, however, continues as if the 'son' and his death were real, making it impossible for her in front of the guests to make her point. He forces Honey to confirm that the telegram did arrive. Nick finally understands what the game is about. As Martha continues to protest that George has 'broken the rules' of their game, Nick and Honey leave. Left alone, George and Martha are sobered and apprehensive at the prospect of a life unsupported by illusion.

Some observations on the play

The play is set in the eastern part of the United States, the area where there are the most prestigious of America's universities. Within this milieu, the characters are above average, and the element of social criticism is directed towards the best that America has to offer by way of civilization. Though the play is concentrated on four characters, there are wider references to society as a whole, and the writer implies that if such people are degraded, the society must also be a degraded one.

The central theme of this play is the necessity of the removal of illusion from a relationship, and it is embodied in the title which Albee has explained as meaning: Who's afraid of a life without illusion? In the life of George and Martha the illusion involved is the fiction that they have a child, and they indulge in this fantasy to compensate for their actual childlessness and their dreary married life. This is also due to professional failure and disillusionment on George's part, infidelity on her part and constant bickering on the part of both of them. She breaks the rules by revealing the truth to strangers, and he in turn puts an end to it by publicly announcing the "son's" death, which she, correspondingly, is forced to accept. The psychological impact of the circumstances and the manner in which he does this is such that there is no question of the fiction being revived, and they are forced to face life together as it is, and not take refuge in what might have been. For Nick and Honey, the illusion here is their image as a presentable and promising couple. The truth is that there is a squalid background to their marriage due to his being trapped into it by her supposed pregnancy, and also because he agreed to it because of the ill-gotten money she had inherited. In addition, their present childlessness is not, as they present it, that of a young couple who have not had time to settle down, but is the result of secret abortions on Honey's part. It is hinted, but never made clear, that the pregnancy which enforced their marriage was a real one, secretly terminated by Honey. Nick's total disloyalty to this relationship is exposed when he is ready to reveal their relationship to a total stranger, and be unfaithful to her when she is in the same house, with the aim of advancing his career. He has to face public discomfiture at the hands of George, whom he despises for his lack of moral fibre. This is the truth he has to face, while Honey has to come to terms with her reluctance to bear children.

The theme of conflict is also significant in the play. The quarrels in which George and Martha engage, are not merely the product of drunkenness and ill-nature. They explain the rows between them as “exercise”. The play is full of boxing metaphors, most of which are used to describe married life, and many come from Martha, who is surprisingly knowledgeable on the subject, and even uses technical phraseology. Conflict is also the means by which truth and illusion are separated. In the case of George and Martha, it is their quarrel which precipitates his decision to end the fantasy of their child. George is also prompted to reveal Nick’s secrets by their conflict with each other. The conflict also reveals Nick to be a grasping and unprincipled man, and we find that he has deserved the exposure and humiliation he has received at the hands of George. Parenthood and childlessness are also prominent themes in the play. Martha was morbidly attached to her father in a way which has precluded happiness with her husband. George’s parents constitute one of the unsolved mysteries of the play. There is talk of his having killed them in separate accidents, but he claims that someone else is responsible for them. Honey had a father who was, it is hinted, a hypocrite and a crook, while no reference is made to Nick’s parents. The generation represented on stage is childless. In George and Martha’s case, this is simply a misfortune, but in Nick and Honey’s it is by her deliberate choice – she refuses to be a mother because of the pain. The childlessness of these characters is symbolic of a more generalized unfruitfulness both in their lives as individuals, and in society as a whole. Albee is certainly preoccupied with family life gone wrong. He also deplores the materialism and success worship in American society through the portrayal of the characters, particularly Martha and Nick.

Though the play gives an initial impression of disorder and shapelessness, it is, in fact, a tightly constructed piece. The play observes the unities of time, place and action. The play begins at two o’clock in the morning and ends before dawn: a period scarcely longer than the actual duration of the play. The scene never moves outside the living room in George’s house. And the action centres upon a single theme, namely the destruction of the false basis upon which George and Martha have built their lives, the apparently aimless quarrelling in the play also being directed towards this end. The unity of action is also seen in the titles Albee gives to the acts, because they point to the progress of the action as it relates to this central

theme. The “fun and Games” of Act I raise the ghosts which walk on “Walpurgisnacht” (named after the night of St. Walpurga in May, when ghosts are believed to walk), in Act II and which are finally laid in the “Exorcism” of Act II. All the quarrels of the evening which are seen by George and Martha as “fun and games”, are devised by Albee to the moment when George brings them to an end by the “exorcism”.

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CHAPTER VIII

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Ernest Hemingway : his life and work

Ernest Hemingway was born in Illinois in 1899. His father was a doctor and his mother was a former singer and teacher of music. After leaving school, he did not join college, but tried for active service in the First World War in 1917. As he was rejected, he became a newspaper reporter for a short while before enlisting as an ambulance driver in Italy. In 1918, he was injured while carrying a wounded man to safety, was awarded a medal, and had to spend three months in a hospital in Milan. He went to Paris to earn his living by writing, and became friendly with many great literary figures like James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound. His first important work, a series of brilliant sketches and short stories called In Our Time, was published in New York in 1925, while The Sun Also Rises became a best-seller in 1926. His Men Without Women (1927), A Farewell to Arms (1929), and Women Take Nothing (1933), confirmed Hemingway's stature as one of the most influential prose writers of the time. He married, divorced and re-married several times, and also reported the war in 1941 and 1944. He then began the final period of his life, when he settled down in Cuba. Several attempts at writing were a failure, until he wrote The Old Man and the Sea (1952), which was partly responsible for his winning the Nobel prize for Literature in 1954. A few years later, he began to suffer from ill-health, and his condition worsened, resulting in severe depression, until his suicide in 1961.

The Old Man and the Sea : A Summary

Santiago was a Cuban fisherman who fished alone in the Gulf Stream. Though he was humble and lonely, he was very exact and sincere in his profession. He was physically strong and had powerful arms and legs. The secret of his muscle power was that he ate the white turtle eggs to give himself strength. He also drank a cup of shark liver oil each day to keep himself fit against all colds and illnesses. But the

irony of fate was that he had not been able to catch a single fish for eighty-four days. Each time Santiago sails his skiff into the harbour after another day's unsuccessful fishing, he is met by the boy Manolin, who helps him carry the fishing gear ashore. The boy had been his companion at sea until his long run of bad luck made the boy's parents place him in another, luckier fishing boat. The old man, whose appearance is almost as dilapidated as his boat, still loves the boy, and sits with him at the Terrace, the local bar, drinking beer among other fishermen. Santiago and a Manolin talk about the past and the future, and Manolin remembers when Santiago once went eighty-seven days without a catch, then was successful. Since his parents will not allow him to fish with Santiago, he offers to help by catching sardines for Santiago to use as bait. They remember the adventures they had together, and Manolin hopes to persuade his skipper to fish far out the next day, so that they can be near Santiago's boat if he should need some help. When they reach the old man's primitive shack, the boy enquires about the old man's dinner, and is answered as usual that he has a pot of rice and fish. But Manolin knows that there is no food and later brings him a meal. When Santiago sleeps, he dreams that he sailed to Africa and saw lions play like cats on the beach.

Santiago wakes up the boy before dawn, and they walk to the harbour with other fishermen. Manolin pushes out the old man's skiff and Santiago rows out steadily until he is alone. Two of his fresh baits were tunas the boy had given him, as well as sardines to cover his hooks, and the lines went straight into the deep dark water. The old man decided to keep them with precision and not to leave anything on luck or chance. As the sun rose, he saw other boats near the shore, which was only a green line on the sea. A man-of-war bird showed him where the dolphins were facing some flying fish, but they were moving too fast and too far away. The bird circled again. This time the old man saw a tuna leaping in the sunlight, and he caught a small one which he hauled aboard thinking that it was a good omen. Towards noon a marlin started nibbling at the bait and he knew from its weight on the line that it was a big one. But the fish did not surface and it began to turn the boat to the north-west. The old man braced himself and though he was skilled he realised that he was not as strong as before. He felt the absence of the boy several times. He waited patiently for the fish and resolved to kill it before the day ended. The day ended but the fish was not seen. Darkness descended from all sides and the

old man shivered in the cold. Once the fish lurched suddenly and pulled the old man forward on his face cutting his cheek. By dawn his left hand was stiff and cramped. The fish headed north-west, and there was no land inside. He felt hungry and cut strips from the tuna and chewed them slowly to keep himself strong.

On the second day the sun rose and the fish jumped. He rose his full length from the water and then re-entered it. The old man realised that it was the biggest marlin he had ever seen. He thought that the fish had jumped to show him how big he was. He made up his mind to show the fish in return what sort of man he was although the latter had everything except his will and intelligence. Though he was not religious, Santiago began muttering prayers and promised to go on a pilgrimage if he caught the fish. He leaned against the wood of the bow and began to mechanically work the fingers of his left hand. Then the fish went under and turned towards the east. Close to nightfall a dolphin took the small hook he had rebaited. He lifted the fish aboard, careful not to jerk the line over his shoulder. After he had rested, he cut fillets from the dolphin. That night he slept but he was sorry for the great fish that he had nothing to eat. He felt that the punishment of the hook was nothing in comparison to the punishment of hunger, but his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him.

On the third day, Santiago felt a jerk on his hand and thought that the line was running out through his fingers because the fish was jumping again and again. Feeding the line slowly the old man tried to tire the fish was going eastwards. At sunrise the marlin began to circle, and though he was faint and dizzy, the old man began to pull the giant fish with his body and legs. The marlin, almost mad with pain, jumped and circled again and again and hit the wire several times. The old man tried to bring the fish nearer, and almost exhausted, he finally drew his catch alongside the boat. He saw that the fish was very big and beautiful and reluctantly, lifted the harpoon high and drove it down with all his strength. The fish rose high in the air showing its great size and power and beauty, and then fell into the water with a crash. The old man drank a little water before he lashed the marlin to the bow and stern of the boat. No catch like this had ever been seen in Havana harbour, and as he turned towards the south-west, he thought that the fish would make his fortune. An hour later, as they were sailing together lashed side by side, the old man sighted his first shark. It came from deep down in the water after it had picked up

the scent of the blood of the marlin. It came in fast to slash at the dead marlin and when the old man hit the shark it sank carrying with it the harpoon and the rope and leaving the marlin mutilated and bloody. Now the bad time came. The old man did not have even the harpoon. The scent of the blood spread in the sea and many sharks followed the boat. The old man hit one with his knife and watched it go down into the water. He killed another one while it tore at the flesh of the marlin. When the third appeared he thrust at it with the knife only to feel the blade snap when the fish rolled. The other sharks came at sunset. At first he tried to club them with the tiller from the bore, but his hands were bleeding and they were too many in the pack. In the darkness as he steered in the direction of Havana, he heard them hitting the carcass again and again, but he ignored them because he was unarmed. He had gone out too far and the sharks had beaten him. He knew they would leave him nothing but the skeleton of the great fish. When the old man sailed into the harbour all the lights were out, and in the darkness he could just make out the white backbone and the upstanding tail of the fish. He went to the shore to his shack and fell on his bed fast asleep. The boy found him there later in the morning. Meanwhile the other fishermen gathered around the board and marvelled at the giant marlin, eighteen feet long from nose to tail. When the old man woke up the boy greeted him with hot coffee and a cheerful smile and told him to rest and to make himself fit for the days of fishing they would have together. He wished Santiago would get well quickly for there was much that he could learn. All that afternoon Santiago slept dreaming of lions, and the boy sat by his bed watching him with a sense of admiration and reverence.

Some observations on the novel

Santiago is an old man of humble birth who lives in a shack that has only the bare necessities. He lost his wife several years ago, and the only friend he has is Manolin, the tender-hearted boy, who is always ready to help him. But Manolin is also restrained by his father from going out in his boat, and so he has to fish alone in the sea. Often he has to go without food, and eats raw fish to sustain himself. He does not accept help easily, be it in the form of things like soap, towel, shirt, and blanket, or physical help with his boat, and immediately tries to repay any kindness shown to him. He is a good fisherman as well as a craftsman of great skill and can

understand the wind, the current and the weather. He has a poetic sensibility and imaginative insight which enable him to identify himself with the fish and feel its sufferings. Above all, he can endure suffering and also see life in its larger terms. Manolin is the second major human character in the novel. Though he appears only in the beginning and the end of the novel, he casts his shadow throughout the story. He is the faithful apprentice, who tends to the old man, learns from him, and embodies hope for the future. He is an unfailing companion to the old man in his lonely hours, and the only human face that Santiago sees in the mornings and evenings. Manolin is simple and tender-hearted with a heart full of compassion. He is a devoted disciple and has unflinching faith in Santiago does not diminish though he is not able to catch any fish for eighty-four days. Both are complementary to each other - Manolin has the sagacity of an old man, while Santiago has the spirit of adventure of a young man. The relationship between them is that of a disciple and a teacher. Santiago has the dignity and nobility of mind of a teacher, while Manolin has the curiosity and faith of a true pupil.

Though the adversary with whom Santiago has a long-drawn battle is a sea-creature, it is a formidable opponent, and with its killing, a noble creature is lost. The long fight between the old man and the fish is an epic battle waged on the vast arena of the sea, and is not so much a show of strength as a display of strong wills. When the marlin is harpooned, sharks gather around its carcass to feast on its meat. He drives them away, but the marlin is so badly destroyed that the old man does not want to look at it. Though the old man is nearly killed in the battle with the sharks, he does not wear a defeated look. He brings back with him the skeleton to show the other fishermen. His victory lies not so much in winning and carrying home the prize, but on performing his appointed task extremely well.

Like most great works, the novel can be interpreted in many ways. It appears to be an exciting adventure story, but has been variously described as a parable, an allegory, and an epic in prose. The novel is said to be a parable because it is a long story designed to teach a moral lesson. It has a significant message for the world torn by violence and moral chaos. Santiago is a man undefeated in the face of suffering and death, a man who does not depend on heavenly aid but seeks his own salvation through the fulfillment of his appointed task with the utmost skill rather than through any religion. He is not defeated by the forces of violence, but can face

pain and suffering with great fortitude. It is an allegory because certain ideas and virtues have been symbolized by persons who are characters in the story. Santiago's adventure with the marlin and sharks is man's capacity to withstand and transcend the hardships of time and circumstances. Some critics say that the description of the carrying of the mast by Santiago from the beach to his shack reminds the reader of Christ under the weight of the cross. The struggle between the old man and the marlin suggests the never-ending battle between man and the mysterious forces of nature. The allegory is about life – the struggle against the impossible odds of unconquerable natural forces in which a man can only lose but in a way that his defeat has dignity. Thus the man is an embodiment of Christian virtues of compassion, humility, charity, brotherhood and suffering. The sea is a vast battlefield where the never-ending game of killing goes on, but to the old man, it is the symbol of a benign mother. The marlin, the sharks and the dolphins are the symbols of the unknown and mysterious universe that allures man but finally crushes him. Manolin symbolizes devotion, faith and reverence. Santiago's dreams of lions playing on the beach are symbolic of the lion-heartedness of his youth which he requires most in his old age, particularly in his battle with the fish. The old man catching a fish is a great artist in the act of mastering his subject. For Santiago, like an artist, nothing is more important than his craft which must be struggled with and mastered. The novel also asserts human values like a sense of love and brotherhood for all living creatures, man's striving for perfection, courage, humility and dignity.

The Old Man and the Sea opens with a serious conversation between the old man and the boy, and the seriousness is sustained throughout the novel. Two of the characters in the novel are human beings, while the rest are sea-creatures. Santiago dominates the story from the beginning to the end, and though he is a poor fisherman, he reaches the heights of dignity, humility and excellence. His adversary, the marlin, is also a glorious and dignified creature. The sharks, who are the villains of the story, are also clever, intelligent and tough creatures. The series of sea-battles which the old man fights with the marlin and the sharks suggests a struggle of epic dimensions, and like the epic hero, he fights them during the course of his venture in the sea.

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CHAPTER IX

MARK TWAIN : THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Mark Twain : his life and work

Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) was born in 1835 in Missouri. During his boyhood, he had all the advantages and disadvantages of growing up in a country environment, and grew up in tune with the life around him. Upon his father's death in 1847, he became a printer's apprentice, but could not earn much, and decided to become a river pilot. After piloting steamers for about four years, he went back to the printing trade. He wrote short pieces for the newspapers he worked on, and met many writers during the course of his work. His The Innocents Abroad (1869) brought him success and he married Olivia Langdon, from a socially prominent New York family. He made friends with a number of interesting literary people and wrote Roughing It and The Gilded Age. In 1875 he began work on his first novel Tom Sawyer, which was a success, and began its sequel The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in 1876. Mark Twain's final years were full of financial disasters and personal losses, which made him a bitter and disillusioned man. His writings, are best described as iconoclastic and a reflection of the society of his times. He died in April 1910.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn : A Summary

The novel opens with the hero of the story (Huck Finn) introducing himself as one of the characters who figured in his other book Tom Sawyer. For all practical purposes, he is an orphan, because his mother is dead and his father is the village drunkard. As a result of his background, Huck has grown into a kind of vagabond, and is happiest when he has fewest social responsibilities. He is superstitious but is not hypocritical and does not think of religion the way other people do because he is more interested in the comforts of the moment. He wants to be left to his own devices, to sleep in his hogshead, to wear his old rags, and to eat his food all mixed up. Widow Douglas who takes him into her home, makes him wear clean clothes

and does not let him smoke because it is crude and dirty. Her old maid sister, Miss Watson, tries to teach Huck to spell, but he cannot stand it. When everyone goes to bed, Huck feels rather lonely and settles down to smoke a pipe. Then he hears twigs snapping and the mewling of a cat which is Tom's signal for him. Huck goes to meet Tom, and they make their way through the widow's backyard when Huck trips and makes a noise. Miss Watson's slave, Jim, hears a noise but falls asleep before he can find the cause. The boys go to a hill overlooking the village where they meet Joe Harper, Ben Rogers and other friends. They take a skiff and travel downstream to a cave in the hillside, where Tom explains the plan for forming a robber gang. Anyone who wants to join the gang has to take an oath, an article of which is that the family of the member who tells the gang's secrets must be killed. As Huck hasn't any family, he offers to let the gang kill Miss Watson if he tells any secrets, and the gang accepts his offer. They decide to call themselves highwaymen, and the meeting breaks up with the gang resolving to meet next week to rob and kill some people. But after playing robber for a few months, Huck and most of the boys quit the gang. Although Huck's drunkard father, known as pap, has not been seen for some time, and the rumours are that he drowned in the river, Huck expects him to show up any day.

Huck starts going to school and tries to learn how to read and write, and seems to be settling down to a new way of life. Then his father appears, and Huck is so frightened of him, that he sells his share of the wealth he and Tom had found. He then goes to Jim for help because Jim has knowledge of spirits, witches and devils. His father forbids Huck to go to school, and threatens to cause trouble for Judge Thatcher unless he gives him Huck's share of the money. Judge Thatcher and the widow try to get Huck appointed as their ward by the court, but fail in doing so because there is a new judge who does not want to separate the child from its parent. The new judge tries to reform pap, but is disappointed when he gets drunk again and breaks an arm. As soon as he is well again, pap begins chasing Huck and beating him for going to school. One day he catches Huck and locks him up in a log cabin in a thickly wooded area. Huck decides to escape, but does not want to go back to the widow's house. So he makes things appear as if he has been killed by robbers, loads some supplies into a canoe, and sails down the river to Jackson's Island. He stays by himself on the island for three days, until he begins to feel bored

and lonely, and begins to explore around. He finds Jim, who has run away from Miss Watson because he is afraid that she will sell him to a slave trader. Huck promises not to tell anyone about Jim, though he is aware that it is unlawful to protect a runaway slave. Huck and Jim now start a new partnership which is rewarding to both and begin their adventures on the Mississippi River. One night, they see a two-storey frame house floating down the river and find a dead man in it, who they realize, is Huck's father. The next morning, Huck goes to the village disguised as a girl, and comes to know that he is believed to have been murdered by Jim and pap, and that there is a reward for the two of them. Huck and Jim load their gear on the raft and sail down the river. They see a steamboat, and board it to find robbers on it. They decide to cut it loose so that the robbers are marooned until they can call the sheriff, but realize that their raft has broken loose. They find the robbers' skiff and glide away in it. Huck decides to stop ashore and send help to them before the steamboat sinks, but they see the wreck floating down the river, and Huck feels that the robbers are dead. Huck and Jim decide to travel on the raft to Cairo, Illinois, where the Mississippi joins the Ohio River.

During the course of their journey, Huck is questioned as to whether he is shielding a slave. Though he feels guilty about it, he does not inform anyone about Tom. Huck lands on the shore to find himself surrounded by a pack of dogs, whose noise wakes up the occupants of the house. They belong to the aristocratic Grangerford family, and living with them, Huck realizes that they are as civilized as they are cruel (as in the case of the elopement of Sophia and Harney). Huck is happy to get back to the river, the raft, and Jim again. After a few idyllic days, they run into two men who call themselves the king and the duke, but who are obviously frauds. They decide to impersonate as the brothers of Peter Wilks, a villager, to take over his estate which they have to administer for Peter's nieces. The duke will be the deaf-mute and the king will be the preacher. When they get to the home, they are greeted by an enthusiastic throng of villagers and the three nieces. Doctor Robinson, the village doctor, tries to tell the girls not to trust the imposters, but one of the nieces gives the king \$ 6,000 without a receipt, asking him to invest it for her. Huck feels guilty about helping the frauds to dupe the girls and tries to help them but does not succeed. Then two men arrive, and claim that they are Peter's brothers, and Huck and the two frauds escape and go aboard the raft. They sail for some time

and then stop by the shore to venture into the villages. At one such time, he realizes that Jim is missing and that the king informed Silas Phelps that Jim was a runaway slave. He resolves to rescue Jim from slavery again. He goes to the Phelps' farm and is mistaken for Tom Sawyer. Tom really does come back and at first thinks that Huck is a ghost. They decide to look for Jim, finally tracking him down in a hut from where they plan to dig him out. At night they try to do so, and find that it is an impossible task. Tom makes several plans to rescue Jim, but cannot carry them out successfully because they are not practically possible. Once they get Jim out of the hut, but he is caught and re-imprisoned. Then Tom decides that Jim's escape must be a proper one and writes anonymous letters to the Phelpses telling them that Jim would be stolen by a group of cutthroats and makes them very nervous. Armed farmers come to the farm and surround the hut, but they manage to escape, Tom being the last to leave. They manage to evade the farmers, who shoot at them, and Tom is shot through the leg. Huck tries to get a doctor for Tom, but cannot do so. Tom and Jim are brought to the farm, the former on a stretcher, and the latter in chains. The doctor comes and tells everyone that Jim saved Tom's life at the expense of his freedom, and was also a good and faithful nurse. Next day, Tom wakes up to find out that Jim is under guard and in chains, and insists that he be unchained immediately. It seems that Miss Watson died two months ago and set him free in her will, and that Tom wanted to set Jim free for the adventure of it. Aunt Polly arrives, identifies Huck, thus motivating Aunt Sally to try to adopt him. Tom, Huck and Jim decide to set out in search of more adventures.

Some observations on the novel

The novel actually consists of a series of short adventures. This is the kind of plot that is known as the episodic plot, because each event is an episode, a self-contained little story. Plots like this are characteristic of what is known as the "picaresque" novel. But this is not a picaresque novel because Huck Finn is not the typical "picaro", who was a rather hard-hearted and selfish rogue. Mark Twain has undoubtedly borrowed from the traditions of the picaresque novel, particularly from Don Quixote, by Cervantes, but changed and shaped it into something entirely different. The first sixteen chapters deal with Jim's escape from slavery, but after that Jim recedes into the background. He disappears from the story altogether in the

Grangerford chapters, and is of no importance to the story until he is sold off. But this is not detrimental to the plot because Jim is neither the central figure, nor his escape the central theme of the story. The central figure of the story is Huck and the story is told from his point of view in the first person. The central theme of the story is the theme set by the first and the last chapters: Huck's fight against getting "civilized". There is an obvious contrast between the characters of Huck and Tom. Tom's ambition is to become famous without counting the cost to himself or others, and he is not bothered by the hurt and anguish of Aunt Sally or the pain and discomfort of Jim. But Huck, who is involved in real adventures, is continuously bothered by his conscience and preoccupied with justice, as is seen when he wonders if he is doing right by Miss Watson and Jim. Huck is the opposite of Tom who is a romantic. He is a realist and is generally level-headed except when he follows Tom's lead into some adventure. He is not civilizable, because the end of the book makes this clear and he is seen to be exactly where he was in the beginning. In the second part of the story, we are taken on a tour of the Mississippi River valley. The Grangerfords, with their senseless pride and crudity are described as ignorant and arrogant people. The king and the duke are illustrations of those who choose their own comfort at the expense of those around them, and trade on the ignorance, pride and laziness of the residents of the villages. Finally, the third part of the novel brings us back to Tom Sawyer as the focus of the plot. Huck is still the main character in the novel and reports all that goes on. Since Huck Finn tells the story himself, in the first person, Mark Twain has to put himself in the place of this thirteen year old son of the town drunkard and see life as Huck saw it. Huck is more than Twain's mouthpiece. As a living character, he is capable of shaping the story. Huck's innocence is reflected through his credulous explanation of what he sees – explanation couched in language characteristic of primitive society.

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CHAPTER X

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE : THE SCARLET LETTER

Nathaniel Hawthorne : his life and work

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1804. His sea-captain father died at sea when he was only four and he was raised by his mother and her family. He entered Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, when he was seventeen, and after some time began to find some rules involving religion too strict. During this time, he formed lifelong friendships with Horatio Bridge, Jonathan Cilley, Franklin Pierce, and H. W. Longfellow. He graduated from Bowdoin in 1824, but had not decided what to do after that. He returned to Salem, and published several works anonymously. In 1837, he published Twice-Told Tales. His first major work The Scarlet Letter, was published in 1850, and The House of the Seven Gables in 1851. In 1858, he travelled to Paris, where he met many well-known figures from the artistic community like Robert and Elizabeth Browning, and Louisa Lander. His The Marble Faun was published in 1860. In 1860, his health began to deteriorate, and he passed away the same year.

The Scarlet Letter : A Summary

The theme of the novel is the universal subject of sin. Hawthorne traces the effect of one particular sin on the lives of four people. They are Hester Prynne, who wears her shame openly for all the world to see, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, who is killed by the secret he hides, Roger Chillingworth, who becomes the devil incarnate, and little Pearl, who develops into a wayward and lovable child. The novel opens on a summer evening in Boston, when a throng of curious people gather outside the jail in Prison Lane. They are there to watch for Hester Prynne, who had been found guilty of adultery by a court of stern Puritan judges. Condemned to wear on the breast of her gown the scarlet letter A which stands for adulteress she has to stand on the stocks before the meeting house so that her shame

might be a warning to all those who see her. The crowd waits to see her ascend the scaffold with her child in her arms, and stand there for three hours to bear her shame alone. When the woman appears, she moves serenely to the steps of the scaffold and stands quietly under the staring eyes that watched her public disgrace. It is whispered in the gathering that she has been spared the penalty of death or branding only through the intervention of the Reverend Arthur. While Hester stands on the scaffold, an elderly deformed man appears from the edge of the forest. When her agitation makes it plain that she recognises him, he puts his finger to his lips as a sign of silence. Hester's story is well-known to the community. She is the daughter of an ancient house of decayed fortune, and when she was young her family had married her to a man who was a scholar. For some years they had lived in Antwerp. Two years earlier he had sent his wife alone to the Massachusetts Colony, intending to follow her soon. There had been news of his departure, but his ship had never been heard of again. Hester, a young attractive widow, had been living in Boston until the time of her disgrace.

The scaffold on which Hester stands is situated next to the balcony of the church where all the dignitaries of the colony sit to watch her humiliation. The ministers of the town call on her to name the man who is equally guilty with her. But Hester refuses to name the father of her child, and is led back to the prison after her period of public shame has ended. On her return to prison Hester is found in a state of great nervous excitement. When at last medical aid is called, a man is found who has knowledge of medicine. His name is Roger Chillingworth. He is the stranger who had appeared suddenly from the forest when Hester had stood on the scaffold that afternoon, and she knew him as her husband, the scholar Prynne. His ship had been wrecked on the coast and he had been captive among the Indians for many months. He also asks Hester to name the father of the child. When she refuses he says that he will remain in Boston to practice medicine and would try to discover the identity of the man who had dishonoured him. He commanded her not to betray their relationship and she swore that she would keep his secret.

When Hester's turn of imprisonment is over, she finds a small house on the outskirts of the town far from other habitation. She settles down there with her child who she has named Pearl, and earns her living from needlework. She still wears the scarlet emblem on her breast. Hester dresses her child in bright clothes in contrast

to her own sober dress. As she grows up Pearl proves to be a wayward child, hard to discipline. One day Hester calls on Governor Bellingham to deliver a pair of embroidered gloves. She also wants to say him about the custody of Pearl, because some strict church members want to take the child away from her. In the governor's garden, Hester finds the governor, Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth. The governor is about to separate the child from the mother because she does not repeat the catechism, but Dimmesdale saves the situation. Hester is allowed to keep Pearl who is strangely attracted to the minister.

Roger Chillingworth has become very intimate with Arthur both as his parishioner and his doctor, for the minister had been in ill-health for a long time. They live in the same house and the doctor comes to know Dimmesdale's inner most thoughts and feelings. Slowly Chillingworth is convinced that Dimmesdale's is Pearl's father. One night, unable to sleep, Dimmesdale walks to the place where Hester had stood in disgrace. He goes up the steps and stands for a long time in the same place. A little later Hester also comes by with little Pearl. The minister calls them to the scaffold and says that he had lacked the courage to stand there with them before. Thus the three stand together and Dimmesdale acknowledges himself as Pearl's father and Hester's partner in sin. Roger watches the scene from the shadows. Hester is so shocked by Dimmesdale's feeble and unhealthy condition that she decides to see her former husband and beg him to set the sick minister free from his evil influence.

One day she meets the old doctor gathering herbs in the forest and begs him to be merciful to his victim. But Roger wants his revenge on the man who has wronged him. Hester then tells him that he will tell Arthur his secret and warned him about the doctor. A short time later Hester and Pearl intercept Dimmesdale in the forest and Hester confesses her true relation with Roger and warns the minister about him. She and Arthur decide to leave the colony together secretly and go by ship to the Old World. They are to leave four days later, after Dimmesdale has preached the Election Sermon. Election Day, on which the new governor is to be installed is a holiday in Boston, and the port is full of sailors from the ship in the harbour. In the crowd is the captain of the vessel with whom Hester has made arrangements for their passage. The captain informs Hester that Roger will also sail on the ship. Filled with despair, Hester turns away and goes with Pearl to listen to

Dimmesdale's Sermon. Unable to find room within the church, she stands at the foot of the scaffold where she can hear the sound of his voice. As the procession leaves the church everyone praises the minister's address. Dimmesdale walks like a man in a dream and once he almost falls. When he sees Hester and Pearl at the foot of the scaffold, he steps out of the procession and calls them to him. Then taking them by the hand he climbs the steps, and almost fainting, he admits his guilt to the watching people. With a sudden gesture, he tears the ministerial band from his breast and sinks down on the platform, dying. When he thus exposes his breast, witnesses say that the stigma of the scarlet letter A is seen imprinted on the flesh above his heart. Roger, no longer able to have revenge on Dimmesdale, dies within the year and leaves his property to Pearl. For a time Hester disappears from the colony but returns some years later, and lives in her humble cottage wearing the scarlet emblem as before. The scarlet letter, once her badge of shame becomes, an emblem of her mercy and kindness. At her death she expresses the wish that the only inscription on her tomb should be the letter A.

Some Observations on the Novel

The Scarlet Letter offers a brilliant analysis of group psychology – of the way, to use Dimmesdale's term, a "hungry" group of people will believe what they want and need to believe about a public figure, regardless of the evidence before their eyes. That is, Hawthorne clearly understood the political dimensions of truth, that is, the way truth is always negotiated between speakers. Modern readers think that the town's people are fools, although there are plenty of modern examples of people refusing to believe ill of their philandering pastors. Hawthorne knew his psychology, especially his Puritan psychology, and knew, as the hypocritical Dimmesdale must have known that such confessions of sinfulness were expected and appreciated. More than any other character in the novel, even Roger Chillingworth, little Pearl keeps Dimmesdale's hypocrisy before the reader. Hawthorne makes Pearl a kind of one-woman chorus, who asks repeatedly what the scarlet letter means and why the minister keeps his hand over his breast. Perhaps he chose Pearl for this role because he wanted to play upon the romantic idea of children's innocence, or because Pearl is intimately identified with the letter. Hester even dresses her to resemble the letter to flaunt the girl in front of the Puritans.

Hawthorne's description and use of Pearl are all the more remarkable when we consider that although Pearl seems to be a realistic portrait of a Puritan child, the "elf-child" as Hawthorne calls her, was based on his own daughter, Una. When Dimmesdale holds hands with Hester and Pearl on the scaffold in Chapter 12, the three form an "electric chain", and he feels as if the mother and child were communicating their vital warmth to him. From the Puritans' point of view, Pearl is an illegitimate child who has no place in society. She is one of the "children of the Lord of Misrule", and associated with witchcraft and wilderness. She has become a scapegoat like her mother, and the two of them have been exiled. Pearl, however, has a centripetal force of character and keeps trying to find a place for herself in the community. Her integration into bosom of the community is essential not only for her discovery of an identity and social role, but also for the community's collective health. Instinctively Pearl seems to know that Dimmesdale holds the key to her place. Pearl's most important role in the novel is to embody the future of the Puritan society. Just as Dimmesdale must finally acknowledge her the Puritan community also must acknowledge her. Hawthorne's portrait of Arthur, Dimmesdale as a failed father also depicts the conflict between his ministerial job and his unacknowledged family responsibilities. Dimmesdale's portrait also reflects the anxieties Hawthorne felt about being a writer and a father. His depiction of Dimmesdale's attitude towards Pearl makes the novel a compelling study of the psychology and ethos of nineteenth century American fatherhood. Dimmesdale is overwhelmed by his experience in the forest and by the image of himself that it reveals. He thinks of an alternative plan to the one he had made with Hester. Instead of sailing for Europe with her and Pearl, he will preach the Election Sermon, climaxing his career as a Puritan pastor, and then confess his sins, before going to Heaven by himself. Once again, he leaves Hester and Pearl to fend for themselves. The ending that Hawthorne wrote, tells a mixed and ambiguous story. Pearl does flourish, but in England rather than in Puritan America. Surprisingly, she inherits not from Dimmesdale, but from Chillingworth, and becomes a rich heiress. She and Hester settle in England, where Pearl appears to marry well and have children. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the ending for recent readers has been Hester's return and her resumption, of her own free will of the scarlet letter. Her resumption of her role as a branded woman seems disappointing and many critics emphasize Hawthorne's failure to allow Hester to fulfill her potential as a reformer. The novel

achieves greatness in its dramatic, objective presentation of conflicting moralities in action, and each character seems symbolic as well as real. But many critics say that this dramatic perfection is flawed by the author's moralistic and subjective criticism of Hester. This contradiction results from Hawthorne's apparent confusion between the romantic and the transcendental moralities. The characters of the novel act out the tragic conflict between traditional morality and transcendental dreams, Hawthorne condemns them for being immoral. More obviously Hawthorne imposed a moralistic "Conclusion" upon the drama which his characters had acted, according to the literary conventions of the age. There is a contradiction between the author's moralistic comments and the earlier realistic words and actions of his characters. He created living protagonists but tried to impose his own will and judgement upon them.

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CONCLUSION

A study of the American works (whether poetry, drama, or novel), prescribed for study reveals that common themes occur in them. While Dickinson and Plath wrote poems which were more personal, Frost and Stevens show concern for the common occurrences in daily life. Plath and Stevens are more experimental in the verse forms they use, while Frost and Dickinson use conventional patterns. O'Neill, Miller and Albee, all display a preoccupation with post-war problems – economic, social, as well as psychological. They particularly highlight the self-centeredness and materialism, and the resulting alienation of man. Hemingway, Twain and Hawthorne depict the individual in the context of society, and highlight qualities like courage, compassion, and high ideals in man.

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QUESTION BANK

1. How does Robert Frost make use of commonplace scenes and situations to express his philosophy?
2. “The poetry of Wallace Stevens is a rich mixture of images and sounds.” Elaborate with reference to the poems you have studied.
3. Which other common themes in many of Emily Dickinson’s poems? Explain in the context of the poems you have studied.
4. “Sylvia Plath’s poems are personal and have a confessional tone.” Do you agree? Justify your answer.
5. What common trends can you find in the poems by Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Emily Dickinson, and Sylvia Plath? Answer with reference to the poems you have studied.
6. Do you think Desire Under the Elms is a suitable title for the play? Explain.
7. How has Eugene O’Neill depicted the dark side of human nature in the play Desire Under the Elms?
8. “All the characters in Desire Under the Elms want to possess something.”_How far do you agree with this statement?
9. In what way has O’Neill depicted the negative side of human nature in Desire Under the Elms?
10. “A View from the Bridge contains the themes of loyalty and betrayal.” Discuss the play in the light of this statement.
11. How does Arthur Miller present the problems of modern man in A View from the Bridge?
12. Does Edward Albee succeed in showing how truth and illusion play an important role in human relationships in his play Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
13. “Albee is preoccupied with the problems of family life.” Discuss with reference to Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
14. How does Albee highlight the problems of family life in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
15. Do you think that the plot of Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf is a compact one? Justify your answer.

16. Has Albee succeeded in depicting the theme of truth and illusion in his play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
17. Discuss The Old Man and the Sea as an allegory.
18. Analyse the character of Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea.
19. Can The Old Man and the Sea be called an epic in prose?
20. "The Old Man and the Sea gives a message of excellent values." Do you agree? Justify your answer.
21. Analyse the character of the boy in The Old Man and the Sea.
22. Do you agree that isolation is the main theme of The Scarlet Letter?
23. "The Scarlet Letter is a reflection of the rigid morals of the society of those times." Do you agree with this statement? Explain.
24. Analyse the character of Hester Prynne as a woman of strong character who faces the anger of society.
25. How has Hawthorne made use of symbolism in The Scarlet Letter?
26. To what extent is The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn a book of social criticism?
27. How does Mark Twain contrast the characters of Tom and Huck in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn?
28. Analyse the character of Jim in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.
29. Write short notes on the following:
 - a. Nature as depicted in the poems of Frost.
 - b. Common themes in the poems of Dickinson and Stevens.
 - c. Symbolism in the poems of Sylvia Plath.
 - d. Confessional quality of Sylvia Plath's poetry.
 - e. Depiction of modern man in A View from the Bridge.
 - f. Theme of disillusionment in A View from the Bridge.
 - g. The character of Ephraim in Desire Under the Elms.
 - h. The character of Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea.
 - i. The character of Manolin in The Old Man and the Sea.
 - j. The character of Arthur in The Scarlet Letter.
 - k. The character of Roger in The Scarlet Letter.
 - l. The character of Pearl in The Scarlet Letter.
 - m. The structure of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
 - n. Humour in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.
 - o. Society as reflected in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

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