

## MODERN LITERATURE- IV

### Poetry : Detailed

Alfred Lord Tennyson	:	The Lotos Eaters
Gerald Manley Hoskins	:	Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord, If control
Mathew Arnold	:	Dover Beach

### Poetry : NonDetailed

Robert Browning	:	Andrea Del Sarto
Thomas Stearns Eliot	:	The Hollow Men
William Butler Yeats	:	Easter 1916
Ted Hughes	:	Hawk Roosting

### Prose : Detailed

Thomas Stearns Eliot	:	The Metaphysical Poets
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### Prose : Non Detailed

Thomas Carlyle	:	“Hero as Poet (Chapter III) from Heroes and Hero Worship
Robert Louis Stevenson	:	Treasure Island
James Joyce	:	Dubliners
Tomas Hardy	:	The Return of the Native

### Drama : Detailed

Oscar Wilde	:	The Importance of Being Earnest
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### Drama : Non Detailed

Bernard Shaw	:	Pygmalion
Henrik Ibsen	:	A Doll’s House

## The Lotos Eaters

Alfred Lord Tennyson

### A Critical Appreciation of the Lotos-Eaters

Tennyson's capacity to conjure up vivid pictures with a few deft strokes is seen at its best in **The Lotos- Eaters** . **The** stream flowing down gently like a sheet of lawn cloth; the 'aged' snow accumulated on 'silent' pinnacles, the poppy hanging down as if in sleep, the mossy waters, the caves curtained with vine, the emerald coloured water, the ground layered with amaranth and holy - all these little details bring out what a beautiful place this lotos-island is and how such an atmosphere cannot but produce a lethargic mood.

The poem is reminiscent of several great masterpieces by other writers. The music that pervades the lotos-island recalls Prospero's island filled with the invisible spirit Ariel's music. The natives of the island plying the sailors with the soporific fruits reminds us of Eve in **Paradise Lost** tempting Adam with the Forbidden Fruit and bringing about his fall. There is a close verbal like between the sailor's complaint that human life is 'Like a tale of little meaning thou the words are strong and Macbeth's anguished cry that life is

A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing.

Above all, Tennyson's description of the lotos-island is derived from Spenser's picture of a cave of indolence in **The Faerie Queen**. Many of Tennyson's effective stylistic devices are seen in **The Lotos-Eaters**. Whenever Tennyson wants to make a forceful statement, he resorts to inversion. The following are some striking inversions in the poem:

1. Hateful is the dark blue sky
2. Dear is the memory of our wedded lives

To convey an idea effectively, Tennyson prefers interrogative and exclamatory types of sentences to bold statements. The following are a few arresting interrogations.

1. Why should we only toil, the roof and  
Crown of things?
- 2) Death is the end of life, ah why  
Should life all labour be?

Stanzas V and VII begin with the exclamation 'How Sweet'. Both the stanzas contain a series of infinitive phrases which recount what experience is sweet

To hear each other's whispered speech;

To watch the crispering ripples on the beach;

To lend our hearts and spirits wholly to ....

Mild minded melancholy

To muse and brood and live again in memory

The accumulation of sentences in the same pattern serves as a sort of refrain, making it easy for the chorus to sing.

Tennyson uses liquid consonants wherever he wants to create a soft effect. The 'm's and 'l' in the following passage serve this end"

...warm airs lull us, blowing lowly

With half-drop eyelids still,

Beneath a heaven dark and holy,

To watch the long bright river drawing slowly

Tennyson's comparisons are always apt and telling. To bring out the softness of the music pervading the island, Tennyson compares it to the noiselessness of rose-petals falling on grass, dew dropping on stagnant waters and tirade eye-lids closing tired eyes. To stress how peace and order reign supreme in the world of nature, he accumulates examples of leaves greening and yellowing, flowers blooming and fading and fruits ripening and falling.

Tennyson has a masterly skill in making compressed, axiomatic statements. Cynical philosophy cannot be better expressed than in the following single-line summing up of the emptiness of human life.

Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass.

The following pithy question is unanswerable:

Death is the end of life: ah why should life all labour be?

On these grounds, *The Lotos-Eaters* is one of Tennyson's masterpieces.

### PARAPHRASE

Ulysses asked his followers not to yield to despair. He sighted a land nearby and said that the rising wave would soon push them to the shore of the island. In the afternoon, Ulysses and his followers reached the island. They were struck by the mild climate prevailing in the island. In the afternoon Ulysses and his followers reached the island. The air was never violent. It breathed softly like a man who had a wearisome dream. There was no movement. Strangely enough, even the moon appeared to stand still. The stream falling down a cliff appeared to stop a mid-air. When it did fall, it did not make any noise as though it was smoke. It was like a downward smoke. The island was full of streams. Some Streams fell gently down cliffs. They looked like a column of smoke moving downward or like veils of thinnest lawn unrolled down mountain. Some other streams flowed through a forest where there were alternating lights and shadows. It appeared as though sunlight was hesitating whether to dim or brighten. It was 'wavering'. The foam that was created at the bottom of the mountain did not flow away. It remained there, as though it was slumbering. A shining river flows from the interior part of the island towards the sea. At a distance were three mountain-tops covered with snow which shone in the bright light of the setting sun. The snow which had accumulated over the years without melting appeared 'aged'. There were tall pine trees, growing high above thick shrubs. The leaves of the pines were touched with dew drops and drops of gentle showers of rain.

It appeared as though a magic spell had been cast over the setting sun, with the result that it was lingering in the red western horizon. Through gaps in the mountain range could be seen valleys and meadows where grew yellow-coloured Lotos plants, palm trees and thin galingales. The natives of the island, addicted to the narcotic Lotos, had lost their vigour and so their faces were pale and eyes had no lustre. The men had a melancholy look.

The natives of the island brought Lotos fruits to Ulysses' sailors. Eating them, the sailors became very dull. They lost the capacity to hear sounds distinctly. The roaring waves sounded like mourning and raving on far-off shores abroad. A sailor speaking to his

colleagues sounded like a ghost's indistinct voice from a grave. A man normally does not hear his own heart-beat. But the island was so silent that the sailor's heart-beat was audible and sounded musical in his ears.

The sailors sat down on the yellow sand, watching the setting sun and the rising moon. They no longer wished to return to their father land. They were quite content with dreaming of their hearth and home. They were weary of wandering across seas. To the tired sailors, the sea itself appeared tired. The sailors felt that their wanderings were fruitless. They considered the foam unproductive. One of the sailors said that their island home was far away and that there was no point in returning home and getting involved in all kinds of unsavoury adventures.

### **Choric Song**

I

The sailors join together and sing, expressing their wish to stay back in the lotos island. The island is pervaded by very soft music. Rose petals cannot fall softer on grass. Dew-drops falling on stagnant water in mountain passes cannot make a softer sound. Tired eyelids cannot close tired eyes so very gently as the music does. There are mosses interspersed with ivy creepers everywhere. Dew drops fall from the long ivy leaves, with the result that the leaves appear to be weeping. The poppy, whose flowers usually hang down, appears to be sleeping.

II

The sailors ask certain unanswerable questions. Man is admittedly the top most of God's creations. If the universe is represented as a building, man is the roof of this building. If all life is like a body, man is the crown placed on the head of this body. Though man occupies a predominant place among God's creations, he has to toil endlessly. His high position does not entitle him to any rest.

III

Next, the sailors observe that there is ceaseless strife only in the world of man. Peace reigns supreme in the world of nature. Natural objects live and die in conformity with certain laws of nature. Hence, they have no cares and anxieties. The bud is wooed by the wind into unfolding its leaves. Under the influence of the wind, the leaves grow broad and green. Sunlight during noon and dewdrops at night promote the leaf's growth. Like a mother feeding her child whenever necessary, dew-drops feed the leaf. The green leaf shrivels and glows yellow and falls down at the appointed time. The apple is also grown by nature. It is filled with sweet juice and mellowed by summer light and drops on a silent autumn night. The flower, grown by the fertile soil, ripens and fades and falls. All these objects are governed by natural forces such as the wind, the sun and the moon and the soil. Nature 'steeps' them, 'feeds' them and 'mellows' them, as a loving mother would tender her children. As a result, they have no cares. The implication is that man suffers because he does not submit to nature.

#### IV

The sailors hate the dark-blue sky and the dark-blue sea because they remind them of their adventurous lives in the past. They find activities useless. Since death puts an end to all human achievements, there is no point in striving. Nothing endures. All that we achieve is forgotten or destroyed sooner or later. Evil is ineradicable. However much we strive, evil cannot be rooted out. Hence, it is advisable to live in ease.

#### V

The Lotos-Eaters have become completely lazy. They consider it a most painful exertion even to keep their eyes fully open or to speak aloud with one another. They would rather keep their eyes shut and whisper to one another. They decide to spend the remaining part of their lives in three ways- dreaming, watching beautiful natural scenes and thinking of their old friends and relatives who are no more. They are sorry to find the older generation reduced to ashes and left in small brass urns. The sailors realize that there is nothing magnificent about human life.

#### VI

The sailors still love their wives. They remember how sadly they bade farewell to their husbands setting out on their dangerous voyage. However, because of the long period of separation, the wives might have grown old. Their dear sons might have forgotten them. The old sailors returning home after such a long interval might not be recognized by their kith and kin. They might be viewed with suspicion; the island might now be under the rule of chieftains who might have seized hold of the properties of the sailors. Everything is dictated by God. What has happened is due to God's will. It is foolish to fight to change what the Gods have decreed. There might be trouble and disorder in their mother land. It is impossible to evolve order out of chaos, especially as they are old and worn out. The best thing to do is to accept the existing order and settle down to a life of ease in the island.

#### VII

The sailors long for a life of ease. They want to recline on beds of amaranth and moly, watching beautiful natural scenes with half-open eyes. Keeping eyes fully open is too great a strain for them. They mention such fascinating sights as emerald-coloured water flowing down purple hills and across fields full of acanthus plants and finally reaching the sea which the men want to see but not cross.

#### VIII

Reclining on flower beds and viewing human suffering with unconcern, the sailors compare themselves to the gods living comfortable in golden houses and hurling thunderbolts at sufferers. Man's life is petty. He ploughs, sows, reaps and finally perishes, going to hell or heaven thereafter. The sailors take an oath with an air of finality that they will rest in the island and not wander any more.

### **Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord**

**GERALD MANLEY HOPKINS**

*Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend*

*With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.*

*Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must  
Disappointment all I endeavour end?*

In the above extract of the poem, the poet is shown willing to admit that Lord God is just and that, in any disputation, he must indeed acknowledge God's justice. And yet a doubt has arisen in the poet's mind, and he must therefore express this doubt which seems to him justified too. The poet then asks why it is that sinful persons thrive in this world. He asks also why all his endeavours, both in respect of his profession as a priest and in respect of the exercise of his poetic faculty, end in disappointment and failure. It is to be noted that the poet, in the second line of the poem, addresses God as "Sir".

*Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,  
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost  
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust  
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,  
Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes*

The poet through this extract then acknowledges God's love and affection for him. But even if God had been his enemy, He could not have done more to defeat and frustrate the poet's endeavours than he is doing as his friend. What puzzles the poet is that drunkards and lechers – that is, sinners of various kinds – prosper even in their spare or idle moments much more than the poet who is sending his whole life in the service of God. Here again, the poet is noted to be addressing God as "Sir".

The main theme is a theodicy, a theological term which means trying to understand evil in the light of a God who is perfect and who loves justice. In the opening four lines, Hopkins repeats the word 'just': the first time it is God who is believed to be just; the second time, it is Hopkins' complaint. So, which is the more just? Hopkins puts up a good case in the octave. It is not just occasional disappointments, they are there for 'all' he endeavours. If God were his enemy, rather than his supposed friend, could it get worse? (With friends like this, who needs enemies?) Hopkins claims he is spending his whole 'life upon thy cause'. He is not looking for a big reward; just the recompense of some of his efforts bearing fruit.

As he moves into the sestet, he forgets the sinners - as Psalm 37 suggests he does ('Do not fret because of evil men' Psalms 37:1, NIV). Ultimately, they are not the problem: his lack of fruitfulness is. Yet in the end, there is no answer, otherwise it would have been discovered centuries ago. However, Hopkins (and we as his readers) need to take something from the poem: it is the final line that suddenly emerges out of the complaint, a heartfelt plea for 'rain'. In Biblical terms, rain is withheld as a sign of God's displeasure; its coming is seen as either a sign of acceptance or blessing (a Biblical text that shows this is Deuteronomy 11:13-15: 'So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today....then I will send rain on your land in its season...' NIV). So Hopkins is asking not only for creativity, but a sense of God's blessing on his life.

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## **DOVER BEACH**

### **MATTHEW ARNOLD**

Arnold was a relentless critic of the Victorian Age. Never did he indulge in Browning's facile optimism and say :

God's in his heaven  
And all's right with the world.

He castigated Victorians as philistines and barbarians in his tract ***Culture and Anarchy***. In a letter of Clough, he drew attention to the unpoetical atmosphere of his age:

Not unprofound, not ungrand, not  
Unmoving – but unpoetical

In another letter he expresses his unhappiness over his role as an analyst of  
The modern situation in its true  
Blankness and barrenness and  
Poetrylessness' (sic)

Arnold's bitterest complaint is that the age, besides being unpoetical, has become irreligious. The Sea of Faith, Arnold says in ***Dover Beach*** was once full but now the poet hears only.

Its long melancholy, withdrawing roar

In the Scholar Gypsy, the poet vividly describes the ravages wrought by industrialization. People are mentally overburdened ("heads o'ertaxed") and emotionally paralysed ("palsied heats"). They are victims of self-contradictory aims ("divided aims"): There is no centre to which their activities could be related. There is no seer or thinker to guide society. The self-styled leaders are themselves confused.

Arnold feels that a void has developed in Victorian society, as old, time-tested values have disappeared and not new values have emerged. All the agony and hardship involved in transition is described in Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born.

Arnold was far ahead of his times, Existentialism and alienation, made much of in the twentieth century were not new to Arnold. Many of the poems describe the state of the alien cut off from the society around him.

Empedocles, out of touch with Nature and with the society around him and jumping into Etna, is a typical alien. The drama foreshadows the anguish of moderns. In *To Marguerite* the poet pictures the sad loneliness of people.

We mortal millions live along.

The meaninglessness of life, a typical modern stance, is the theme of Rugby Chapel:

Most men eddy about,

Here and there – eat and drink,

.....achieving

Nothing and they die

Thus, besides representing Victorian problems, Arnold experienced and expressed many chronic modern problems also.

### **An Introduction to Dover Beach**

Dover Beach was published in 1867 in new poems. The scene described in the poem is the English Channel at Dover, with the chalk-cliffs looking bright in the soft moonlight. The 'love' addressee in the poem is Arnold's newly married wife Frances Lucy Wightman with whom he visited Dover.

### **A critical appreciation of Dover Beach**

*Dover Beach* is pervaded by melancholy. Arnold realizes that nature, supposed to boost dispirited man, has only a depressing effect on him. There is light everywhere on Dover Beach. The English Channel is glistening in the moonlight. The French coast at a distance is gleaming. The chalk-cliffs of England are 'glimmering'. The bay is 'tranquil'. The land is 'moonblanched' the ways 'spray the shore'. In spite of all these beautiful natural scenes the poet is not happy. The waves rising and falling reminds the poet only on the rise and fall of human misery. The harsh sound of pebbles rolled on the shore by the ways seems to the poet to strike only a note of sadness.

Arnold feels that sadness is eternal. The waves of the English Channel fill the poet only with gloom. In the same way the waves of the Mediterranean Sea might have only saddened the ancient Greek playwright Sophocles, thinking of man being assailed by endless waves of suffering.

Having said that sadness is 'eternal', Arnold contradicts himself by saying that the Sea of Faith was once full. Arnold uses only the vague pointer 'once'. He does not, and probably cannot, state specifically when the sea of faith was full. It could not have been full during the time of Sophocles. If Sophocles had been sustained by faith, he would not have viewed man as being the plaything of blind forces. Even if we admit that the Sea of Faith was once full, we cannot escape the conclusion that the present state is dreary. Religious faith had retreated, leaving behind the shingles of materialism and utilitarianism.

Arnold is now quite aware of the unpleasantness and emptiness of life, particularly his life. Nature cannot inspire him – the beautiful scenes around the English Channel only depress him. Literature, too fails him. Sophocles works reflect not the glory of life but merely "the turbid ebb and flow of human misery". Thanks to the advancement of science,



Christianity too has' retreated'. In the place of the lie-giving waters of religion, there are only the barren rocks of materialism and nihilism.

The major sources of inner nourishment have been depleted. Arnold falls back on love, the Victorian equivalent of the Freudian concept of sexual fulfilment as the centre of life. Arnold was always aware of the revivifying power of love. In *The Buried Life*, for instance, he speaks of how love can revitalize and rejuvenate us “

When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
When jaded with the rust and glare  
Of the interminable hours,  
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
When our world – deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd-  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.

This idea is repeated in *Dover Beach*. Arnold sadly reflects that all the varied attractions of life are empty and can give neither joy nor peace if there is no love. Life without love takes a destructive turn, with people struggling and harming one another, like soldiers fighting in the dark and killing not enemies but men of their own side, out of ignorance. The poem begins with a lovely description of “moon-balanced land” and closed with the horrifying visions of “darkling plain” and self-destructive massacre.

The poem revolves round the image of the sea. After describing the English Channel and the Aegean Sea literally, the poet goes on to describe the Sea of Faith. The link between the literal and the symbolic seas is that in both the seas and waves are retiring, leaving behind, and pebbles. Taken symbolically, the pebbles stand for lifeless materialism. Religious faith is also glorified by a jewel image, faith being compared to a ‘bright girdle’ enclosing the earth. In the last stanza, life without love and spiritual illumination (certitude) is viewed as fighting “on a darkling plain” and killing comrades by mistake.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

## ROBERT BROWNING

### Introduction to the poem

*'Andrea delSarto'* was included in the volume entitled *'Men and Women'*. It was written in Italy and published in 1855. The poem is a dramatic monologue. The painter Andrea and his art of painting is the theme of the poem.

Andrea del Sarto was the son of a Florentine tailor. Andrea was a faultless painter. He had high technical skill. He married Lucrezia who served as a model for his paintings in 1513. King of Francis, Francis I assigned him the work of decorating his palace at Fontainebleau. Lucrezia was tired of the life at French court. She valued his art for the sake of money. She was indifferent to his love. So she urged Andrea to go back to Florence. He deserted his ailing poverty-stricken parents for her sake. He built a house for Lucrezia with

the money given by the king. The he betrayed the king who valued his art. She was unfaithful to him and deserted him. Andrea died of poverty and disgrace.

Browning was inspired to write this poem after seeing a picture of Andrea and Lucrezia called '**Andrea del Sarto and his Wife**'. It was painted by Andrea himself. It was hung in the Pitti Palace at Florence. Browning friend. John Kenyon asked for a photograph of the portrait. As the photo was not available Browning wrote this poem and sent it to Kenyon. The account of Andrea Del Sarto was given by George Vasari in his "Lives of Most Excellent Italian Painter, Sculptors and Architects."

## A Critical Appreciation of the Poem

### Introduction

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### Life of Andrea del Sarto

Andrea del Sarto was the son of a Florentine tailor. Andrea was a faultless painter. He had high technical skill. He married Lucrezia who served as a model for his paintings in 1513. King of Francis, Francis I assigned him the work of decorating his palace at Fontainebleau. Lucrezia was tired of the life at French court. She valued his art for the sake of money. She was indifferent to his love. So she urged Andrea to go back to Florence. He deserted his ailing poverty-stricken parents for her sake. He built a house for Lucrezia with the money given by the King. Thus he betrayed the king who valued his art. She was unfaithful to him and deserted him. Andrea died of poverty and disgrace.

### As a Dramatic Monologue

'**Andrea del Sarto**' is one of the greatest of the dramatic monologues of Browning. Lucrezia is both the interlocutor and listener. Minor figures such as the cousin, the French King and his courtiers stand in the background. The characters Andrea and Lucrezia have been well brought out. The speech helps to view memories, aspirations, momentary impulses and actions, fears and desires. '**AndreadelSarto**' differs from Browning's other monologues. Unlike the other monologues, it does not grow out of a critical situation. It presents a part from the great painter's life. All other monologues of the Browning deal with the exalting and ennobling influence of love. But this monologue tells us of the degrading and disintegrating effect of love on the great painter's soul. Andrea is shown in a reflective mood. He muses over his failure in art. His thoughts range over the past and the present. In this ways he revealed the complete tragedy of his soul. The setting is the painter's studio in Florence and 'the silvery grey' of an autumn evening. The keynote of the

poem is struck in the opening works in which Andrea attempts to bribe his wife with money in order to get from her some show of love. If she inspires him he might excel Raphael and Angelo, the great painters. The poem is a discussion of what constitutes the failure in art.

### **Character-analysis.**

'*Andrea del Sarto*' is a master piece of character analysis. Not only Andrea's character is exposed and his soul dissected but Lucrezia's character is also revealed through Andrea's words. Andrea is a feeble minded personality. He lacks vitality. As a typical weak minded person first he seeks to blame his wife for his failure in art and then lays the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of God. He says that all human beings are in the hands of God and that God is responsible for the kind of life which he and Lucrezia are leading. It is only later on in the poem that Andrea admits that he himself to be blamed for his failure. Incentives have to come from within; outside stimulants are of little use. He pathetically admits that he is one of those half-men of the world having talent but little will power to use that talent to its high point and thus struggling along in mediocrity. Andrea is fit only for twilight, not for brilliant sunlight. It is his own nature that has caused his failure as an artist. His marriage, his treatment of King Francis I, his helpless attitude towards his parents dying in poverty, his subservience to Lucrezia whose lover's debt he is willing to pay-all these things reveals his true nature. In *Andrea*, Browning has made a study of a man whose soul has not developed but had stagnated.

### **Discussion about Art**

All his paintings are all technically perfect and flawless. But they are lacking in soul and suggestiveness. Andrea can paint as effortlessly as one might imagine. But unfortunately he has no deep meaning in impart to his painting because he has nothing in her heart to inspire deep feelings. Andrea's reputation as a faultless painter is not confined to his own country. It has travelled to France where he is recognised as a great artist by patrons of art. Andrea has won laurels, only as a craftsman. But art is something higher than craft. Andrea knows well that his art is spiritually inferior. The consciousness mars his artistic production. The more an artist is conscious of himself and his art, lesser will be his artistic success. It is life the most enchanting poetry is produced in moments of unconscious ecstasy.

### **The symbolic Use of Colours**

Silvery grey is the actual colour of the twilight. This colour is identified with Andrea's present physical state. His art does not have the red colour of other artists. Hence it is lifeless and soulless.

### **Style and Diction**

This poem is characterised by lucidity and clarity of style. It is entirely free from the usual faults of Browning. There is no obscurity. Repetition is one of the features of almost all Browning's poems. It is an important element in Browning's use of sound to help to depict character. Andrea repeat words or phrases successively in the same time or in successive lines. (e.g) 'Quietly, quietly'; 'out of me, out of me'; 'This , this, this' ; ' There, there' etc.

### **Browning's Philosophy**

This poem brings out Browning's optimism, his faith in God, the immortality of the human soul and his theory of art. All human beings are in the hands of God and that God is responsible for the kind of life which everyone is leading. Incentives have to come from within; outside stimulations are of little use. Art is something higher than craft. Consciousness mars one's artistic production. The more an artist is conscious of himself and his art, the lesser will be his artistic success. It is like the most enchanting poetry is produced in moments of unconscious ecstasy.

### **Conclusion**

'*Andrea del Sarto*' is a lament for a soul's tragedy. An Andrea speaks his soul is laid bare. He is conscious of his degradation, oppressed with the sense of failure. He is the unfortunate painter whose spiritless temperament is both the cause and effect of his moral and artistic failures. This poem is a discussion of what constitutes failure in art.

### **CHARACTER SKETCH OF ANDREA**

'*Andrea del Sarto*' is a remarkable piece of character study. The characters both of Andrea and Lucrezia have been well brought out. This monologue tells the pathetic tale of the moral and artistic failure of a talented painter but faultless in execution. He is devoid of any lofty purpose in his life or art. In this poem Andrea's character is exposed and his soul is dissected. Andrea is a feeble minded personality. He lacks vitality. As a typical weak minded person first he seeks to blame his wife for his failure in art and then lays the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of God. He says that all human beings are in the hands of God and that God is responsible for the kind of life which he and Lucrezia are leading. It is only later on in the poem that Andrea admits that he himself to be blamed for his failure. Incentives have to come from within; outside stimulants are of little use. He pathetically admits the he is one of those half-men of the world having talent but little will power to use that talent. Andrea is fit only for twilight, not for brilliant sunlight. It is his own nature that has caused his failure as an artist.

In the very first line of the poem, Andrea requests his wife not to quarrel with him, at least for one evening. He asks her to sit with him and he will paint as she desires him to. The poor Andrea is made to toil to pay of the gambling debts of his wife's lover. He promises to paint according to the direction from his wife's friend's friend. He will have no freedom at all to follow his own instincts and intuitions. He is prepared to sacrifice his freedom of expression and to accept whatever remuneration he is given for his wife's sake. What he expects from his materialistic wife is that she would be kind enough to give him company. It shows his dependency on and affection of Lucrezia. Andrea's love for his wife is too delicate. He is fascinated by the intoxicating beauty of his wife. He finds it difficult to image how such delicate limbs of hers could ever be put to the least strain even for the purpose of putting on some ornament. Her wavering nature does not lessen his love for her. At the sight of her, Andrea is surcharged with emotion and he finds it difficult to give adequate expression to his thought.

Andrea has been guilty of some crimes in the past. He misappropriated the money of King Francis and he built the house with that money in order to satisfy her. The wrong

done to the king cannot be mended. He has been guilty of another sin also. He allowed his parents to die in poverty.

All his paintings are all technically perfect and flawless. But they are lacking in soul and suggestiveness. Andrea can do with his pencil what great painters like Rafael could not do. He can paint as effortlessly as one might imagine. But unfortunately he has no deep meaning to impart to his painting because he has nothing in heart to inspire deep feelings. Andrea's reputation as a faultless painter is not confined to his own country. It has travelled to France where he is recognised as a great artist by patrons of art. Andrea has won laurels, only as a craftsman. But art is something higher than craft. Andrea knows well that his art is spiritually inferior. The consciousness mars his artistic production. The more an artist is conscious of himself and his art, the lesser will be his artistic success. It is like the most enchanting poetry is produced in moments of unconscious ecstasy.

Rafael's art became almost divine. But the arm in Rafael's picture of Madonna is not correctly drawn. Andrea can improve Rafael's picture as far as technical execution is concerned, but the spiritual aspect of them is beyond him. We sympathise with Andrea. This is the secret of the success of this dramatic monologue. Andrea believes that God is just to everybody. If a man has failed to make use of his gifts, God will punish him at the end. But if a man is not properly rewarded by the world, God will compensate him at last. So Andrea prefers to be neglected in this world, as he hopes to be rewarded by God. So his main purpose is to win a place in Lucrezia's heart.

Andrea's love for his wife is immeasurable. He says that God may desire the four walls of the Holy City. New Jerusalem, to be decorated with pictures of the four great artists Leonardo, Rafael Michael Angelo and Andrea. There he will get an opportunity to compete with the top most artists of the world. He remembers that the other three would have no wives, while he himself would still have Lucrezia as his wife. Though, Lucrezia will be handicap to him, he will prefer to have her always with him, even though it means his defeat as an artist. When his wife's lover's whistle is heard he allows her to go to him.

#### **CHARACTER SKETCH OF LUCREZIA**

Lucrezia del Fede was the wife of a hat-maker, named Racannati. After the death of her first husband in 1512, she married Andrea. She was a woman of singular physical beauty. Andrea treated her as a model for many of his paintings. Vasari, the author of the '**Lives of the Illustrious Painters**' have described her faithless and overbearing. In Browning's poem she is soulless and sensual, for which there is no historical warrant. Even Vasari has not changed her with infidelity which Browning has imputed to her.

Lucrezia possessed a perfect figure and perfect features. Her brow, her eyes, and her mouth are perfect in every way. Her physical charm has ensnared Andrea's soul. Her voice is so sweet and bewitching that Andrea follows it as a bird follows a fowler's pipe to the trap. Andrea would like his wife to urge him to aspire for higher ideals, but her lips that are only meant to be kissed never preach.

Lucrezia is compared to the moon which attracts and enthralls everybody. Andrea assures that he will give her all the money that he received for doing the portrait for her friend's friend. It is made clear that Lucrezia cared only for the money that Andrea's

painting fetched and not for the artistic merits they possessed. When poor Andrea expects her to place her hand in those of him to take the money out of them, the heartless Lucrezia shows sign of displeasure. She considers it waste of half an hour in giving him her sweet company.

Browning calls her beauty as serpentine. This suggest not only the fascinating curves of Lucrezia's beautiful figure but also the evil connected with the role which the serpent played in the Garden of Eden as the source of feminine deception, loss of innocence and spiritual death. Andrea is fascinated by the intoxicating beauty of his wife. Her smile inspires him to paint. She tries neither to understand nor cares for his artistic achievements. She seems to be hardly aware of the public recognition that her husband has achieved.

Andrea's love for Lucrezia is immeasurable. With the gold he robbed of from the King he built a grand, gay house for her. If only she would love him and often sit with him, he would feel sufficiently compensated for all that he has suffered. He values high of her smile. She smiles to Andrea not out of love but because she wanted him to work and fetch more money to pay the debts of her lover. Andrea asks her to continue to smile. If she continues to bestow smiles upon him, he promises to work as long as his eyes can see and his hand can hold the brush. This is his fancy to see her smiling all the time and he is prepared to pay for it by working almost endlessly. All that he asks from her as a special privilege is that she should sit smiling with him for the rest of this evening. After that he will do as she orders. Lucrezia may think that her sitting with Andrea is merely idling away the time. But to him her company would be precise. By this time, Lucrezia's so called cousin (lover) is calling her outside and she is planning to go in spite of Andrea's request to stay. When her lover's whistle is heard he allows her to go to him. She also goes.

### **THOMAS STERNS ELIOT - THE HOLLOW MEN**

Thomas Sterns Eliot (1886-1965), poet, critic and playwright, is one of the outstanding writers of the present century. He was an American but later became a British citizen. He served as a school master, as an official at Loyds Bank, London and as a Director of Faber Publishing House. He wrote much poetry, criticism and five verse plays. He revolutionised the literary traditions of the Romantics and the Victorians by introducing radical innovations in poetic techniques. He achieved high reputation in his own lifetime. He received the Noble prize for literature for his work as a trail-brazing pioneer in modern poetry in 1948.

T.S. Eliot's early poetry voices the frustration and loss of faith caused by World War I. It is expressed in his major poetic work. "The Waste Land". But his later work shows deep religious feeling and the need to find a way of salvation. He uses a new poetic, Idiom to represent the complexity of modern life. He employs myths and symbols. His poetic style is characterised by concentration, obscure references and unified imagery. His verse is allusive and difficult, but masterly in rhythm and music.

## II. Introduction to "The Hollow men"

"The Hollow men" was composed in fragments and the final version was published in 1925. It is a dramatization of a state of spiritual and emotional sterility in a physical and psychological landscape reminiscent of "The Waste Land". Like "Prufrock", "Gerontion" and "The Waste Land", "The Hollow Men" is pervaded by feelings of guilt, remorse and anguish, and by intensely personal experience which cannot be properly expressed or resolved. It reveals certain stylistic innovations, the result of Eliot's interest in ritual and drama. The choral chants of "The Hollow Men" are stylised in a ritual-like manner. Eliot uses the rhythms of popular verse, such as that of the nursery rhyme, in order to parody ritual and to recreate the effect of mechanical movement which enacts the theme of a spiritually enervated, death-in-life existence monotonously repeating itself.

In "The Hollow Men" Eliot seeks to follow the system of Dante's organization of sensibility, by integrating and transforming adolescent feelings of disillusionment with romantic love into a larger view of life, and by attempting to make a transition from human to divine love. The poem is an interior spiritual journey which dramatizes subtle shifts in the speaker's consciousness.

The poem presents a sordid picture of modern men. They are hollow men, devoid of sentiments and values. They live in a state of damnation without faith. They lack the resolution and power to act. They are totally paralysed in mind and spirit.

## III. Content Analysis

Section I : Chorus – the modern Hollow Men describe their condition

Section II : One of the hollow men analyses their spiritual state

Section III : The hollow men worship lifeless gods in a dead land

Section IV : The desperate spiritual plight of the hollow men is brought out –

They grope in a hollow valley.

Section V : The hollow men purposely go round the prickly pear -

psychological torpor – indecision and inaction – life ends in a whimper

A penny for the Old Guy taken from Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. It is an African servant's announcement of death of Kurtz, the hero. Kurtz, a European trader in ivory goes to the Congo with the sham ideal of spreading the light of civilization. He sets himself as a god among the Africans, extorts ivory from them, and surrenders to the dark, primitive impulses within his own psyche, participating in 'unspeakable rites'. He is a 'hollow sham', 'hollow at the core'. He clings to the illusion of life. But at the moment of death he has vision of reality and discovers what a hell his life has been. His dying words are "The Horror! The Horror".

The second epigraph is a reference to the custom of children asking for a penny from people to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day (5 November) with fireworks and burning of Guy's effigy. Guy Fawkes and a few others conspired to blow up Parliament and King James I on 5 November 1605. They were caught and executed. 5 November came to be celebrated as a day of public thanksgiving with fireworks and burning of Guy's effigy. Children used to carry effigies of Guy and beg money to buy fireworks for the celebration of Guy Fawkes Day. They used to cry 'A penny for the Old Guy'.

Eliot's epigraphs function at different levels. They relate the hollow men of the poem with Kurtz of *Heart of Darkness* and the stuffed effigy of Guy Fawkes. The hollow men of modern times and similar to Kurtz and Guy, because they lack the resolution and power to act like Kurtz and Guy, They do neither good nor evil. They are completely paralysed. 'The old guy' may also mean 'the fallen human nature not regenerated by divine grace'.

### Title of the poem

It is a combination of "The Hollow land", a romance by William Morris (1834- 1890) and 'The Broken Men', a poem by Rudyard Kipling (1865 -1936). "The Broken Men" depicts the plight of Englishmen exiled to the colonies, loitering by the shore and waiting to communicate with passengers of ships from home. It may have inspired Eliot's dramatization of the hollow men gathered on the beach of the tumid river (vide line 57-60). Kipling's broken men and Eliot's hollow men share a sense of failure and exile. Another source of the title is Brutus remark in Shakespeare's play.

But hollow men like horses at hand,  
Make gallant show and promise of their mettle  
But when they should endure the bloody spur,  
They fall their crests and like deceitful jade,  
Sink in the trial.

Modern men are hollow men. They have some shape without living human form. They are dark shadows without dazzling colours. They are inactive, immobile, and living-dead. They are unfit to be called human being at all. They are mere puppets.

Modern men behave like rats, crows, etc. not like human beings. They are no better than scarecrows in cornfields. These lines refer to the country custom of hanging up dead bodies of vermin or birds which damage crops in order to frighten away others of the same species. There is a note of guilt and self-contempt as the speaker's guises are dehumanising and reveal his hollowness and despair.

Modern men are so rotten and hopeless that they avoid the sight of Paradise, the place of purification of the soul. They shun even the final chance of salvation. They indulge in tragic escapism

## EASTER 1916

William Butler Yeats

### Critical Appreciation of the Poem

#### Introduction

The poem '*Easter 1916*' poem celebrates the Easter Rising of 1916. The Irish people rebelled against the British for Independence. The uprising was crushed by the British army. A group of Irish insurgents captured the General Post Office in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. They held it for seven days. Then they surrendered. Sixteen of them, including the two leaders Pearse and Connolly were put to death. A number of men and women died in that premature rising. The event impressed Yeats for its bravery and heroism. Yeats did not



think of patriotism as a good and suitable subject of poetry. Though the poem celebrates them as martyrs, it is not the justice of their cause. He did not believe that all the bloodshed was wise. But he was convinced that the '*Eastern Rebellion of 1916*' will be remembered long for its heroism. The 'I' in the poem is Yeats himself. The poem possesses a remarkable Lyrical intensity. The poem has no metaphysical level.

### **The theme of the Poem**

At the close of the day before the Easter Rebellion of 1916 the people of Ireland were coming out of the shops and officers with vivid faces among the 18<sup>th</sup> century old houses. The poet used to greet them with conventional polite words such as 'good morning, good day etc.' The poet was certain that all of them were living a life of mixed colours, like the dress of a jester. But all that changed suddenly into what was glorious and yet terrible.

The countess Markiewicz was a beautiful woman. She was passing her time in ignorant and pleasant conversation. She spent her nights in attending meetings in clubs and other public places until her voice became sharp and shrewd. No voice was sweeter than hers. Pearse was fond of riding swift horses. His friend Connolly was a rising star. Another man was John MacBride. He was a drunkard and a useless awkward fellow. The violent freedom struggle had changed him completely. As a result 'terrible beauty was born'. Too much of sacrifice can make a man's heart a stone. The hearts which have only one purpose and aim seem to be a stone. The stone does not change or transform. But it will hinder the flow of a stream. The running horse on the road, its rider, the flying birds, the uncontrolled way of moving clouds have been changing every minute. A shadow of cloud on the stream also changes. A horse running on the edge and another horse running in water with a splashing sound, the diving long-legged black water female bird with a red and yellow bill and calling male bird all change every minute when they live. But in the midst of all these changes, the stone remains unchanged.

A prolonged sacrifice can harden the heart. We should remember the sacrifices. Their act is like a nightfall but death at its end. Their death did not achieve its aim. There was no need of their death for England may keep its promise of freeing Ireland after the First World War. They were bewildered by their excess love for their country. So they sacrificed their lives in a passion. So the poet writes to remember the sacrifices rendered by MacDonagh, MacBride, Connolly, Pearse and others. They stand transformed. Their excess of love for their county blinded them. But wherever green, the Irish National colour, is worn, the names of these patriots will be remembered with respect. They are not ordinary men. They are completely changed. "A terrible beauty is born."

### **The Imagery of the poem**

The poem is remarkable for the intensity of symbols. These symbols have three important characteristics. They are, 1) directness of expression, 2) a tone of tragic solemnity and 3) a professional quality.

'The close of day' conveys the image of an evening sky of a pale dusk. It is linked with the 'grey eighteenth century houses'. The persons whom the poet describes are contemporary but they come from eighteenth century houses. Their faces are vivid. This antithesis suggests

transformation. It is the central theme of the poem. The heroes represented in the poem were common men and women. They are now completely transformed through sacrifice and bloodshed. The whole poem is focussed on a single phrase – ‘terrible beauty’. ‘Terrible’ suggests ‘terror, destruction and thrilling suspense but ‘beauty’ is contradictory image. When the two images are mixed up and reconciled, a new beauty is evoked. Two basic antithetical symbols are related to the central idea of ‘transformation’. They are ‘stone’ and ‘stream’. ‘Stream’ represents change. But ‘stone’ represents immobility. Hearts with one purpose are like a stone placed in the midst of a living stream. At the same time the stone is enchanting and hungry for souls. Finally, hearts are changed completely. The stone dissolves and a new beauty is born.

## HAWK ROOSTING

TED HUGHES

### Introduction

Ted Hughes was born on August 17, 1930. He belongs to West Yorkshire and is proud of the dialect which he links to Middle English poetry. He says, without it I doubt it’ I would ever have written verse. After two years of national service in Royal Air Force, he went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, He preferred to study anthropology and archaeology instead of pursuing the English course. He passed out in 1954. He married Sylvia Plath, the famous poet, in 1956. The couple travelled in France and settled down in a Spanish village on the seashore. They went to America in 1957 and his first collection of poems, *The Hawk in the Rain* received much acclaim and the New York Poetry centre’s First publication’s award. The Guggenheim Fellowship helped him to travel widely in America. In December 1959, the poet couple settled in London. He separated from Sylvia Plath and her suicide in 1963 left a mental scar on Hughes. A dark magnificence can be seen in his poetry, *Crow*, published in 1970.

Two major influences on Ted Hughes are the Bible and Shakespeare. The dramatist left an early and indelible impact. On reading *King Lear* while at school he remarked, “I suddenly realised that Shakespearean language was ... it was super-crude. It was backyard improvisation. It was dialect taken to the limit. That was it ..... it was inspired dialect”. Such language, plain and powerful could be the distinguishing feature of this verse. An outburst of emotional energy sweeps away all sentiment. *The Old Testament* has influence the poet considerable in his themes.

‘His lyricism is Gothic and is motivated chiefly by weather and beasts and stones.’ He was intimately acquainted with the mourns of Yorkshire and the animals grew in his imagination and his poems are concerned with them. The poet feels the insensitivity of the modern world too deeply.

And stabbing somebody through the midriff  
Was too like striking a match  
Too like potting a snooker ball

Like Lawrence, Hughes feels the horror of technology as the cause of callosity. Lack of our powers of sympathy has broken off our continuity from nature.

In his poems, nature is not the harmonious Words-Worthing solace. Nature is depicted piecemeal. His birds and beasts are solitary figures. As Roland Barthes observes "Nature becomes a fragmented space, made up of objects, solitary and terrible, because links between them are only potential".

This piece, 'Hawk Roosting ' is a daring attempt and achievement. In this hawk, Nature is thinking. The consciousness of the bird is expressed in human language and concepts. "The hawk is free from falsifying dreams sophistries and arguments which distress and deflect men."

In his interview with **London Magazine**, Hughes said, 'The poem of mine usually cited for violence is the one about the Hawk roosting; this drowsy hawk sitting in a wood and talking to itself. That bird is accused of being a Fascist .....the symbol of some horrible totalitarian genocides dictator. Actually, what I had in mind was that in this hawk, Nature is thinking. Simply Nature, It is not so simple may be because Nature is no longer so simple I intended some creator like the Jehovah in Job but more feminine. When Christianity kicked the devil out of Job what they actually kicked out was Nature .... and Nature became the devil."

When one peruses critical opinions on Ted Hughes, one agrees with Archibald MacLeish that

A poem should not mean

But be

The simplest approach to the poem is to interpret it as a plea for the life of instinct that reflection. The hawk is a God-like creation of Hughes sweeping all arguments away, to justify its being

**roosting** : perched on top in an attitude of relaxation

## **PROSE : DETAILED**

### **Thomas Streans Eliot's The Metaphysical Poets**

#### **How does Eliot defend the Metaphysical poets?**

T.S.Eliot's essay on the metaphysical poets, contributed to Professor Grierson's edition of the 'Metaphysical Lyrics and poems of the Seventeenth Century' marks a turning point in the history of English literary criticism.

Eliot begins his praise of the metaphysical poets by praising Grierson, the editor of metaphysical poetry; He says that, by editing metaphysical poetry. Grierson has rendered a service of some importance. "Eliot says that there are many kinds and shades of metaphysical poetry. It is stupid to group them together under one head and condemn them all in a sweeping manner. Donne's metaphysical poetry has 'late Elizabethan' qualities. His feeling is close to Chapman's. 'The courtly' metaphysical poetry is derived from Ben Jonson who, in turn, borrowed extensively from the Latin. Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw have a devotional quality which was echoed long after by Christina Rossetti and Francis Thomson. Crashaw's less sectarian poems have the flavour of Italian poetry.

Even in the use of 'conceit' the metaphysical are markedly different from one another. Donne and Cowley elaborately spun out their conceits. Thus Donne uses the comparison of lovers to a pair of compasses. Cowley elaborates on the common place comparison of the world to a chessboard through several long stanzas. Some metaphysical poets crowd their poems with a mass of association. Thus Donne, In his ***A Valediction: of weeping***, starts with the comparison of the tear to the geographer's globe and winds up with the comparison of the tear to the deluge. In some other poems, Donne indulges in startling and sudden contrast as in the following line from 'The Relic'

'A bracelet of bright hair about the bone'

Associating 'bright hair' with 'bone' has a startling effect. Such shocking telescoping of images is common in Shakespeare, Middleton, Tourneur and Webster whom Donne knows so well. Thus there are marked differences among the metaphysical poets and it serves no purpose to group all these poets together and condemn them at one stroke. Such a criticism is an indiscriminate act.

Johnson condemned the metaphysical poets in an indiscriminate way. He said that the metaphysical poetry "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together'. Eliot says that this criticism is probably true of the worse metaphysical poets. Eliot also points out Johnson himself are not free from such heterogeneity of material. Eliot takes a passage from Johnson's ***The Vanity of Human Wishes*** and shows that it contains contrasting ideas. Different in degree – the very fault condemned by Johnson in the metaphysical poets. Eliot concludes that Heterogeneity of material compelled into unity is a feature of all poetry, not of metaphysical poetry alone.

Eliot quotes from Herbert's ***Ode upon a question moved and*** shows that the heterogeneity of ideas contributes to its richness. The sentences in this poem are involved. Such complex structures represent the complex thought and feeling of the poet.

Eliot says that the metaphysical poets are directly descended from the later Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets. These dramatists were directly or indirectly affected by Montaigne, a very complex prose writer. Ben Jonson and Chapman were erudite. They incorporated what they read into their writings. In their writings especially in Chapman's writings, thoughts are 'felt'. In their works, one sees a 'direct sensuous apprehension of thought or a recreation of thought into feeling'. One sees the same phenomenon in Donne's and Herbert's poetry. Thus Eliot establishes the point that the metaphysical poets were descended from the writer of the previous century. They maintained the poetic tradition intact.

The tradition is not maintained by Tennyson and Browning. In these poets, one finds only feeling and no thought. Their sensibility is split or dissociated, whereas Donne and the other metaphysical poets had a unified sensibility. These metaphysical poets could feel a thought as easily as they could feel the odour of a rose. They could combine totally different experiences into new wholes. In this connection Eliot describes the 'synthetic' work of the poet as follows:

"When poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experiences; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, and

fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes”.

The unified sensibility of the metaphysical poet was unfortunately dissociated in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This dissociation continued down the centuries. Milton and Dryden revolted against ‘theratiocinative and the descriptive’. They did not think and feel simultaneously. Their thinking and feeling were not unbalanced. This dissociation took a far worse turn in the Romantic Age. In Shelley and Keats, there is only a very feeble struggletoward unification of sensibility. As for the Victorian poets Tennyson and Browning, they merely ‘ruminated’.

The last point made by Eliot is that our civilization, being highly complex, requires that poetry reflecting the complex civilization also be equally complex. The poetic mode of the metaphysical has, therefore, to be revived in our time.

“Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into this meaning”.

### **Eliot’s concept of Dissociation of sensibility**

Eliot explains his concept of dissociation of sensibility in his essay “The Metaphysical Poets”.

Eliot is of the opinion that the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century have a peculiar sensibility – they felt a thought as readily as they felt the smell of a rose. They thought and felt simultaneously. They possessed a unified sensibility which could synthesize and unify disparate experiences into complex new wholes. Thus they could unify experiences as heterogeneous as making love, cooking food, typing etc. They were able to ‘devour’ and digest any experience. As a result of this unified sensibility, the metaphysical poets wrote poetry rich in associations and allusions.

In a later half of the seventeenth century, however, the unified sensibility was dissociated or split up. Poets like Milton and Dryden were in capable of feeling a thought. Feeling and thought were not balanced in their writing. Because of the lack of intellectual content, their feeling became crude and coarse. The feeling expressed in Gray’s *Elegy* is cruder than the feeling expressed in Marvell’s *Coy Mistress*, though both are ‘graveyard’ poems. This is because Marvell both thinks and feels, whereas Gray only feels. This dissociation of sensibility took a far worse turn in the Romantic Age. Shelley and Keats made only a feeble attempt at unifying their sensibility. As for the Victorian poets Tennyson and Browning, they merely ‘ruminated’. They did not make any attempt at unifying their sensibility.

Eliot points out that in our age the sensibility continues to be in a state of dissociation. Eliot would like to rectify this sorry state of affairs. He says that modern age is very complex and so modern poetry has to be correspondingly complex. Only a complex

poetry and do justice to the complex world around us And complex poetry can be written only if the dissociated sensibility is unified.

### **PROSE : NON DETAILED**

#### **The Hero as Poet. Dante: Shakespeare.**

**Thomas Carlyle**

A man can be anyone. He is what profession he takes up.

This universe has a mystery in all times and places. It is an open secret which is open to all and seen by almost none. Vates bring such things to the light of people. Vates can be either a Prophet or a Poet in some old language. Vates Prophet explains the moral side while Vates Poet explains the aesthetic side of the mystery of the universe. The former explains what to do and the latter explains what to love. Both cannot be disjointed because the good is beautiful and the beautiful has in it the good.

Since a man can be anyone, he can be a poet if he has some skills and can be noticeable. If he is noticeable throughout the world they are termed as universal poets by the critics.

True Poetry and true Speech must have some difference, some say. Both stem from deep thoughts. If True Poetry is a song, True Speech has accent. Basically, both are melodious. Therefore, no one is inferior to each other among Vates Prophet and Vates Poet. Both are Heroic Gifts and are admired equally by man.

There are two great people: Dante and Shakespeare. They are Saints of Poetry.

Dante lived five centuries before the speaker. Only a portrait and a book is there to know about him. He was born at Florence, in the upper class society, in 1265. His education was the best of that time. He was a soldier then on embassy then one of the Chief Magistrates of Florence. Beatrice Portinari, a girl he fell in love with, married another and died soon after. She is the subject of most of his poems. When he was in power, his own friends in his party proved deceitful and the State snatched all his property and he was abandoned from the place. All these miseries he brooded over resulted in the creation of his "Divine Comedy." He worked for this in solace and exile. It has his whole history and he died after that at the age of 56 in Ravenna.

Normal speech becomes musical when delivered with deep passion. There are also pretenders who express in a musical way without deep passion.

Thomas Carlyle calls his 'Divine Comedy' a song. It uses Terza Rima stanza form. The depth sincerity of it makes it musical. Thomas Carlyle says that no other work known to him is as elaborate as 'Divine Comedy.' His silence is more eloquent than words. His intensity is

present in all. Carlyle prefers the purgatorio than the other two parts of 'Divine comedy'. Repentance is the grand Christian act. But Carlyle accepts that all the three parts mutually support each other. Dante's Hell, purgatory and paradise are all symbols, representing his belief in this universe. Dante is great as he speaks from the heart of man, and speaks to all men's hearts. Dante speaks to the noble, the pure and great in all times and places. Dante burns as a pure star. Just as Dante embodies the Religion of the middle ages, Shakespeare embodies the outer life of Europe as developed then, its chivalries and ambitions. Dante has given us the soul, but Shakespeare has given us the body.

Shakespeare is the chief of all poets. He is the greatest intellect who has left record of himself in the way of literature. He had the power of vision and faculty of thought. In the construction of Shakespeare's plays, there is an understanding as it is present in Bacon's essays. His plays are perfectly constructed as if it came there by its own law and the nature of things. He deliberately illuminates the whole matter. It is due to his seeing eye and his intellectual capacity. Shakespeare is at best in portrait painting or delineation of men and things. He reveals the inmost heart and generic secret. It is a great wonder that how his soul takes us all kinds of men and objects like a Falstaff, a Juliet, and an Othello. It is due to his seeing eyes that discloses the inner harmony of things. He could see and discern what nature meant.

Carlyle praises Shakespeare's faculty to discuss the inner heart of things and the harmony that dwells in it. It is not rhyme that makes one a poet, but the Seeing Eye. We must keep in mind that these divisions are but names. The vital force that dwells in every man is one and indivisible. Morality is the another side of the vital force.

Shakespeare is endowed with the unconscious intellect. There is more virtue in it. Critics say that his plays are products of Nature and deep as Nature. Shakespeare's art grows up from the voice of Nature. New interpretations are possible due to this.

## **TREASURE ISLAND**

### **ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**

At the start of *Treasure Island*, Jim Hawkins is living with his mother and father at their inn, the Admiral Benbow. Life is pretty ordinary – Jim's father is sick, which sucks, but other than that, there isn't much going on for him. Until, that is, a sunburned sailor singing, "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!" comes through the front door of the family establishment. This sailor calls himself a captain and demands a room. He proceeds to settle down at the Admiral Benbow Inn, drink a ton of whiskey, and tell terrifying stories about life on the high seas.

One day, after an old shipmate named Black Dog manages to track down the captain, he gets so worked up that he has a stroke. The captain starts hallucinating and raving about his old life as a pirate. Apparently, the captain isn't a captain at all: his name is Billy Bones, and he was second in command to someone named Captain Flint. Jim doesn't have much time to care about the captain's crazy talk, though: his father dies that same night.

The day after Jim's father's funeral, a blind man appears at the Inn looking for the captain. This man is Pew, and he orders that the captain meet his old shipmates at 10 o'clock that

night. The blind man leaves, the captain jumps up, and then he falls over dead from a heart attack. After some shenanigans with Pew and a bunch of pirates who try to steal Billy Bones's sea chest, Jim comes away with a packet of papers from Billy Bones. He decides to bring the papers to Doctor Livesey, the local judge.

Jim finds Doctor Livesey at the squire's house (a squire is a local lord). The squire is Mr. Trelawney. Doctor Livesey and Squire Trelawney both agree that Captain Flint is a famous pirate and that Jim's packet of papers must contain a treasure map to Flint's fortune. Squire Trelawney offers to put up the money for a sailing voyage to the island shown on the map, since who *doesn't* want to go hunting for treasure? So it's decided: Squire Trelawney is going to go to a coastal town in England right away to hire a ship and a crew, and then Doctor Livesey will come down to accompany him on their quest. Jim gets to go, too, as cabin boy.

While Squire Trelawney is looking for a crew for their voyage, he finds a delightful man, an old cook with one leg named Long John Silver who willingly volunteers to help him choose his crew. Squire Trelawney is really impressed by Long John Silver's manner and intelligence, so he basically hands over the hiring duties to him. Squire Trelawney also finds a nice ship, the *Hispaniola*, and a captain, Captain Smollett. Squire Trelawney asks one of his servants, Mr. Blandly, to stay behind and send another ship after them in August if Mr. Blandly sees no signs of them before then.

And they're off! Jim is having the time of his life, even though he has to work hard. But things take a bad turn one night when Jim climbs down into an apple barrel on deck to get the last piece of fruit and finds himself falling asleep in the dark space. He wakes up to overhear Long John Silver talking to a young sailor, Dick Johnson, trying to persuade Dick to join Long John Silver and his men. Long John Silver knows exactly where the *Hispaniola* is heading, because *he* used to be part of Captain Flint's crew as well!

Jim realizes that the crew is just biding its time until they reach the island, when the sailors plan to rise up against Captain Smollett, kill all the non-pirates, and steal Captain Flint's treasure. As soon as the coast is clear, Jim climbs out of the barrel and runs and tells Captain Smollett, Doctor Livesey, and Squire Trelawney what he has overheard.

When the *Hispaniola* arrives at the island to get a sense of what it looks like), the mood of the crew is clearly growing ugly. But they don't actively mutiny (remember, the crew doesn't have the map, and they also don't have Captain Smollett's sailing skills). Captain Smollett offers them all a round of drinks and sends two-thirds of the crew onto the island to stretch their legs. When the crew is ashore, he and Doctor Livesey ambush the remaining six sailors (including Israel Hands, one of the leaders of the sailors) and lock them below decks. Then they go ashore to find a better place to set up headquarters, a place with fresh water (which the ship doesn't have) that can still be defended. They find an abandoned fort and set up there after a brief fight with a group of surprised crewmen.

Jim, meanwhile, has slipped ashore with the pirates and gone off exploring on his own. He is totally astonished to find a man on the island, Ben Gunn, who sailed with Captain Flint. Ben was marooned on the island three years earlier, so he's a little nutty, but he agrees to help Squire Trelawney and Doctor Livesey in exchange for a thousand British pounds, freedom,



and some cheese. As Jim and Ben talk, they hear the sounds of a fight. Jim hurries through the forest to find that his friends have taken control of an old fort on the island. So he slips into the fort to tell them what he has discovered about Ben Gunn.

After a battle with the pirates, Jim sees Doctor Livesey head into the forest to consult with Ben Gunn. Jim hatches his own plan: he's going to find the tiny boat Ben Gunn mentioned to see if it might be helpful to them. Jim knows that he wouldn't be allowed to do this if he asked, but he slips away from the fort anyway and goes off to explore.

Jim finds the little boat and suddenly gets another great idea: he's going to set the *Hispaniola* adrift from its anchor so that the pirates can't control the ship. Jim rows out to the ship, cuts the line attaching it to its anchor, and watches it get caught in the current. There are only two men aboard the ship, Israel Hands and a man named O'Brien. The two are in the middle of a furious fight when the *Hispaniola* starts to move, so they don't react quickly enough to stop Jim.

Jim eventually manages to get on board the *Hispaniola* again. He sees that Israel Hands has murdered O'Brien, but he has also been badly injured. Israel Hands isn't strong enough to steer the ship by himself, so he and Jim strike a deal to bring the ship around to the secluded North Inlet of the island to beach it safely. Once they arrive at the North Inlet, Israel Hands tries to murder Jim, but Jim gets in a lucky shot, and Israel Hands falls dead into the sea below. Jim climbs down from the ship, wades to shore, and climbs back up to the fort.

It's now the middle of the night and too dark to see what is going on, so Jim is completely surprised to find the *pirates*, and not his friends, waiting at the fort. Long John Silver prevents the other pirates from killing Jim. Long John Silver is playing a complicated game: first of all, Long John Silver is confused. He can't figure out why Doctor Livesey and everyone just abandoned the fort, nor can he work out why Doctor Livesey gave Long John Silver the treasure map. But Long John Silver is dealing with dissatisfaction from his own pirate crew, who are angry that they haven't found the treasure and now the ship is gone. Long John Silver is sure the pirates are going to rise up against him if he shows his confusion or any sign of weakness. So he keeps Jim close to him – he wants Jim to stand as witness that he saved Jim's life if he ever comes to trial.

Doctor Livesey comes by the fort as part of their truce and treats the injured and sick pirates. Jim manages to get word to him that Long John Silver seems to be flipping sides and that Jim has beached the *Hispaniola* on the north end of the island. Doctor Livesey warns Long John Silver that there will be trouble if he goes to look for the treasure, and then Doctor Livesey heads off into the forest.

Long John Silver uses the treasure map to lead Jim and the remaining pirates (Dick Johnson, Tom Morgan, George Merry, and two more guys) to the place marked on the map. They find that the treasure has already been dug up! That's why Doctor Livesey was willing to give them the map – it isn't worth anything anymore. With this disappointment, the pirates turn on Long John Silver. They're about to charge, when suddenly three shots ring out from the forest. It's Doctor Livesey, Abraham Gray, and Ben Gunn. Knowing that the pirates were going to look for the treasure with Jim in tow, the three men decided to follow them

through the forest to rescue Jim (and Long John Silver, since he helped save Jim's life). Three pirates survive the ambush (Dick Johnson, Tom Morgan, and a third) and run off into the forest.

And that's pretty much it. All that is left is wrapping up. It was Ben Gunn who dug up the treasure and moved it to his cave, two months before the *Hispaniola* even arrived at the island. They all carry the treasure back to the beached *Hispaniola*, leave some supplies for the pirates they are planning to abandon on the island (check out "What's Up With the Ending?" for more on this morally gray choice), and sail away. The only men left on the *Hispaniola* are Doctor Livesey, Squire Trelawney, Jim Hawkins, Abraham Gray, Ben Gunn, and Long John Silver. Long John Silver slips away from the ship as soon as they dock at a nearby port to restock their crew and supplies. Ben Gunn gets his thousand pounds as a reward for his help and then spends it all and winds up a beggar again. Abraham Gray, the loyal sailor, saves his money and starts a good life. And everyone else gets plenty of treasure.

## **DUBLINERS**

### **JAMES JOYCE**

A famous old film noir about New York ends with the line, "There are eight million stories in the naked city. This has been one of them." Well, there were about 400,000 stories in Dublin in 1900, and these are fifteen of them. Joyce set up the collection to move from stories about childhood onto stories about adolescence and finally stories about mature life and public life, all within the confines of Ireland's big city.

The first three stories are all about the life of the kiddo. In the first, a boy finds out that his friend and mentor, an Old Catholic priest, had gone crazy before he died. In the second, a boy has a strange conversation with a potential child-molester while skipping school with a friend. And in the third, a boy turns on himself after failing to buy his crush a gift from a traveling market.

Then it's on to adolescence, when things really start to go downhill. For number four, a girl decides to stay in Dublin rather than leave on a ship for Argentina with her lover. A young man enjoys partying with his high-rolling international friends until he loses a whole lot of dough playing poker with them in the fifth story.

In *numero* six, two guys meet up to talk before one of them tries to seduce a young woman. The last story in the section features a boarding house owner who handles her daughter's affair with one of the boarders by trying to convince him to marry her.

Adolescence over? Good, it's time to meet some of our more mature characters. The eighth story gives us a usually well-behaved middle-class family man on a bad night of drinking with his wilder and more cosmopolitan friend. In slight contrast, nine tells of a heavy-drinking office worker who pawns his watch to scrounge up some scratch for even more boozing.

In the tenth story a poor and single middle-aged woman pays a Halloween visit to the boys she used to nanny. Then, we finish out the set with an introverted and sexually unavailable

man finding out the consequences of his rejection of the *one* person he allowed to get close to him. That's story number eleven, and it's a doozy.

Finally, Joyce tells us some stories of public life in Dublin. In the twelfth story, local campaign workers and their circle of friends discuss Irish politics and the legacy of Charles Parnell on the holiday celebrating his memory. *Dubliners*'s lucky number thirteen features an overbearing mother who arranges for her daughter to play piano concerts for money and then causes a major scene when the show doesn't go as planned.

In "Grace," the fourteenth, a man's four friends stage an intervention after he injures himself one boozy night. The fifteenth and final story follows a man stunned by his wife's memories of an adolescent romance after his aunts' annual holiday party, and it's quite possibly one of the most famous short stories of all time.

### **Overview of Dubliners**

James Joyce's *Dubliners* was published in 1914, and it was his first major work of fiction. He'd put out a book of poems a few years earlier. This collection of 15 short stories is important for several reasons. For one thing, it shows us how Joyce, who went on to write innovative and complex Modernist texts like *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, got his start writing simpler tales with more conventional prose. It's also notable as a portrait of middle- and working-class life in Ireland during a complicated period, when the country was struggling towards independence from England and its citizens were searching for a uniquely Irish identity.

### **Plot(s) Summary**

If you take a close look at the protagonists in each of these stories, you'll notice an interesting pattern. The first stories are all about children, and as the book progresses, it moves on to stories about young people and adults, finally ending with a middle-aged man looking back over his life in the last story, 'The Dead.' In a neat literary trick, the book progresses the way a human life progresses.

In 'The Sisters' young boy and his aunt visit two sisters, who are keeping watch over the body of their brother, a priest?

In 'An Encounter', two boys skip class and gallivant around Dublin, till a meeting with a strangely lecherous old man frightens the narrator into retreat.

In the next story, 'Araby', a bazaar called Araby provides the opportunity for a young boy to purchase a gift for his crush, the sister of a friend. However, he returns empty-handed.

In 'Eveline', the title character has to make a decision: should she elope with her sweetheart to Argentina? At the critical moment, she abandons the plan.

In 'After the Race', a young student tries to keep up with appearances, but foolishly spends all his money at the racetrack.

In 'Two Gallants', two down-on-their-luck drifters, Corley and Lenahan, plot to swindle a maid who works in a fancy house.

In 'The Boarding House', Mrs. Mooney urges things along towards a marriage proposal when she sees sparks between her daughter, Polly, and one of her tenants.

In 'A Little Cloud', dinner with an old friend provokes Little Chandler to rethink his own life, including his failed ambitions as a writer and his sparkless marriage.

In 'Counterparts', the frustrated alcoholic Farrington behaves violently in the pub, then goes home and beats his son.

In 'Clay', the hardworking Maria goes to visit Joe and his family. She remembers how she used to take care of Joe when he was little.

In 'A Painful Case' Mr. Duffy has feelings for Miss Sinico, but his prudishness causes him to end the affair. Four years later he learns that she has died and is filled with regret.

In 'Ivy Day in the Commitment Room', Ivy Day celebrates the legacy of the famous Irish nationalist, Charles Parnell. In this story a group of political workers reflect on their work life and Parnell's memory.

In 'A Mother', Mrs. Kearney is an overly ambitious mother who embarrasses herself and her daughter Kathleen during a concert.

In 'Grace', a group of friends hope that religion can help straighten out the bumbling drinker Tom Kernan.

And in probably the most famous stories in *Dubliners*, 'The Dead' follows Gabriel and his wife as they attend a party. Overcome by melancholy, Gabriel reminisces about his life and considers middle age.

Even before its London publication in 1914, James Joyce's *Dubliners* caused considerable controversy due to the material in the stories that was obvious and accessible, available to even the most casual readers and reviewers. The collection all but overflows with unattractive human behaviour: simony, truancy, pederasty, drunkenness (all of them in the first three stories alone!), child and spousal abuse, gambling, prostitution, petty thievery, blackmail, and suicide. The use throughout of the names of Dublin streets and parks — and especially shops, pubs, and railway companies — was seen as scandalous, too. (In the past, fiction writers had almost invariably changed the names of their short-story and novel settings, or discretely left them out altogether.) In fact, including these details delayed publication of the book by years, as potential publishers and printers feared lawsuits by those businesses mentioned by name. Disrespectful dialogue about the king of England, and even the use of the mild British oath "bloody," were thought by many to go beyond the bounds of good taste — and they did. In contrast to his status-conscious character Gabriel Conroy, James Joyce rejected good taste — one of the characteristics that mark his art as Modern.

A precedent existed for Joyce's warts-and-all approach, in the nineteenth-century French school of writing known as Naturalism, but no writer had ever been quite as explicit, or as relentlessly downbeat, as Joyce in *Dubliners*. To this day, despite a more liberal attitude in art and entertainment regarding the issues dramatized in the book (premarital sex, for instance, is hardly the taboo it was when "The Boarding House" appeared), many first-time readers are distracted by the unsavoury surface details of nearly all the stories. This distraction can prevent them from appreciating *Dubliners'* deeper, more universal themes. It can be difficult to see the forest in this book for the blighted, stunted, gnarled trees. Of course, the forest is no fairyland, either. For Joyce's three major themes in *Dubliners* are *paralysis*, *corruption*, and *death*. All appear in the collection's very first story, "The

Sisters" — and all continue to appear throughout the book, up to and including the magnificent final tale, "The Dead."

James Joyce himself wrote, "I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that . . . paralysis which many consider a city." Joyce believed passionately that Irish society and culture had been frozen in place for centuries by two forces: the Roman Catholic Church and England. The result, at the turn of the twentieth century, was one of the poorest, least-developed countries in all of Western Europe. And so images of paralysis recur throughout the collection obsessively, relentlessly, and without mercy. In the first line of "Sisters," and thus the first of *Dubliners* as a whole, it is revealed that Father Flynn has suffered a third and fatal stroke. Later, the unnamed protagonist of the story dreams of a grey face that "had died of paralysis," which is that of Father Flynn himself. This sets the tone for much of the material to follow.

The main character of "An Encounter" wants "real adventures," but is waylaid on his quest for the Pigeon House by a stranger who masturbates — a kind of paralysis because it is sex that does not result in procreation or even love. The *Pigeon House* itself is symbolic: A pigeon is a bird trained always to return home, no matter how far it flies. In "Araby," although the boy ultimately reaches the bazaar, he arrives too late to buy Mangan's sister a decent gift there. Why? Because his uncle, who holds the money that, will make the excursion possible, has been out drinking. Drunkenness paralyzes too, of course. Eveline, in the story that bears her name, freezes at the gangplank leading to the ship that would take her away from her dead-end Dublin life. All three characters venture tentatively outward, only to be forced by fear or circumstance — by Ireland itself, Joyce would say — to return where they came from, literally or metaphorically empty handed. Indeed, characters in *Dubliners* are forever returning home, bereft: Think of the protagonists of "A Little Cloud," "Counterparts," and "Clay." The bereft Gabriel Conroy in "The Dead" never makes it home at all.

Yellow and brown are the colours symbolic of paralysis throughout the work of James Joyce. Note, for instance, that the old men in *Dubliners'* first two stories show yellow teeth when they smile. Joyce's other image of paralysis is the circle. The race cars in "After the Race" conjure images of circular or oval tracks on which starting and finish lines are one and the same, and indeed, the story's protagonist seems stuck in a pointless circuit of expensive schools and false friendships. In "Two Gallants" and "The Dead," characters travel around and around, never moving truly forward, never actually arriving anywhere. Lenehan in "Two Gallants" travels in a large and meaningless loop around Dublin, stopping only for a paltry meal and ending near to where he began. He is an observer, not an actor — and an observer of a petty crime, at that. In one of the most memorable images in the entire book, Gabriel's grandfather in "The Dead" is said to have owned a horse named Johnny who earned his keep at the family glue factory "walking round and round in order to drive the mill." One day, according to family legend, the "old gentleman" harnessed Johnny to a carriage and led him out into the city. Upon reaching a famous statue of King William, however, the horse could not be made to proceed onward, instead plodding dumbly in an endless circle around the statue. Gabriel acts this out, circling the front hall of the Morkans' house in his galoshes,

to the delight of all. Conventionally, the circle is a symbol of life with positive connotations, as in wedding rings and Christmas wreaths. In *Dubliners*, however, it means an insuperable lack of progress, growth, and development. It means paralysis.

Joyce's second great theme here is corruption; that is, contamination, deterioration, perversity, or depravity. Because corruption prevents progress, it is closely related to the theme of paralysis — and indeed, corruption is almost as prevalent in *Dubliners* as paralysis. Again, Joyce introduces his theme at once. In the second paragraph of "The Sisters," the unnamed narrator mentions *simony* (the selling to its members by the Roman Catholic Church of blessings, pardons, or other favors), of which Father Flynn has apparently been guilty. The two stories that follow reiterate the theme. Certainly, perversity and depravity exist in "An Encounter," just as the narrator's unarguably pure love for Mangan's sister in "Araby" is contaminated — and effectively paralyzed — by his uncle's drunkenness. In fact, a subtheme of *Dubliners'* first three stories, as well as "A Little Cloud," "Counterparts," and "A Mother" is the corruption of childhood innocence — seen in the former stories from the child's point of view, and in the latter from the perspective of the corrupting adults.

Corruption returns in various guises throughout the book. In "The Boarding House," Mrs. Mooney hopes to earn money from the young woman living under her roof, and thus gives Polly "the run of the young men" there. In "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," the canvassers work for money, rather than out of enthusiasm on behalf of the candidate they support, and some of them in fact seem contemptuous of that candidate. "A Mother" returns to the theme of corruption, as the concerts staged by Holohan are patriotic in nature (a celebration of Irish culture), and yet Mrs. Kearney's only concern is the money promised to her daughter. Finally, in "Grace," the purity of Christian faith in God clearly has been corrupted by the institution of the Catholic Church — then further corrupted by types like Kernan's friends, who seem to mean well but misunderstand almost everything about their own faith. By discouraging him from drinking, Kernan's friends have probably saved his life, but they have done so by means of a sort of parody of real religion.

Joyce's third and last major theme in *Dubliners* is death. He links this theme closely to the prior two, and without much effort, as paralysis often precedes death, and corruption could be defined as resulting from a kind of spiritual or moral death. Once more, Joyce introduces his theme from the get-go: The events of "The Sisters" are caused by the death of Father Flynn, whose corpse the story's boy protagonist eventually sees face to face. Deaths are also implied in this story, and in "Araby" — those of the boys' parents, absent from both tales. Thereafter, death follows death in *Dubliners*: Dead is the priest who last lived in the house in "Araby"; Eveline's mother in "Eveline"; Mrs. Mooney's father in "The Boarding House"; Maria, perhaps, in "Clay" (the title of which symbolizes death itself); Mrs. Sinico (by suicide) in "A Painful Case"; Charles Parnell in "Ivy Day"; and finally Michael Furey and the other inhabitants of the churchyard in which he lays buried in "The Dead." Those are only the actual deaths in the book; add spiritual and moral deaths, and *Dubliners* grows as crowded with corpses as the Hades episode in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Paralysis, corruption, and death: In *Dubliners*, Joyce paints a grim picture of his hometown and its inhabitants. Keep in mind that he blamed the sorry state of affairs on outside forces

— England and the church — rather than the Irish themselves. Looking back, the writer himself found the book insufficiently sympathetic to Dubliners' best qualities (hospitality, for example). He would address this deficiency in his masterpiece, *Ulysses*, which itself began as an aborted *Dubliners* story. Before that, however, he would tell the tale of a Dublin youth who vows to escape the paralysis, corruption, and death endemic to Dublin, a character based on Joyce himself whom he called Stephen Dedalus. Dedalus would be the main character of Joyce's thematically similar next book and his first novel: *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*.

### **PROSE : NON DETAILED**

#### **A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE PLOT OF THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE**

The title introduces to us the return of Clym Yeobright to his native place Egdon Heath. Egdon Heath was a gloomy wasteland in Southern England. Against this majestic but solemn, brooding background a small group of people were to work out their tragic drama in the impersonal presence of fate and nature.

On the fifth of November, bonfires were glowing in the twilight as Diggory Venn, the reddleman, drove his van across the Heath. Tired and ill, Thomasin Yeobright lay in the rear of his van. She was a young girl whom Diggory loved, but she had rejected his proposal in order to marry Damon Wildeve, proprietor of the Quiet Woman Inn. Now Diggory was carrying the girl to her home at Blooms End. The girl had gone to marry Wildeve in a nearby town, but the ceremony could not take place because of an irregularity in the license. Shocked and shamed, Thomasin had asked her old sweetheart Diggory to take her home.

Mrs. Yeobright, Thomasin's aunt and guardian, heard the story from the reddleman. Concerned for the girl's welfare she decided that the wedding should take place as early as possible. Mrs. Yeobright had good cause to worry for Wildeve's intentions were not wholly honourable. Wildeve was a gay philanderer and was not serious about marrying Thomasin. Later in evening, after Wildeve has assured the Yeobrights, rather casually, that he intended to go through with his promise, his attention was turned to a bonfire blazing on Mistover Knap. There old captain Vye lived with his beautiful granddaughter, Eustacia. At dusk the girl had started a fire on Heath as a signal to her lover, Wildeve, to come to her. Though he had intended to break with Eustacia, he decided to obey her summons to continue as it were his romantic hobnobbing.

Eustacia, meanwhile, was waiting for Wildeve in the company of Young Johnny Nunsuch. When Wildeve threw a pebble in the pond to announce his arrival, Eustacia told Johnny to go home. The meeting between Wildeve and Eustacia was unsatisfactory for both. He complained that she gave him no peace, she in turn, resented his desertion. Meanwhile Johnny Nunsuch, frightened by strange lights he saw on the Heath, went back to Mistover-knap to ask Eustacia to let her servant accompany him home, but he kept silent when he came upon Eustacia and Wildeve. Retracting his steps, he stumbled into a stand-pit where stood reddleman's van. From the boy Diggory learned of the meeting between

Eustacia and Wildeve. Later, he overheard Eustacia declare her hatred of the Heath to Wildeve who asked her to run away with him to America. Her reply was vague but the reddeleman decided to see Eustacia without delay to beg her to let Thomsain have Wildeve.

Diggory's visit to Eustacia was fruitless. He then approached Mrs. Yeobright, declared again his love for her niece and offered to marry Thomsain. Mrs. Yeobright refused the reddeleman's offer because she felt that the girl should marry Wildeve. She confronted the innkeeper with vague references to another suitor with the result that Wildeve's interest in Thomsain awakened once more.

Shortly afterward Mrs. Yeobright's son, Clym returned from Paris and a welcome-home-party gave Eustacia the chance to view this stranger about whom she had heard so much. Uninvited, she went to party disguised as one of the mummers. Clym was fascinated by this interesting and mysterious young woman disguised as a man. Eustacia dreamed of marrying Clym and going with him to Paris. She even broke off with Wildeve who, stung by her rejection, promptly married Thomsain to spite Eustacia. Indeed Eustacia went out of her way to facilitate the circumstances prompting Thomsain's marriage with Wildeve. Clym Yeobright decided not to go back to France. Instead he planned to open a school. Mrs. Yeobright strongly opposed her son's decision. When Clym heard that Eustacia had been witching her children, his decision to educate these ignorant people was strengthened. Much against his mother's wishes Clym visited Eustacia's home to ask her to teach in his school. Eustacia refused because she hated the Heath and the country peasants, but at the result of his visit, Clym fell completely in love with the enchanting yet ambivalent Eustacia.

Mrs. Yeobright blamed Eustacia for Clym's wishes to stay on the Heath. When bitter feeling grew between mother and son, he decided to leave home. His marriage to Eustacia made the break complete. Later Mrs. Yeobright felt loneliness; she relented somewhat and gave a neighbor, Christian Cantle, a sum of money to be delivered in equal portions of Clym and Thomsain. Christian foolishly lost the money to Wildeve in a gamble of dice. Fortunately, Diggory won the money from Wildeve, but thinking that all of it belonged to Thomsain he gave it as a faithful though unrequited lover. Mrs. Yeobright knew that Wildeve had duped Christian. She did not know that the reddeleman had won the money away from the innkeeper and she mistakenly supposed that Wildeve had given the money to Eustacia. Meeting Eustacia she asked the girl if she has received any money from Wildeve. Eustacia was enraged by the questions and in the course of her reply to Mrs. Yeobright's charge she said that she would never have condescended to marry Clym as she knows that she would have remain on the Heath. The two women parted angrily. Eustacia's unhappiness was increased by Clym's near-blindness, a condition brought on by too much reading for she feared that this meant she would never go to Paris. When Clym became a wood-cutter, Eustacia's feeling of degradation was complete. Bored with her life, she went by herself one evening to a gipsying. There she accidentally met Wildeve and again felt an attachment for him. Seeing Eustacia and Wildeve together the reddeleman told Mrs. Yeobright of the



unfortunate condition of her son and daughter in law proved fatal. When she arrived in sight of Clym's house, she saw her son from a distance as she entered the front door. Then as she was thinking how to enter into the house such as to cause least annoyance to Eustacia she saw another man getting into the house. She was too far away, however, to recognize Wildeve. After resting for twenty minutes, Mrs. Yeobright went on Clym's cottage and knocked. No one came to the door. Heart broken by what she considered a rebuff from her own son, Mrs. Yeobright started back homewards across the Heath. Overcome by exhaustion and grief, she sat down to rest and a poisonous adder bit her. She died without knowing that inside her son's house Clym had been asleep worn out by his morning's work. Eustacia did not go to door because as she later explained to her husband, she had thought he would answer the knock. The real reason, for Eustacia's failure to go to door was fear of the consequences should Mrs. Yeobright find Eustacia and Wildeve together.

Clym awoke with the decision to visit his mother. Starting out across the Heath toward her house he stumbled over the body, His grief was tempered by the bewilderment over the reason for her being in the Heath at the same time. When Clym discovered that Eustacia had failed to let her mother in and that Wildeve had been in the cottage, he ordered Eustacia out of his house. She went quickly because she felt in part responsible for Mrs. Yeobright's death.

Eustacia took refuge in her grandmother's house where a faithful servant thwarted her in an attempt to commit suicide. In utter despair over her own wretched life and over the misery she had caused to others, Eustacia turned to Wildeve, who had unexpectedly inherited eleven thousand pounds and who still wanted her to run away with him. One night she left her grandfather's house in order to keep a pre-arranged meeting with the inn keeper, but in departure she failed to receive a letter of reconciliation which Thomasin had persuaded Clym to send her. On her way to keep her rendezvous with Wildeve she lost her way in the inky blackness of the Heath and either fell accidentally or jumped into a small lake and was drowned. Wildeve who happened to be near the lake when she fell in, jumped in to save her and was drowned also.

Originally, *The Return of the Native* ended with the death of Eustacia and of Wildeve but in order to satisfy his romantic readers in a later edition. Hardy made additions to the story. The faithful Diggory married Thomasin. Clym unable to abolish ignorance and superstition on the Heath by teaching became in the end, an itinerant preacher.

### **Dramatic Significance**

The story makes it clear that Hardy feels an obscure volition in the depth of things that curbs our individual destinies under a law greater than ourselves.

The tragic fatality immanent on the concatenation of events heightens the dramatic unity of impression of this classical novel. Indeed Hardy tends to shift the construction of the novel to the inner world: he writes a moral drama and shows us a conflict of

contradictory wills, guided themselves by feelings. The story shows a penetrating search-light into methods and methodologies of plot construction typically characteristic of the genius of the Thomas Hardy.

The catastrophe of Hardy's novels often depends on a number of trivial accidents. Chance exhibits planned divergences of Hardy's tragic pattern. Mrs. Yeobright's first visit to the house of her son is purely accidental and misconceived. She talks to Eustacia and her question is misunderstood by her in another context. This is dramatic irony. The incidents and accidents, so simple and innocuous in themselves spell-disaster. Clym's near blindness is also accidental and it mars the happy consequences of his newly wedded life. Eustacia's sudden meeting with Wildeve, when she goes to amuse herself one evening, rekindles the never completely extinguished desire surging in her blossom, to leave the Egdon Heath. Similarly, the second coming of Mrs. Yeobright to the house of her son with attitude of complete forgiveness and reconciliation, an incident with great future prospects, turns out to be inevitable premonition of bleak despair. At last another apparently insignificant event which comes to occur because of sheer inadvertence or chance causing Eustacia to fail to receive the letter of reconciliation sent to her by Clym confirms the inevitable tragic predicament.

Further probe into the methods of plot construction reveals that Hardy also utilizes what can be technically described as the improbabilities of character besides coincidence of chance in shaping the pattern of his tragic novels. This is vividly illustrated in *The Return of the Native* and brings to light the Shakespearean craftsmanship of Hardy.

Eustacia is abnormal. She is the raw-material for divinity but not so good as a woman or as a housewife. She is moon-struck and is propelled by fathomless mysteries of libidinal impulses of which she is not always conspicuous. The nocturnal impulse of carnal magnetism individuates her being and is the main cause of her social and psychic maladjustment. She mistakenly calls this impulse as love but it is love which transcends human limits and its symptomatic of a kind of madness.

Clym is an abnormal visionary and Wildeve is an abnormal philanderer who is not able to understand the motivation of his ambivalent instincts. Thus the tragedy returns from the conjunctions of abnormal traits in the leading characters who act and react upon one another with peculiar frequencies in the novel at particular instants of space and time.

### **Allegorical Meaning of the Novel**

In this novel, Thomas Hardy created two strong and opposing forces: Egdon Heath, a somber tract of wasteland symbolic of an impersonal fate and Eustacia Vye, a beautiful young woman representing the opposing human element. Throughout the book Eustacia struggles against the Heath, but in the vain. Of course her failure to overcome the environment would seem to prove Hardy's view that man is not the master of his fate. But in attempting to minimize the importance of individual in this life, Hardy has created in the

character of Eustacia Vye, a person of great strength and marked in individuality. Indeed, the reader, contemplating her feels that Eustacia herself to a greater extent and not fate alone, is responsible for tragic end.

### **Draw the Sketch of Wildeve.**

The character of Wildeve is a riddle. He is good man acting villainously. He appears to be the villain of the piece, but he is not really so. He is protagonist to a protagonist (Clym) of the story. By chance all the hostile occurrences of fate and chance incidents happen through him, though he remains unconscious or passive about them. Therefore he cannot be held responsible, even though he is instrumental for all that happens. He is not an ordinary or mediocre man as he appears to be. In fact, he rises to the tragic heights. The author does not intentionally highlight the qualities, for that in the case he would have eclipsed the hero, Clym.

### **His Personality**

Wildeve is a smart young man. He is young and impressive. He possess two great qualities-form and motion. The grace of his movement was singular. It was "pantomimic expression of a lady killing career". He had a profuse crop of hair over the top of his face, lending to his forehead "the high-cornered outline of an early Gothic shield, and a neck which was light build. Hardy says, "Altogether he was in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and in whom no woman have seen anything to dislike".

### **Sentimental Man**

Wildeve is a sentimental man. He is called the Rosseau of Edgon. He is a man of sensitive nature and emotion excitement. His nature is to yearn "for the difficult, to be weary of that offered to care for the remote, to dislike the near". When obstacles come in his way, his love becomes stronger. He himself refers "to the curse of inflammability" that is on him. This accounts for his erratic actions. His sensitive and sentimental nature is both his weakness and as well as strength.

### **His love for Euscatia**

Wildeve's love for Euscatia is the cause of his ruin and tragic end. He marries Thomsain but loves Eustacia. Thomsain cannot give him the excitement and romance he yearns for and finds in Eustacia. He burns with jealousy when he discovers that Eusctacia loves Clym. As soon as he knows this, his revives for her. He does not want to take undue advantages of her troubles. Yet he cannot help her indulging in what Hardy calls "emotional struggling". He does not consider his act of flight with Eustacia bad. He has settled a great deal of money on Thomsain. He thinks that would lessen her sense of injury. But he thinks that he is entitled to live with a greater woman of two.

### **Not a Villain**

Wildeve is not so a villain. Villains have their place in the world of Hardy, but Wildeve is not one of them. He never wants to do a wrong thing. It may turn wrong in the course of doing it. As Wildeve is a man of sentiments, he is not able to check himself and very soon he borders on the wrong. He wants to marry Thomsain but once the marriage is put off he is not anxious to rectify the mistake. In the same way he wants to win the guineas of Christian

and give them back to Thomsain in the presence of Mrs.Yeobright. He himself does not know when the intention changes. In the same way he does not want to do any wrong to Eustacia. He wants to help her in every possible way. But he cannot help loving her and having a desire to live her way. While attempting to run away with Eustacia, he does not show any wickedness. He feels that he is responsible for her situation. He should have done either more or nothing for her. So he is out to help her out of a sense of deep love. In this deep sense of love which makes him sacrifice even his marriage life in the attempt to save Eustacia from drowning.

### **Conclusion**

Intentionally therefore he is not bad. We are responsible for our intentions and not for the result that flow from them. So he cannot be a villain. His only fault is his sentimentality and his adventurous spirit. He calls himself a man "cursed with sensitiveness, and blue demons and Heaven knows what," But for this we cannot blame him. Atleast Hardy would not like us to do so.

### **DRAMA : DETAILED**

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

#### **IMPORTANT THEMES, MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS IN THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

The major theme of this play is the satire of the upper classes. This is a particularly appropriate theme for Wilde to choose because of his experience among upper class people. Wilde's leisurely setting, the country, where almost no action takes place- is a perfect backdrop, because it insinuates that the wealthy do nothing with their time. His characterization is also clever. None of the upper class characters have any real depth, which suggests a one-dimensional nature. They are trivial, and shallow as well. An example of this can be found in the interaction between Gwendolen and Cecily, who immediately profess their admiration for one another and then, suddenly, turn on each other when they are at odds over "Ernest." The only characters that can be seen working are Lane, Merriman, and Ms. Prism, who are not of the upper class. To further this theme, Wilde incorporates many mini-themes, such as the absurdity of social life, the triviality of the wealthy, the importance of money, and the lack of reverence for marriage.

#### **The Nature of Marriage**

Marriage is of paramount importance in the importance of Being Earnest, both as a primary force motivating the plot and as a subject for philosophical speculation and debate. The question of the nature of marriage appears for the first time in the opening dialogue between Algernon and his butler, Lane, and from this point the subject never disappears for very long. Algernon and Jack discuss the nature of marriage when they dispute briefly about whether a marriage proposal is a matter of "business" or "pleasure," and Lady Bracknell touches on the issue when she states, "An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be." Even Lady Bracknell's list of bachelors

and the prepared interview to which she subjects Jack are based on a set of assumptions about the nature and purpose of marriage; in general, these assumptions reflect the conventional preoccupations of

### **Victorian respectability – social position, income, and character.**

The play is actually an on-going debate about the nature of marriage and whether it is “pleasant or unpleasant.” Lane remarks casually that he believes it to be “a very pleasant state,” before admitting that his own marriage, now presumably ended, was the result of “a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.” Algernon regards Lane’s views on marriage as “somewhat lax.” His own views are relentlessly cynical until he meets and falls in love with Cecily. Jack, by contrast, speaks in the voice of the true romantic. He tells Algernon, however, that the truth isn’t quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl.” At the end of the play, Jack apologizes to Gwendolen when he realizes he had been telling the truth all his life. She forgives him, she says, on the grounds that she thinks he’s sure to change, which suggests Gwendolen’s own rather cynical view of the nature of men and marriage.

### **The Constraints of Morality**

Morality and the constraints it imposes on society is a favourite topic of conversation in the importance of Being Earnest. Algernon thinks the servant class has a responsibility to set a moral standard for the upper classes. Jack thinks reading a private cigarette case is “ungentle manly.” “More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn’t read,” Algernon points out. These restrictions and assumptions suggest a strict code of morals that exists in Victorian society, but Wilde isn’t concerned with questions of what is and isn’t moral. Instead he makes fun of the whole Victorian idea of morality as a rigid body of rules about what people should and shouldn’t do. The very title of the play is a double edged comment on the phenomenon. The play’s central plot—the man who both is and isn’t Ernest / earnest – presents a moral paradox. Earnestness, which refers to both the quality of being serious and the quality of being sincere, is the play’s primary object of satire. Characters such as Jack, Gwendolen, Miss Prism, and Dr. Chasuble, who put a premium on sobriety and honesty, are either hypocrites or else have the rug pulled out from under them, what Wilde wants us to see as truly moral is really the opposite of earnestness: irreverence.

### **Hypocrisy vs. Inventiveness**

Algernon and Jack may create similar deceptions, but they are not morally equivalent characters, when Jack fabricates his Brother Ernest’s death, he imposes that fantasy on his loved ones, and though we are aware of the deception, they, of course, are not. He rounds out the deception with costumes and props, and he does his best to convince the family he’s in mourning. He is acting hypocritically, in contrast, Algernon and Cecily make up elaborate stories that don’t really assault the truth in any serious way or try to alter anyone else’s perception of reality. In a sense, Algernon and Cecily are characters after Wilde’s own heart, since in a way they invent life for themselves as though life is a work of art. In some ways, Algernon, not Jack, is the play’s real hero. Not only is Algernon

like Wilde in his dandified, exquisite wit, tastes, and priorities, but he also resembles Wilde to the extent that his fictions and inventions resemble those of an artist.

### **The importance of Not Being “Earnest”**

Earnestness, which implies seriousness or sincerity, is the great enemy of morality in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Earnestness can take many forms, including boringness, so pomposity, complacency, smugness, self-righteousness, and sense of duty, all of which Wilde saw as hallmarks of the Victorian character, when characters in the play use the word serious, they tend to mean “trivial,” and vice versa. For example, Algernon thinks it “shallow” for people not to be “serious” about meals, and Gwendolen believes, “In matters of grave importance, style not sincerity is the vital thing.”

For Wilde, the word earnest comprised two different but related ideas: the notion of false truth and the notion of false morality, or moralism. The moralism of Victorian society, its smugness and pomposity, impels Algernon and Jack to invent fictitious alter egos so as to be able to escape the strictures of propriety and decency. However, what one member of society considers decent or indecent doesn’t always reflect what decency really is. One of the play’s paradoxes is the impossibility of actually being either earnest (meaning “serious” or sincere”) or moral while claiming to be so. The characters who embrace triviality and wickedness are the ones who may have the greatest chance of attaining seriousness and virtue.

### **Motifs**

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text’s major themes.

Puns: *In the importance of Being Earnest*, the pun, widely considered to be the lowest form of verbal wit, is rarely just a play on words. The pun in the title is a case in point. The earnest / Ernest joke strikes at the very heart of Victorian notions of respectability and duty. Gwendolen wants to marry a man called Ernest, and she doesn’t care whether the man actually possesses the qualities that comprise earnestness. She is, after all, quick to forgive Jack’s deception, in embodying a man who is initially neither “earnest” nor “Ernest,” and who, through forces beyond his control, subsequently becomes both “earnest” and “Ernest,” Jack is a Walking, breathing paradox and a complex symbol of Victorian hypocrisy.

In Act III, when Lady Bracknell quips that until recently she had no idea there were any persons “Whose origin was a Terminus,” she too is making an extremely complicated pun. The joke is that a railway station is as far back as Jack can trace his identity and therefore a railway station actually is his “origin,” hence the pun. In Wilde’s day, as in the England of today, the first stop on a railway line is known as the “origin” and the last stop as the “terminus.” There’s also a whole series of implicit subsidiary puns on words like line and connection that can refer to either ancestry or travel. Wilde is poking fun at Lady Bracknell’s snobbery. He depicts her as incapable of distinguishing between a railway line and a family line, social connections and railway connections, a person’s ancestral origins and the place where he chanced to be found, in general, puns add layers of meaning to the characters’ lines and call into question the true or intended meaning of what is being said.

**Inversion:** One of the most common motifs in *The Importance of Being Earnest* is the notion of inversion, and inversion takes many forms. The play contains inversions of thought, situation, and character, as well as inversions of common notions of morality or philosophical thought, when Algernon remarks, "Divorces are made in Heaven," he inverts the cliché about marriages being "made in heaven." Similarly, at the end of the play, when Jack calls it "a terrible thing" for a man to discover that he's been telling the truth all his life, he inverts conventional morality. Most of the women in the play represent an inversion of accepted Victorian practices with regard to gender roles. Lady Bracknell usurps the role of the father in interviewing Jack, since typically this was a father's task, and Gwendolen and Cecily take charge of their own romantic lives, while the men stand by watching in a relatively passive role. The trick that Wilde plays on Miss Prism at the end of the play is also a kind of inversion: The trick projects onto the play's most fervently moralistic character the image of the "fallen woman" of melodrama.

**Death:** Jokes about death appear frequently in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Lady Bracknell comes onstage talking about death, and in one of the play's many inversions, she says her friend Lady Harbury looks twenty years younger since the death of her husband, with respect to Bunbury, she suggests that death is an inconvenience for other – she says Bunbury is "shilly-shallying" over whether "to live or to die." On being told in Act III that Bunbury has died suddenly in accordance with his physicians' predictions, Lady Bracknell commends Bunbury for acting "under proper medical advice." Miss Prism speaks as though death were something from which one could learn a moral lesson and piously says she hopes Earnest will profit from having died. Jack and Algernon have several conversations about how to 'kill Jack's imaginary brother. Besides giving the play a layer of dark humour, the death jokes also connect to the idea of life being a work of art. Most of the characters discuss death as something over which a person actually has control, as though death is something over which a person actually has control, as though death is a final decision one can make about how to shape and colour one's life.

**The Dandy:** To the form of Victorian melodrama, Wilde contributed the figure of the dandy, a character who gave the form a moral texture it had never before possessed in Wilde's works, the dandy is a wittily, overdressed, self-styled philosopher who speaks in epigrams and paradoxes and ridicules the cant and hypocrisy of society's moral arbiters. To a very large extent, this figure was a self-portrait, a stand-in for Wilde himself. The dandy isn't always a comic figure in Wilde's work, in *A Woman of No Importance* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; he takes the form of the villains Lord Illingworth and Lord Henry Wotton, respectively. But in works such as *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde seems to be evolving a more positive and clearly defined moral position on the figure of the dandy. The dandy pretends to be all about surface, which makes him seem trivial, shallow, and ineffectual, Lord Darlington and Lord Goring (in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *An Ideal Husband*) both present themselves this way. In fact, the dandy in both plays turns out to be something very close to the real hero. He proves to be deeply moral and essential to the happy resolution of the plot.

*In the Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon has many characteristics of the dandy, but he remains morally neutral throughout the play. Many other characters also express dandiacal sentiments and views. Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell are being dandiacal when they assert the importance of surfaces, style, or 'profile,' and even Jack echoes the philosophy of the dandy when he comes onstage asserting that "pleasure" is the only thing that should "bring one anywhere." For the most part, these utterances seem to be part of Wilde's general lampooning of the superficiality of the upper classes. The point is that it's the wrong sort of superficiality because it doesn't recognize and applaud its own triviality. In fact, Cecily, with her impatience with self-improvement and conventional morality and her curiosity about "wickedness," is arguably the character who, after Algernon, most closely resembles the dandy. Her dandiacal qualities make her a perfect match for him.

### Symbols

"Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Double Life: The double life is the central metaphor in the play, epitomized in the notion of Bunbury" or "Bunburying." As defined by Algernon, "Bunburying is the practice of creating an elaborate deception that allows one to misbehave while seeming to uphold the very highest standards of duty and responsibility. Jack's imaginary, wayward brother Ernest is a device not only for escaping social and moral obligations but also one that allows Jack to appear far more moral and responsible than he actually is. Similarly, Algernon's imaginary invalid friend Bunbury allows Algernon to escape to the country, where he presumably imposes on people who don't know him in much the same way he imposes on Cecily in the play, all the while seeming to demonstrate Christian charity. The practice of visiting the poor and the sick was a staple activity among the Victorian upper and upper-middle classes and considered a public duty. The difference between what Jack does and what Algernon does, however, is that Jack not only pretends to be something he is not, that is, completely virtuous, but also routinely pretends to be something he is not, that is, completely virtuous, but also routinely pretends to be someone he is not, which is very different. This sort of deception suggests a far more serious and profound degree of hypocrisy. Through these various enactments of double lives, Wilde suggests the general hypocrisy of the Victorian mindset.

Food: Food and scenes of eating appear frequently in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and they are almost always sources of conflict. Act I contains the extended cucumber sandwich joke, in which Algernon, without realizing it, steadily devours all the sandwiches. In Act II, the climax of Gwendolen and Cecily's spat over who is really engaged to Ernest Worthing comes when Gwendolen tells Cecily, who has just offered her sugar and cake, that sugar is "not fashionable any more" and "cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays." Cecily responds by filling Gwendolen's tea with sugar and her plate with cake. The two women have actually been insulting each other quite steadily for some time, but Cecily's impudent actions cause Gwendolen to become even angrier, and she warns Cecily that she "may go too far." On one level, the jokes about food provide a sort of low comedy, the Wildean



equivalent of the slammed door or the pratfall. On another level, food seems to be a stand-in for sex, as when Jack tucks into the bread and butter with too much gusto and Algernon accuses him of behaving as though he were already married to Gwendolen. Food and gluttony suggest and substitute for other appetites and indulgences.

Fiction and Writing: Writing and the idea of fiction figure in the play in a variety of important ways. Algernon, when the play opens, has begun to suspect that Jack's life is at least partly a fiction, which, thanks to the invented brother Ernest, it is. Bunbury is also a fiction, when Algernon says in Act I, "More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read," he may be making a veiled reference to fiction, or at least reading material perceived to be immoral, in Act II, the idea of fiction develops further when Cecily speaks dismissively of "three-volume novels" and Miss Prism tells her she once wrote one herself. This is an allusion to a mysterious past life that a contemporary audience would have recognized as a stock element of stage melodrama. Cecily's diary is a sort of fiction as well: in it, she has recorded an invented romance whose details and developments' she has entirely imagined. When Cecily and Gwendolen seek to establish their respective claims on Ernest Worthing, each appeals to the diary in which she recorded the date of her engagement, as though the mere fact of having written something down makes it fact. Ultimately, fiction becomes related to the notion of life as an art form. Several of the characters attempt to create a fictional life for themselves which then, in some capacity, becomes real. Wilde seems to regard as the most fundamentally moral those who not only freely admit to creating fictions for themselves but who actually take pride in doing so.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST:**

### **A FARCICAL PLAY**

A farce is a comic play in which the audience is asked to accept impossible or highly improbable situations for the time being. It differs radically from comedy, in that the audience must believe, for if the personages are to appear real – and they must, as characters is of prime importance in comedy – they must move about in real situations, or at least such as we can give credence to. In a farce, then, what the characters do is of more importance than what they are. The importance of *Being Earnest* is a farce, one of the best ever written, cleverly constructed and delightfully amusing. There is only the slightest attempt at the sketching of character, while most of the personages are at best but caricatures; the author's skill is brought to bear chiefly upon the situations and the lines. It so happens that this farce contains more clever lines, puns, epigrams, and deft repartees than any other of modern times, but these are after all accessory. A farce may be written without these additions – it might well be pure pantomime. Wilde has thrown them in for full measure.

### **Farcical Situations**

The very episode of Jack being found in a handbag in a cloak-room of a railway station, the misplacement of the baby with three-volume novels written by Miss Prism is in keeping with the novel's farcical trait.

### **The First Act Smoothly Leads to Second Act**

The first act should be carefully studied after a reading of the entire play. It is noteworthy, especially how the very comic scene in the second act – where Jack enters “in the deepest mourning” – is prepared for and led up to. In order that this scene shall be a surprise, and that the appearance of Jack without a spoken word, shall evoke a series of recognitions in the mind of the audience, and a correlation of hitherto unknown facts, the preparation in the first act must be skilfully done. The very casualness and apparent triviality of the dialogue tend to throw us off our guard. This is in a manner comparable with the art of the magician who, while calling attention to a dexterous feat of legerdemain with his right hand, prepares the next trick with his left. So, in the first act, we are scarcely aware of the importance of Algernon’s disquisition on “Bunburying,” or of Algernon’s writing the address which Jack gives to Gwendolen “on his shirt-cuff,” so nonchalantly are these points introduced. Yet, when the scene in question – in Act II – comes, we are perfectly acquainted with the necessary facts.

### **Farcical Tone Enhanced by Witty Dialogues**

That farce can be independent of clever dialogue is, as we have said, true, but when this can be added and made to fit into the action and further it, so much the better for farce. Oscar Wilde could not resist the temptation to be witty, though this practice was often detrimental to the rest of the work. In *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, indeed, the wit covers occasional bungling in the plot. But in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde found a form which he could make “personal,” and plot and wit go hand in hand. Take, for instance, the following dialogue from the first act:

ALGERNON: Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don’t think you ever will be.

JACK: Why on earth do you say that?

ALGERNON: Well, in the first place, girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don’t think it right.

JACK: Oh, that is nonsense,

ALGERNON: It isn’t. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don’t give my consent.

### **Usage of Epigrams for Farcical Purpose**

The epigram is not forced, as many epigrams are forced in the first act of *A Woman of No Importance*; it is in keeping with the characters and situation. At the same time it serves the ends of drama, by advancing the story and affording some insight into the character of the personages.

The third act of a farce – and it is extremely dangerous to extend a farce to more than three acts – is usually difficult. The effort to maintain interest for two acts often leaves a dramatist exhausted by the time he comes to conclude.

But, the concluding act lives up to its farcical ambience. A well planned denouement extricable all the complications and the lovers reconcile with their respective beloveds.

The Name “Ernest” Being the Cause of Falling in Love

Both Gwendolen and Cecily's rapturous reaction to a particular name "Ernest" is typically farcical. The name becomes an important factor in giving their consent to their lover's proposal. Equally farcical is when the truth is unraveled both the lovers, Jack and Algernon, to appease their beloveds decide to re-christen themselves as Ernest. Though none of them are earnest in nature, in actuality they show their queer zealotry to name themselves as 'Ernest'. This particular theme is very much farcical.

## **THE CHARACTERIZATION IN THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

### **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

#### **(1) JACK WORTHING**

##### **Introduction**

Jack Worthing, like the other main characters in Wilde's play, is less a realistic character and more an instrument for representing a set of ideas or attitudes. Wilde uses him to represent an upper - class character easily recognized by his audience, Jack also gives Wilde an opportunity to explore attitudes about Victorian rituals such as courtship and marriage. As an alter ego of Wilde, Jack represents the idea of leading a life of respectability on the surface ( in the country) and a life of deception for pleasure ( in the city). His name, worthing, is related to worthiness, allowing Wilde to humorously consider the correct manners of Victorian society.

##### **Anonymous Parentage**

Jack Worthing is the hero of the play. His parentage is in cloud till the play reaches its climax. The story of his lost and found as an infant is quite interesting and amusing. The episode endowed the play with more comical elements. Miss Prism, who is now Cecily's governess, had been a nurse in Lord Bracknell's house. She had a habit of forgetting things. And in a moment of forgetfulness, she placed infant Jack into a leather hand -bag and deposited it in the cloak-room of a railway station. A gentleman called Mr. Thomas Cardew, found him and bring him to his household. He adopted him and gave it the name of Worthing. As Jack himself explains: "Late Mr. Thomas Cardew, gave me the name of worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for worthing in his pocket at that time". He unhesitatingly informed Lady Bracknell of his unknown parentage. On which Lady Bracknell advised him, ... to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex,..." if he desires to marry Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell rejected him for his anonymous parentage; however, Gwendolen finds his origin "romantic and stirring".

##### **A Representative of Upper-class Victorian**

As a recognized upper-class Victorian, Jack has earned respectability only because of his adopted father's fortune. It has put him in a position to know the rules of behavior of polite society. His ability to spout witty lines about trivial subjects and say the opposite of what is known to be true are learned results of his position. When Lady Bracknell questions his qualifications for marrying her daughter, he knows she wants to hear about his pedigree. He recognizes that he needs the correct parents along with his wealth.

### **His Love for Gwendolen**

Jack is deeply in love with Gwendolen and wants to marry her. He finds her to be a very charming girl, he ever saw in his life. He came to London with the purpose of proposing marriage to Gwendolen. His voice stammers when he proposes "Miss Fairfax ever since I met you I have admired you more than any other girl... I have ever met since... I met you," And his stammering is the sign that he is proposing somebody for the very first time in his life. He is not aplomb in his manners like Algernon. But he is quite clever in his own way. And an example of his cleverness is his invention of a wicked younger brother Ernest. Who leads an immoral life and whose irresponsible deeds endowed Jack with opportunities to visit London? He is sure enough that he will "kill" his brother, as soon as Gwendolen accepts him. After consulting a lot with Algernon, he comes on the conclusion that he will inform everybody in his country house that Ernest died of a severe chill in Paris. But Algernon is far more advanced, he reaches Jack's country house in the guise of his younger brother Ernest because he has now developed interest in Cecily and desires to meet her. Jack arrives there in mourning clothes. He informs Dr. Chasuble and Miss Prism about his brother Ernest's untimely death. They both show their regret for the same. Cecily is greatly shocked to see uncle Jack in mourning attire because his younger brother (for whom he is mourning) is still alive and very much present there. Jack is annoyed at the way Algernon is behaving with Cecily and refused to shake hand with him. Algernon is fully enjoying Jack's discomfort. Later on both of them wish to be christened as Ernest in order to please their beloved. However, everything went well for Jack because his real name turns out to be Ernest. His point was: "I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all."

#### His Serious Nature and Love for City Life

Jack Worthing appears to be a serious person. But his seriousness is all a result of his responsibilities as a guardian - a guardian of a beautiful and charming young girl. In Cecily's views, he sometimes appears so serious that she doubts on his mental fitness. Miss Prism thinks that, "Your guardian enjoys best of health and his gravity of demeanor is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility. "He himself explains reasons for his seriousness to Algernon, "When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so."

He finds country life rather dull and uninteresting. He finds no means of joy and amusement in countryside. He is of the opinion that one amuses oneself in town while other people in countryside. He is hardly on speaking terms with his neighbours in the country because they are perfectly horrid people according to him.

### **Encounters with Lady Bracknell**

Jack's encounters with Lady Bracknell, mother of Gwendolen are not at all pleasing. Although Gwendolen has accepted Jack's proposal marriage, Lady Bracknell expresses her desire to interrogate the suitor for her daughter's hand. Jack explained everything frankly

about his anonymous parentage and upbringing by Mr. Thomas Cardew. Jack finds Lady Bracknell to be an intimidating woman and tells Algernon.

"As far as Gwendolen is concerned we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon. I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth."

His second encounter with Lady Bracknell is when Cecily is interrogated by her, before she is giving her approval to her alliance with Algernon. Jack clears Lady Bracknell's doubts about Cecily's character and background and informs her in a tone of irritation.

"I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping, cough, registration vaccination, confirmation and the measles both the German and English variety."

When Lady Bracknell inquires about Cecily's Property, he informs her that she has about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in her name. Soon after knowing Cecily's possession, Lady Bracknell gives her consent to her nephew Algernon's alliance with Cecily, but Jack rejects to give his consent to this marriage.

### **Miss-match for Algernon**

Jack and Algernon do not match with each other. Algernon is jolly by nature while Jack is serious. In the beginning of the play Jack is scrutinized by Algernon for his inscribed cigarette-case. Algernon is showering one after another verbal attack on Jack and he is left with four words, "Oh, that is nonsense". Jack has to reconcile with Algernon on the matter of entertaining him at dinner at an expensive restaurant and in return Algernon will provide him with a chance to converse in private with Gwendolen. Algernon claims to be an immensely over-educated man and Jack retorts.

"Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct and outrage and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Budburying as you call it, has not been a great success for you."

A Worthy Guardian for Cecily : Jack is very good guardian for Cecily. He has adopted a highly moral tone when he is placed in the position of a guardian: And this is the reason why he has invented a younger brother with the name of Ernest, who lives in London. Cecily calls them as "Uncle Jack". He rebukes Algernon to mind his behavior with Cecily.

"As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your talking to a sweet, simple and innocent girl like Cecily is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward."

However, all this is useless because it leaves no imprint on Algernon's behavior.

### **His Wit and Tactfulness**

Of particular significance is Jack's role in the dialogues about social attitudes and rituals, such as courtship and marriage. He often plays the straight man to counter Algernon's humor, but occasionally, he gets the witty lines. Respectability is also a function of Jack's character. Although he leads a deceptive life in town, he represents the ideal of leading a responsible life in the country. He agrees more with the ideas of Victorian

earnestness or duty than Algernon does, however, because he deceives people in the city, he is still a symbol of Wilde's deceptive life of pleasure in the homosexual community. Jack longs for the respectability of marrying Gwendolen and is willing to do whatever it takes. In the long run, he assumes his rightful place in the very society he has occasionally skewered for its attitudes. Wilde is able to soften Jack's respectability and position as a symbol of the ruling class by showing his enormous sense of humor. The funeral garb for his fake brother's death and the story about the French maid both show that while Jack longs for respectability, he still has the wit and rebelliousness to recognize the ridiculous nature of trivial Victorian concerns.

There are several occasions when Jack provides us with amusement and effective remarks. For instance, when he is with Algernon and Lady Bracknell is about to reach there - he talks of aunts that some aunts are tall and some aunts are not tall. "You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt." At another occasion, he says to Algernon, "My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist to one who isn't a dentist." His wit is reflected through his words. When he says to Algernon, "My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl," Jack is aware of the fact that Cecily is taking interest in Ernest (his false brother) and when Algernon expresses his wish to meet Cecily, Jack retorts: "I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen." Algernon says that if he ever gets married, he will try to forget the fact that he is married. Jack retorts that the Divorce Court was especially invented for the people like Algernon. When it becomes a compulsion for him to admit the facts about his imaginary younger brother Ernest, he does so in a witty and paradoxical manner:

"It is very painful to me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However, I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly not have the smallest intention of ever having one in the future."

Algernon mocks at Jack saying that he has an extremely trivial nature, Jack replies:

"Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business in that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too."

### Conclusion

More than any other character in the play, Jack Worthing represents conventional Victorian values: he wants others to think he adheres to such notions as duty, honor, and respectability, but he hypocritically flouts those very notions. Indeed, what Wilde was actually satirizing through Jack was the general tolerance for hypocrisy in conventional Victorian morality. Jack uses his alter-ego Ernest to keep his honorable image intact. Ernest enables Jack to escape the boundaries of his real life and act as he wouldn't dare to under his real identity. Ernest provides a convenient excuse and disguise for Jack, and Jack feels no qualms about invoking Ernest whenever necessary. Jack wants to be seen as upright and

moral, but he doesn't care what lies he has to tell his loved ones in order to be able to misbehave. Though Ernest has always been Jack's unsavory alter ego, as the play progresses Jack must aspire to become Ernest, in name if not behavior. Until he seeks to marry Gwendolen, Jack has used Ernest obligates Jack to embrace his deception in order to pursue the real life he desires. Jack has always managed to get what he wants by using Ernest, and his lie eventually threatens to undo him. Though Jack never really gets his comeuppance, he must scramble to reconcile his two worlds in order to get what he ultimately desires and to fully understand who he is.

## (2) **ALGERNON MONCRIEFF**

### Introduction

Algernon Moncrieff is a member of the wealthy class, life of total bachelorhood in a fashionable part of London. He is younger than Jack takes less responsibility, and is always frivolous and irreverent, As a symbol, he is witness an aestheticism personified. He, like Jack, functions as a Victorian male with a life of deception. Unlike Jack, he is much more self-absorbed, allowing Wilde to discuss Victorian repression and guilt, which often result in narcissism.

### **His Appearance**

Algernon is a wealthy and rich man living in luxury. According to Jack, he is always over-dressed. Neither he denies the fact of his being over-dressed. His dress is immaculate. His clothes and the correct fashion of the period, but they are worn with the slightly flamboyant air of the dandy. The Jacket consist of a formal single-breasted black coat; the trousers are fairly tight; boots are of patent leather; the collar is high or winged; a figured waistcoats, a cravat, and a flower worn in the buttonhole give a touch of color. His hair is parted in the middle and is perfectly straight. He is either clean-shaven or has a small waxed moustache. A monocle would certainly be in the character of Algernon."

### **His Love for Music**

Algernon Moncrieff is a young man of pleasure, who enjoys life to its fullest. He belongs to an aristocratic family, though presently he is in rather poor conditions. He is the nephew of Lord and lady Bracknell and resides in a luxuriously furnished flat in Half-moon Street, London. In the very opening scene we find him playing on piano which reflects his excessive love for music. Though he himself acknowledges the fact, that he does not play accurately on piano. At the same time, he emphasizes that he can produce wonderful expressions and sentiments through his music. In Act I he says to his man-servant Lane, "I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately - anyone can play accurately - but I play with wonderful expression. As far as piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for life."

He shows his awareness of the fact that in a bachelor's house, servants consume too much champagne. A bachelor has no control over servants. He inquires Lane, his servant about the excessive quantity of wine consumed at his last party. Lane retorts that a bachelor's house always have superior quality of champagne and take no interest in inquiring about its use, so servants mostly drink it and that too with their master's

acknowledgement. He is of the opinion that lower order of society ought to set a good example of moral responsibility and which they generally do not. He is a character who seems to be very fond of making paradoxical remarks. See the paradox in the present statement:

“Really, if the lower orders don’t set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.”

The upper class is generally considered to set models for lower class. So here this statement is contrary to generally accepted opinion

### **A Voracious Eater**

Algernon is a rapacious eater. He tells Jack that one should be serious about meals: ‘I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them. “Most of his statements are paradoxical and speak against the generally accepted truths. Later in the end of the play when his true self is disclosed, he kept on eating muffins. Jack blames him to be perfectly heartless because he is eating, while Gwendolen and Cecily are annoyed with them. Algernon replies:

“When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Instead when I am in really great trouble, I refuse everything but food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides I am particularly fond of muffins.”

He is mostly engaged in eating. It appears as if he is a person whose sole aim in life is to eat, and eat. When Jack orders him to leave his house and depart to London, Algernon’s reply reflects his excessive love.

“You cannot possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It’s absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does’ except people like vegetarians and people like that.”

### **His Ideas on Matrimony**

He has got his own practical views on marriage. He certainly reckons courtship to be something romantic, but a proposal of marriage is entirely unromantic in his opinion. When he learns that Jack has come to London to propose to Gwendolen, he describes Jack action to Gwendolen as business” and not as” pleasure”. In Act I of the play, when Jack calls him unromantic, he retorts: “I really don’t see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over, the very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I’ll certainly try to forget the fact,”

### **His Attitude to His Kins**

He does not have a very high opinion about his relatives, especially his Aunt Augusta. He would not mind if his relatives are being criticized by others rather he feels pleased when they are abused. This is again a paradox because nobody could ever feel delighted at his relatives being abused. He says to Jack:



“My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me think of them at all. Relatives are simply a tedious pack of people who haven’t got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.”

He has invented a fictitious friend Bunbury to avoid Aunt Augusta’s frequent high class dinner parties. And the reason being-she either provides him with no women companions or two of them at the same time. He especially dislikes aunt’s putting him next to Mary Farquhar who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. It is very absurd to watch somebody flirting with her own husband in the presence of others. He says: “The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous.” He often leaves London on the pretext of visiting his sick friend Bunbury in the countryside.

### **His Awareness of Games**

Algernon is very expert in Bunburying. He is aware of the “rules of the game”. He has invented a fictitious friend Bunbury, who resides in country and is always sick. This invalid friend provides him with the opportunities to visit countryside. When he came to know about Jack’s “Ernest”, he tells him about his Bunbury:

“You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable.”

### **His affection for Cecily**

His visit to countryside in Jack’s house is a part of his Bunburying. He introduces himself to Cecily Cardew (Jack’s ward) as Jack’s younger brother Ernest. He makes a confession that he is not good enough for the world and requests her to reform him. He tells her that good looks are a share and every man would love to be caught. He admits “I had been bad in my own small way.” He stated in the first act that “the only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.” He declares his love for Cecily in the following words:

“Cecily, ever since I first liked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.”

His proposal of marriage is immediately accepted by Cecily because she has also fallen in love with him as he bears the name of Ernest and is already engaged to him in her imagination. He is ready to undergo another baptism to please Cecily as she is fascinated with the name of Ernest.

### **His Poor Monetary Condition**

We are also well aware of the fact that Algernon is not in a prosperous time when the play opens. He is short of money and as Lady Bracknell puts, “Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon.” We all notice him tearing some letters that he has received (they are all bills which he is unable to pay). He is least bothered about his debts. At one point he himself says, “Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy court are called Algernon.”

### **His Curious and Observant Nature**

In Algernon curiosity is much stronger urge than moral correctness. He does not even hesitate to look inside Jack's cigarette case. He is totally unmoved when Jack's cigarette case. He is totally unmoved when Jack tells him: "It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case." He is a very observant and shrewd person. He knows the tricks to take the things out from other. Again it is his curiosity and shrewdness which leads him to Jack's country. He overhears Jack's country address and from here his Bunburying game starts. He has invented an invalid friend called Bunbury. Whenever he want an escape from town life he moves to countryside on the pretext of visiting Bunbury.

### **His Witticism**

Along with Lady Bracknell, Algernon is given witty lines and epigrams showing his humor and disrespect for the society he will inherit. In discussing the music for Lady Bracknell's reception, Algernon says, "Of course the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk." This is Algernon's wit and wisdom contained in a single line. Occasionally, he even congratulates himself on his humour: "It's perfectly phrased!" he poses and moves luxuriously about the stage with the studied languor of the aesthete who has nothing to do but admire his own wittiness. One might certainly see him as a representation of Wilde's cleverness and position in the aesthetic cult of the 1890s.

He forbids Jack from eating cucumber sandwiches saying that they are meant for his aunt Augusta, but he himself starts eating them and his reply to Jack's question is: "That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt." He offers bread-and-butter to Jack and when Jack begins eating, Algernon again makes a witty comment:

"Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her (Gwendolen) already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be."

He further adds:

"Well, in the first place, girls never marry the man they flirt with. Girls don't think it is right."

### **His paradoxical Remarks**

He goes on making paradoxical statements. Instead of saying "Marriages are made in heaven", he says, "Divorces are made in heaven". A common saying "Two is company, three is none" is beautifully operated by him and comes out before us as "In married life three is company and two is none." He talks about the increasing trends in London's high society: "The amount of women in London who flirts with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public."

Instead of the idiom "washing one's dirty linen in public", he has used "washing one's clean linen in public." While people use the phrase, "the whole truth, pure and simple",

### **Algernon says:**

"The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility."

He thinks about literary criticisms: "You should leave that to people who haven't been at a university. They do it so well in the daily papers."

Jack talks about Algernon as, "being always immensely overeducated." And he tells Jack, "I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result." He is better than Jack in terms of talks. Jack tells him that he has decided to inform everybody that his fictitious brother Ernest has died of apoplexy in Paris, Algernon tells him that apoplexy is a hereditary disease He suggests him that he should instead, say that his brother has died of severe chill and Jack accepts his suggestion.

The promptness with which Gwendolen accepts Jack's proposal is comical. Though the preposterousness of her behavior strikes us at once, we understand that Wilde has deliberately invented comically exaggerated incident as a part of the play's comic design.

### **Parallelism with Wilde**

Parallel to Wilde in deception, Algernon is leading a double life. He uses an imaginary invalid friend, Bunbury, to get out of boring engagements and to provide excitement in the otherwise dull life of Victorian England. As he says, "A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it." This secrecy, of course, was also a facet of Wilde's life, which was unraveling before his Victorian audiences all too quickly by the time the play opened in London. With his irreverent attitudes about marrying and his propensity for a secret life, Algernon represents the rule-breaker side of Oscar Wilde-the side that eventually would meet its downfall in a notorious trial.

### **A symbol of Defending Stringent Victorian Morality**

Finally, Algernon functions as an expression of the lengths to which Victorians had to go to escape the stifling moral repression and guilt brought about by a society that values appearance over reality. Algernon's constant references to eating and his repeated actions of gorging himself on cucumber sandwiches, muffins, and whatever food might be handy are symbols of total self-absorption, lust, and the physical pleasures denied by polite society. Just as institutions such as the church (Chasuble) and the education system (Prism) function to keep people on the straight and narrow ideas, human nature denies these restrictions and seems to have a will of its own. Algernon symbolizes the wild, unrestricted, curly-headed youngster who is happiest in breaking the rules.

### **Conclusion**

Algernon is a proponent of aestheticism and a stand-in for Wilde himself, as are all Wilde's dandified characters, including Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband*, Lord Darlington in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Lord Illingworth in *A Woman of No importance*, and Lord Henry Wotton in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Unlike these other characters, however, Algernon is completely amoral. Where Lord Illingworth and Lord Henry are downright evil, and Lord Goring and Lord Darlington are deeply good. Algernon has no moral convictions at all, recognizing no duty other than the responsibility to live beautifully.

## **MISS GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX**

### **Ignorant of Country Life**

More than any other female character in the play, Gwendolen suggests the qualities of conventional Victorian womanhood. She has ideas and ideals, attends lectures, and is bent on self-improvement. She is a young and charming girl who loves town life, but feels extremely bored living in the country. She cannot fathom how anybody of immense importance can reside in the country. Nor did she have any idea about the presence of so many flowers in the countryside. Although she is fond of living in the town, she says that she hates crowds. This shows a contradictory statement made by her.

### **Her Reaction to Jack's Declaration of Love**

Gwendolen reacts weirdly when she comes to know of Jack's love for her. Without giving Jack the scope to complete his sentence, she bursts into an elaborate speech about how he has always fascinated her and how it was her dream always to love someone by the name of Ernest. When he asks whether she really loves him she replies: "Passionately". She further says that the name Ernest is divine, has music of its own and produces vibrations in her. The name Jack or John, according to her, conveys only domesticity and nothing more. She could never marry a man having the name Jack or John, says Gwendolen. A woman who marries Jack or John would not get a single minute's solitude in her house, Gwendolen further says. But before Jack proposes marriage to her, she immediately accepts the proposal in advance. She then praises his wonderful blue eyes and expresses the hope that he will always look at her exactly in the way in which he is looking at her now. The story of his 'romantic origin' stirs the deeper fibers of her nature! Now her reaction is indeed ludicrous.

### **A Free-minded Women**

Gwendolen was not so obedient girl of her mother. Her wishes are strong and to fulfill them she does not hesitate to defy her mother. When Lady Bracknell commands Gwendolen to accompany her in the next room her response is one of a good girl showing her willingness to join her mother but then tactfully stay with Jack, alias Ernest. She even manages to visit Jack at his country house defying her mother's forbidding order. When Lady Bracknell arrives there in search of her daughter, Gwendolen openly declares that she is engaged to Jack. Her bold steps show a free, willful mind that in fact directs her actions.

### **Gwendolen's Wit**

Like other characters the dialogues of Gwendolen are replete with witty comments. These comments sparkle with her intelligence. When Jack praises her as a perfect woman she replies that she has least intention to be perfect. She intends to develop in various directions and perfection only hinders this process. She ridicules Jack's discussion on weather and comments that such discussion only reveals one's pretention since weather is not the actual subject that he intends to discuss, something else lies beneath it. She reminds Jack of his lapse in formally proposing her when he speaks about their marriage. Her paradoxical comments are incisive and poignant. Her general comment about the current trend startles us: "the old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out." She admonished Algernon when he tries to prevent her from taking with Jack along: "Algy, you

always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not old enough to do that.” We are shocked as well as amused by how the antithetical ideas being incorporated into one statement. We cannot miss the epigram in her assessment of Jack: “the simplicity of your charter makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me: “ Another such comment she makes when Jack asks her to wait for him: “If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.’ In the same vein she describes her father’s anonymity outside family circle:

“Outside the family circle, I am glad to say, papa is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be a proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate. And I don’t like that. It makes men so very attractive.

The paradoxical strain is also present in her explanation of her poor eye-sight and her mother’s role in it. She tells Cecily: Mamma, whose views on education are remarkable strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system. So, do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

She calls uncertainty a terrible subject and hopes that it may last longer. There are ample of such witty comments made by her.

For example

1. “In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing.”
- 2) “I never change, except in my affections.”

For her witty comments she becomes an important source of the play’s humour. Even her trivial comments are seeped in such comical attributions.

When Cecily requests her that they should speak in wisdom, a quick reply comes from Gwendolen : “ An excellent idea! I always speak at the same time as other people.”

#### **Gwendolen’s Temperament towards Cecily**

Gwendolen remains amicable and gentle towards Cecily as long as she does not suspect any amorous relationship between Cecily and Jack. Once this suspicion overpowers her, a kind of hostility tends to show itself in her attitude towards Cecily. She expresses her wariness in this regard with her usual paradoxical manners: “I cannot help expressing a wish you were – well, just a little older than you seem to be – and not quite so very alluring in appearance. Well, to speak with perfect candour. Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.”

The last sentence of the extracted speech suggests her weird conception of history whose interest lies in the incidents of infidelity caused by physical attraction between men and women. But as soon her suspicion turns false she becomes friendly to Cecily. She shows her gratitude telling her: “you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious.” However, again a misunderstanding between the two crops up that result into

bitter verbal exchanges between the two and this continues till everything is clarified. In one such furious verbal duel Cecily tells that she calls spade a spade. Soon comes Gwendolen's queer reply: "I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our soul spheres have been widely different." Her ignorance and resulting wonder that she exhibits after coming to Jack's countryside house amuse us. She is amazed after seeing a variety of countryside flowers. Though she dislikes crowds, she hates seclusion of countryside as she feels the place is not suitable for any socially important person.

### **Few other Amusing Remarks by Her**

Gwendolen's comment is remarkably comical when both she and Cecily being ignored by their respective lovers, she suggests Cecily to cough to draw their attention and when their lover come to them Gwendolen advises Cecily to keep a dignified silence and then shifts her stance telling that "this dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect." When both Jack and Algernon express their desire to be re-christened as Ernest, such generous act on their part elicits an exclamation from Gwendolen and in her characteristic wit she comments, "How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us".

### **Conclusion**

Though more self-consciously intellectual than Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen is cut from very much the same cloth as her mother. She is similarly strong-minded and speaks with unassailable authority on matters of taste and morality, just as Lady Bracknell does. She is both a model and an arbiter of elegant fashion and sophistication, and nearly everything she says and does is calculated for effect. As Jack fears, Gwendolen does indeed show signs of becoming her mother "in about a hundred and fifty years," but she is likeable, as is Lady Bracknell, because her pronouncements are so outrageous.

### **MISS CECILY CARDEW**

#### **Vibrant in Nature and a Keen Observer**

Cecily is Jack's ward and the granddaughter of the old gentleman who found and adopted Jack when Jack was a baby. Cecily is probably the most realistically drawn character in the play. She is charming and immensely pretty. She is quite tall. Being the only granddaughter of Thomas Cardew she is expected to inherit a huge legacy after attaining the appropriate age. She has keen interest in gardening but spurns the idea of studying German grammar, political economy and geography as she finds them horrible. Being jovial in nature, she dislikes Uncle Jack's grim seriousness. It is peculiar to notice her observation on the novels which have happy endings. They simply depress her. Her reaction after coming to know that Miss Prism has written a novel in three volumes is quite worthy in this context. "How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.."

She is also intelligent enough to perceive the development of mutual likings between Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble. We notice her ready intelligence when Dr. Chasuble comes to

visit Miss. Prism who is busy goading Cecily to put her concentration in studying German grammar. Cecily tells Dr.Chasuble how badly Miss. Prism needs a stroll outside with Dr.Chasuble since she (i.e Miss.Prism) is having headache. Thus she makes an opportunity for the lover couple of enjoying some intimate moments.

### **Cecily's Diary**

Cecily has the habit of writing diary on regular basis. When Miss Prism questions about this particular habit of hers, she gives a quick reply: " I keep a diary in order to center the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down, I should forget all about them. "Upon this Miss.Prism tells her that human memory is like a diary that records every incident. However, Cecily contradicts this view by making a witty as well as paradoxical comment insisting that "it (the human memory) usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that memory is responsible for nearly all the three volume novels that Mudie sends us". In fact she ridicules the distortion of facts by human memory. Equally funny is her reaction towards Algernon's praise of hers. When Algernon breaks into an eloquent speech praising Cecily's exquisite beauty, Cecily starts to note down it in her diary and when Algernon wants to have a look into it she declines and tells:

"You see it (i.e Cecily's diary) is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Earnest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from diction. You can go on. I am quite ready for more." Being totally outwitted Algernon starts to cough to hide his embarrassment. Whereupon Cecily tells that while giving dictation one should not cough rather should speak fluently. Also she expresses her ignorance in spelling the word 'cough'. In reply Algernon tells her that he loves her wildly, passionately, devotedly and also hopelessly. Hearing this Cecily tells that in this context 'hopelessly' is an inappropriate word and seems to be meaningless. Her habit of writing diary seems farcical for in such a steadfast way she keeps record of every incident including her lover's adoration and also his coughing.

### **Cecily's Engagement to Ernest**

Cecily's engagement to Ernest suggest another farcical treatment of the play. Long before meeting Ernest (i.e Algernon) she fell in love with him. His unscrupulous ways of his life as told by Jack fascinate her and she is also besotted by his name 'Ernest' she got engaged with Ernest in her imagination she bought herself a ring in his name, and also got a bangle with a true lover's knot, also in his name pledging to wear it always. She made it a point to write letters to herself in his name, thrice a week, occasionally more frequently. Even she broke the engagement once piqued by Ernest's attitude but later forgave and reconciled with him. Meeting Algernon brings her imagination into reality and she readily accepts his proposal. She loves everything about the real Ernest, alias Algernon. She loves his curly hair, his name 'Ernest' and his wrongful deeds that he often commits. Her yardstick of judging Ernest, as her perfect suitor only evokes our laughter for its implausibility which our common sense reckons as a farce.

### **Cecily's Sense of Humour**

With her startling and witty humour Cecily amuses readers. She makes a queer observation on the deteriorating effect of German lesson on her beauty. She also recommends a wholesome meal as an imperative to start an entirely new life. Paradoxes are present in her statements concerning women working for charity and seeming to have progressive mind or the unpleasant talk which is best to be spoken in a candid manner. These elements of paradox become conspicuous in her appreciation for punctuality though herself being an unpunctual. She makes an assessment of the behavior of both Jack and Algernon of eating muffins telling that they do so since they are penitent.

Her ingenuous remarks to Lady Bracknell about her age is also comical. She tells, "Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties."

### **Presence of Satire in Her comments**

Cecily dialogues are impregnated with satirical yet comical elements. The traits are very much evident in her conversation with Gwendolen. When Gwendolen expresses her disliking for crowd, Cecily comments: "I suppose that is why you live in town." In another instance Gwendolen exhibits her amazement at seeing abundance of unknown flowers to which Cecily retorts back: "Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London," Suspecting Gwendolen of her malicious intention to entice her 'Ernest', Cecily tells sardonically: 'No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighbourhood.'" In replying Algernon's frenzied declaration that he can wait for Cecily till she becomes thirty-five, she tells the period is too long for her to wait. Once she wisely comments that importance of business engagement has nothing to do with the beauty of life.

After hearing the comparison of her beauty with pink rose, as made by Algernon, she confesses: "Miss Prism never says such things to me."

### **Conclusion**

If Gwendolen is a product of London high society, Cecily is its antithesis. She is a child of nature, an ingenuous and unspoiled as a pink rose, to which Algernon compares her in Act II. However, her ingenuity is belied by her fascination with wickedness. She is obsessed with the name Ernest just as Gwendolen is, but wickedness is primarily what leads her to fall in love with "Uncle Jack's brother," whose reputation is wayward enough to intrigue her. Like Algernon and Jack, she is a fantasist. She has invented her romance with Ernest and elaborated it with as much artistry and enthusiasm as the men have their spurious obligations and secret identities. Though she does not have an alter-ego as vivid or developed as Bunbury or Ernest, her claim that she and Algernon /Ernest are already engaged is rooted in the fantasy world she has created around Ernest. Cecily is probably the most realistically drawn character in the play, and she is the only character who does not speak in epigrams. Her charm lies in her idiosyncratic cast of mind and her imaginative capacity, qualities that derive from Wilde's notion of life as a work of art. These elements of her personality make her a perfect mate for Algernon.



## **LADY BRACKNELL**

Lady Bracknell is Algernon's snobbish, mercenary, and domineering aunt and Gwendolen's mother. Lady Bracknell married well, and her primary goal in life is to see her daughter do the same. She has a list of 'eligible young men' and a prepared interview she gives to potential suitors. Like her nephew, Lady Bracknell is given to making hilarious pronouncements, but where Algernon means to be witty, the humor in Lady Bracknell's speeches is unintentional. Through the figure of Lady Bracknell, Wilde manages to satirize the hypocrisy and stupidity of the British aristocracy. Lady Bracknell values ignorance, which she sees as "a delicate exotic fruit." When she gives a dinner party, she prefers her husband to eat downstairs with the servants. She is cunning, narrow-minded, authoritarian, and possibly the most quotable character in the play.

### **A Fastidious and Fashionable Lady**

Like most of the ladies of higher class of Victorian society, Lady Bracknell is very fashion conscious. She is well conversant with carrying out her dresses, how to hold skirt, pad at hip, tighten the lace or reveal ankles. She knots her luxuriant hair up with combs and expensive hair-pins. She has a taste for fine music. Her character is marked by her snobbery. She feels proud of her superior social status and judges every individual from that perspective.

### **Paradox in Her Attitude**

Paradox in her nature lies in her hypocrisy while treating her husband. Though she gives lecture on being attentive to husband's needs, she herself behaves very irresponsibly with her husband. What she professes does not seem to match with her own attitude.

### **Her unsympathetic Nature**

Lady Bracknell possesses a mercenary outlook. Self-interest dictates her life's course. Nothing can sway her mind except personal gain. Naturally this particular quality makes her unsympathetic towards Bunbury, a fictitious invalid friend of Algernon and passes comical comment in this regard : "I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die this shillyshallying with the question is absurd. Not do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in other. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to you poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice .... as far as improvement in his ailment goes."

### **A Social Climber**

Her opinions and mannerisms betray a careful and calculated speaking pattern. She is able to go round for round with the other characters on witty epigrams and social repartee. Despite her current position, Lady Bracknell has not always been a member of the upper class; she was a social climber bent on marrying into the aristocracy. As a former member of the lower class, she represents the righteousness of the formerly excluded. Because she is now Lady Bracknell, she has opinions on society, marriage, religion, money, illness, death, and responsibility. She is another of Wilde's inventions to present his satire on these subjects.

As a ruthless social climber and spokesperson for the status quo, Lady Bracknell's behavior enforces social discrimination and excludes those who do not fit into her new

class. Her daughter's unsuitable marriage is an excellent example of how she flexes her muscles. She sees marriage as an alliance for property and social security; love or passion is not part of the mix. She bends the rulers to suit her pleasure because she can. Jack will be placed on her list of eligible suitors only if he can pass her unpredictable and difficult test. She gives him ruthlessly "correct" but immoral, advice on his parents. " I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over. " It matters not how Jack finds parent(s) just that he do it, following the requirements for acceptability.

### **Her Authoritative Manners**

Lady Bracknell's authority and power are extended over every character in the play. Her decision about the suitability of both marriages provides the conflict of the story. She tells her daughter quite explicitly, "Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to someone, I or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact," Done, decided, finished. She interrogates both Jack and Cecily, bribes Gwendolen's maid, and looks down her nose at both Chasuble and Prism.

### **Her Witty and Paradoxical Remarks**

Like other characters in the play her remarks are equally poignant and witty in tone. She refuses Gwendolen's decision to marry Jack on the charge of his unknown parentage. Humour in her comment is noteworthy in this regard.

" You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter – a girl brought up with the utmost care- to marry into a clock-room and form an alliance with a parcel. " Another interesting paradoxical comment of her on Algernon is : " he has nothing, but his debts to depend on."

### **Conclusion**

The most memorable character and one who has a tremendous impact on the audience is Lady Augusta Bracknell. Wilde's audience would have identified most with her titled position and bearing. Wilde humorously makes her the tool of the conflict, and much of the satire. For the play to end as a comedy, her objections and obstacles must be dealt with and overcome.

Lady Bracknell is first and foremost a symbol of Victorian earnestness and the unhappiness it brings as a result. She is powerful, arrogant, ruthless to the extreme, conservative, and proper. In many ways she represents Wilde's opinion of Victorian upper-class negativity, conservative and repressive values and power.

Wilde has created, with Augusta Bracknell, a memorable instrument of his satiric wit, questioning all he sees in Victorian upper-class society.

## DRAMA : NON DETAILED

### PYGMALION

Bernard Shaw

#### Sources of the Play 'Pygmalion'

The very purpose of writing this play was to show that there is no basic difference between the various classes in society. If a girl from a very poor family is kept in a refined and cultured environment and given proper training in speech and manners, she can be identified as upper class. To dramatise this idea he needed a story. He took it from four sources.

1) There is a **myth in ancient Greece**. Pygmalion was a dedicated Greek sculptor. As he was handsome, girls used to stare at him. He found something lacking in each of his statues. He made an ivory statue of a girl. It seems to him his ideal of beauty. He fell in love with it. He called it Galatea. He prayed Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty to make Galatea a living woman. His prayer was granted. Galatea married him. They lived happily.

2) The second source is the Fairy tale of Cinderella. There was a merchant. He had a beautiful daughter. After his wife died, he married a widow. The widow had two daughters. They started torturing the motherless girl. She was made to sleep among the cinders. Hence she was called Cinderella. She planted a hazel plant near her mother's grave. One day the king gave a grand ball. The two evil daughters went there. Cinderella also wanted to go. A white bird from the hazel tree brought her a fine dress. She put it on and went to the ball. The prince saw and danced with her. He wanted to marry her. Before the end of the ball she rushed home. In hurry she left a slipper behind. The prince announced that he would marry the girl whose foot fitted the slipper. The bird guided the prince to Cinderella. They got married.

3. The third source is the story of **Adam and Eve**. Adam and Eve were living in the garden of Eden. They were in perfect bliss. God warned them not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Satan, the ruler of hell, in the form of a serpent tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit. So they were driven out of the garden of Eden and they came to this world.

4. The fourth source is the **Faust myth**. Goethe wrote a play on that and Marlowe wrote Doctor Faustus. Faustus wanted to master the art of Black Magic. He got it from Lucifer in exchange of his soul. Mephistopheles, the servant of Lucifer served him for twenty four years and finally they took his soul.

#### Act wise summary of the play

##### Act I

It is raining. The time is about 11.15 p.m in the night. A number of people have taken shelter in the portico of St.Paul's church in London. There is a lady and her daughter Clara Hill. They are waiting for Freddy, the lady's son. He has gone to bring a cab. Clara is feeling chilly. She becomes impatient. The mother becomes tired. She is waiting patiently. One of the bystanders tells them it is hard to get a cab at that time. The cabbies will not return after having left the people who came out of the theatre at their respective destinations. Freddy returns without finding a cab. He is soaked with rain. The mother sends

him again to search for a cab. The daughter calls him a selfish pig in irritation. Freddy rushes out. He collides with a flower girl, Eliza. Her basket falls down. Her flowers get scattered in the mud. He says 'sorry' and rushes out. She is about 18. She is dirty and poorly dressed. She scolds him in her cockney dialect. She calls him 'Freddy' instinctively. The mother is surprised to hear her calling his son 'Freddy'. She explains the 'Freddy' is a common name as 'Charlie'. She asks the mother to pay for the spoiled flowers. The mother pays her six pence. Clara objects it as not worth.

Now a military looking middle-aged gentle man comes in to take shelter. He is Colonel Pickering. Eliza addresses him as 'Captain'. Eliza requests him to purchase some flowers. He has no change and gives her three pence. He moves away without taking flowers. A bystander advises her to give some flowers to the man who has given her money for there is a person taking notes of her every word. He says that he may be a detective and arrest her for scolding customers in the street. Eliza get frightened. She shouts that she is poor, earning her living and means no harm.

The note taker is Professor Henry Higgins. He is a professor of phonetics. He has come there to study the various dialects spoken by the people. Higgins tells Eliza that she was born at Lisson Grove and asking a bystander how the people are at Selsey. Everyone is astonished. One of the bystanders asks him where Pickering came from. Higgins replies "Cheltenham, Harrow, Cambridge and India". He tells that Clara came from Earls court and her mother from Epsom.

Now the rain stops. The people begin to leave one after another. Freddy had not yet returned. The mother and the daughter leave for the bus-stand. Only Eliza, Higgins and Colonel Pickering are left there. Pickering asks Higgins how he is able to say all these. Higgins replies that his profession is Phonetics, the science of speech. He can spot an Irish man or a Yorkshire man by his tongue. He can say exactly in which part of London and its suburbs one lives. He says further by teaching fashionable speech to those who speak dialects, he earns money also. They go on talking. Eliza accuses Higgins in her cockney dialect. Higgins asks her to shut up and says that a person who speaks like that has not right to live. He challenges the Colonel that he can pass Eliza off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party in three months or get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant where better English is required. Pickering says that he can believe him because he himself is a student of Indian dialects, the author of 'Spoken **Sanskrit**'. He says further that he had come from India to meet Prof. Higgins, the author of 'Universal **Alphabet**'. Thus they meet by chance. Pickering invites Higgins to come with him to Carlton Hotel where he is staying and dine with him.

When they are ready to leave, Eliza begs Pickering to purchase some flowers as she has no money for her night's lodging. Higgins calls her liar. The church bell rings. Higgins takes it as a warning for behaving such towards a poor girl. So he throws a lot of money into the flowers basket.

Freddy comes in a cab. As his mother and sister have gone by bus, Eliza offers to go home in that cab. She tells the cab driver to go to Buckingham Palace. After Freddy has left

she asks the driver to drive her home in Angel Court. He asks for a shilling. As the charge is exorbitant, she walks to her room. For the first time she starts planning her future.

## Act II

Higgins' laboratory is well equipped. It contains all the instruments for recording and reproducing sounds. There is a half human head model showing vocal organs. There are cabinet with drawers. Files of all the old cases are kept inside. There is a piano in a corner. There are comfortable sofa-sets and chairs. Higgins explains to Pickering about his instruments and training methods. Higgins is enthusiastic about all scientific methods. He is careless about himself. He is incapable of understanding the feeling of others. He loses his temper easily. But he is not malicious. Mrs. Pearce comes to inform that a common girl has come to see Higgins. Eliza has come there in a taxi to take lesson and would be ready to pay for it. She pays eighteen pence a lesson to a French lady to learn French. As English is her mother tongue she is ready to pay a shilling a lesson. It is two-fifth of her daily income. If a millionaire pays like that it would be sixty guineas for a lesson. Higgins says that it is a fine offer.

Colonel Pickering challenges Higgins, if he can pass her off as a duchess at an Ambassador's party within six months. If Higgins can, the Colonel will pay for the entire experiment. Higgins agrees. He wants to start the experiment at once. He asks Mrs. Pearce to clean the girl and to burn all her cloths. Eliza starts crying. She says that she has no mother and her sixth stepmother had sent her out of the house. Since the girl is an orphan, they are ready to take her. Higgins offers her a chocolate. Though she is tempted, she refuses to eat it. She suspects them that they may be immoral men and there may be a drug in the chocolate. Higgins eats half and puts the other half into her mouth. Higgins tells her that she will have plenty of chocolates, fine dresses, gold and diamonds and would move in taxi. He asks her to remain under the care of Mrs. Pearce. The Colonel begins to address her as '**Miss. Doolittle**'. Higgins explains to the girl that she would be trained for six months and then put up before the king as duchess. If she is found that she is an imposter she will be hanged. If she passes the test she will be made a lady in a fashionable flower shop. The girl is bewildering. She protests, but Mrs. Pearce takes Eliza to her bed room. The girl is astonished to see the luxury of the room. Giving a dressing gown Mrs. Pearce asks her to remove all her cloths and wrap it round her. Removing under-cloths seems to be in descent to the poor girl. She has no clothes. Mrs. Pearce prepares warm bath water and pushed her into the bath tub. The girl never had taken bath in the whole of her life. She thought that covering herself completely with water would kill her. So she screams.

Higgins tells the Colonel that he treated young girls like pupils when he taught them. The Colonel feels satisfied that no advantage will be taken of Eliza's helpless position. Mrs. Pearce tells Higgins that he should not swear and use words like 'damn it', 'what the devil', 'bloody' etc. before the girl. Now Eliza's father Alfred Doolittle comes there. He is a black guard. He has come to blackmail Higgins. He demands to send her daughter along with him. Higgins agrees immediately. Alfred comes down and says that he was informed that his daughter had come here with a boy in a taxi and he had brought her little luggage. Higgins asks him why he had brought her luggage if he wanted to take her away. Mrs.

Pearce asks Alfred to wait till her clothes come from the tailor. He is upset. He does not want to take her away. He tells Higgins that he wants 5 pounds. Higgins asks him if he has no morals. He replies that he is an underserving poor who cannot afford morals. He adds that he has to pay for everything at the same rate as others. Higgins is impressed by Alfred. He says that if he were to train for three months, he would be a member of the cabinet or a clergy man. According to Alfred these persons lead a dog's life and he wants to remain only as 'undeserving poor'. Higgins ten pounds would make him rich and unhappy. Higgins is impressed by his morality.

While Alfred is leaving, he sees a beautiful lady wearing a Japanese dress, coming. This is Eliza. He cannot recognise her. He is amazed. Higgins and Pickering are impressed. Alfred informs Higgins to beat her if he wants to teach her anything. Now the lessons start. Higgins is severe. He makes her to pronounce every letter correctly. When she makes a mistake, he roars like a wounded lion and calls it 'splendid' when she says correctly. He warns her that she will be dragged round the room three times by the hair of her head if she makes the same mistake again. She starts crying. He gives her a chocolate. The girl feels like running away. But the Colonel gives her fatherly advice. She makes good progress. She is taken to concerts and musical parties. She picks up all the tunes. She can pronounce African dialects. She play well on the piano. She can reproduce the music of Beethoven and other masters. She can imitate others way of speaking.

### **Act III**

'Mrs.Higgins', the mother of Higgins, drawing room is decorated according to the style popularized by Morris and Burne Jones. This is her At Home day. None of her friends have arrived so far. Higgins enters with his hat on. She does not like her son's arrival on that day. She does not like his habit of entering the room with his hat on and talking with his hats in his pocket and using bad words while speaking. He used to offend her friends by pointing out their wrong pronunciation. Higgins tells her that he has invited a young girl to her house. She thinks that it was a love affair. He explains that he likes a girl who should be as like his mother and he has not found one so far. He has brought Eliza. She was informed to talk only of the weather and everybody's health. Freddy's mother and sister Mrs. And Miss. Eynsford arrive. The colonel also arrives. Higgins cannot resist saying 'Damn it' while talking. Then Freddy comes. Higgins looks at him as if he was a pick-pocket and says he had met him somewhere. Now Eliza comes there gracefully. She talks correctly about the weather. But her upbringing betrays when she talks of her father's drinking and her aunt's death on influenza. She gets up to go. Freddy talks with her, using the word 'bloody' often. Freddy is in love with Eliza. The Hill family leaves. Higgins asks his mother about Eliza. She says that Eliza is the success of a phonetician art. But her manners and the words she uses are not perfect. Higgins and Pickering say that she is only a trainee. Mrs. Higgins is convinced that men do not understand anything and cannot reform.

After six months Eliza is ready for the test. In an Ambassador's party, the Host and the Hostess are standing at the entrance to receive the guests. Higgins, Colonel Pickering and Eliza walk up to them. The Hostess is very much impressed by Eliza's beauty, graces of walking style and her accent. One of the Higgins old students Nepommuck comes there. He

knows thirty two languages. He is in demand as an interpreter. The Hostess asks Nepommuck to find out who Eliza is. So he comes to Eliza and talks with her. Then he comes to a conclusion that she is a foreign princess. He believes that a foreigner who has been taught to speak English by an expert alone can speak English so perfectly. People stop talking to her. One lady tells Eliza that she spoke like Queen Victoria. Higgins has won his bet.

#### **Act IV**

After the Ambassador's party, Pickering congratulates Higgins on winning the bet. In these six months Eliza has developed an attachment with Higgins. He expected her to marry him. Now she realizes that Higgins has looked at her as a speaking machine. She gets angry. She throws her slippers at him and says that she has won his bet for him. Higgins is shocked. He asks if anyone had behaved badly towards her. She asks what she is fit for and where she is to go and what to do. He tells her that she can attract anyone of the young men and marry him. She says that she sold flowers but not herself. Now she is not fit to sell anything. She asks him to leave her where he had found her. She asks him to return her clothes. Higgins gets annoyed. He asks her to take the whole house except the jewels which belonged to the jeweller. She gives the jewels and the ring that he had purchased for her. He throws the ring into the fireplace and says that she has wounded him. She asks him to write a note to Mrs. Pearce about the morning tea as she would not be available to tell her about it. By telling that it was his mistake to spend his hard-earned knowledge and treasure of his regard on a heartless guttersnipe, he bangs the door and leaves. She puts on her walking out dress and comes down. Freddy is there. He spent most of his time there. She grabs Freddy. They are locked in embrace for a long time. They are interrupted by an elderly constable. They run off to another place. There they are interrupted by a taxi man. Then they go into the taxi. She plans to spend all the night and go to Mrs. Higgins in the morning.

#### **Act V**

As planned Eliza goes to Mrs. Higgins's house in the morning by seven. Higgins and Pickering do not find Eliza in the house. So they come to Mrs. Higgins house. Mrs. Higgins asked Eliza to be in the upper room and not to come down. Higgins and Pickering tell Mrs. Higgins that Eliza has run away. Mrs. Higgins says that the girl has full right to go as she wants. She advises Higgins to do without her. But Higgins has come to depend so much on Eliza. He cannot find things and does not know appointments without her. Pickering rings up the police. But they cannot give the girl's name to the police as if she was a thief. Now Alfred Dolittle enters. He is dressed in very fine clothes. He says that it had been done by Higgins. Higgins had written to an American millionaire, Mr. Wannafeller, that Alfred Dolittle was the original moralist in England in those days. He left three thousand pounds per year to Alfred on condition that he should deliver up to six lectures a year. This had made him a gentleman. Now he has become a victim of middle class morality. Now Higgins will make money from him by teaching him middle class language. Happier men than he serve him

and take tips from him. Mrs. Higgins says that Eliza's father can provide for her. Higgins did not like this. He had paid 5 pounds to Alfred for the girl. So she no longer belonged to him.

Now Mrs. Higgins reveals that Eliza is in the upstairs. She says that Eliza was affectionate in nature. She had become attached to them. She had worked hard to perform well at the Ambassador's party. But they took the entire credit to themselves. So that she was annoyed. They request Alfred to go out for a few minutes. Eliza comes down. She wishes as if they are strangers. She begins to talk of the weather. Higgins asks her to get up and go home. But she takes no notice of him and carries on her knitting. Higgins becomes angry. She tells that the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she is treated. She is always a flower girl and Higgins because he always treats her as flower girl; but she can be a lady to Pickering because he always treats her as a lady.

Alfred comes behind and touches Eliza. On seeing him in very fine clothes she is moved. He tells her that he is going to church to marry her step-mother. She asks him why he is going to marry that 'low common woman'. He says that she has been broker by middle class morality. He also says that it is his first experience to get married. He has not married Eliza's mother. So Eliza was an illegitimate child. Pickering asks Eliza to forgive Higgins and stay with them. Higgins says that he can do without her but he would miss her. He asks her to come back for the sake of good fellowship. She asks him if he ever thought of the trouble the training would make for her. He replies that the world would ever have been made if the Maker had been afraid of making trouble. Making life means making trouble.

Eliza was free when she was selling flowers. Though she has fine clothes, she is a slave not. Higgins tells that he can adopt her as his daughter and settle money on her and asks her if she would marry Pickering. In anger she says that Pickering was like her father. She gave a slap on Higgins face and says that he is nearer to her age and he is not her teacher anymore. Freddy was in love with her. Higgins says the Freddy is a fool and asks her if she wanted him to be infatuate as Freddy. She tells him that she did not want him to love but to be kind and friendly. She says that she would marry Freddy. Higgins is shocked. He trained her to be the consort of a king but she was thinking of marrying a fool. She says that she would make money by teaching phonetics. He says that he will wring her neck. Now she knows that she can bully him instead of being bullied by him. She tells that she would advertise that she as a flower-girl who was made to speak and behave like a duchess by the practice given by Professor Higgins and in turn now she is ready to train anyone for a payment of one thousand guineas. Though Higgins calls her an imprudent slut, he admires her spirit. He realizes that she is now a strong woman.

Now Mrs. Higgins comes back. She is ready for the wedding. She is against the idea of Higgins going to the church. There he can comment on the pronunciation of clergy men. When Eliza is leaving she says that what he can do without her. Mrs. Higgins remarks that Higgins would marry Eliza soon. Higgins says that she was wrong and Eliza was going to marry Freddy.



## **Character Sketches**

### **1. ELIZA**

#### **Eliza at the opening of the play**

Eliza is introduced in the play as a poor, ignorant, illiterate, crude, ill-mannered girl selling flowers. She has no mother and her sixth step-mother had sent her out of the house. She is about 18. She is dirty and poorly dressed. She is speaking a kind of cockney. She belongs to low-class. She has received no education. At the same time she is ambitious and self-confident. She feels that she is not ordinary. When Freddy collides with her, her flower basket falls down. She scolds him in her cockney dialect. His mother pays her six pence. She is not timid. A bystander informs her that there is a persona taking notes of her every word and he may be a detective. Though Eliza get frightened, she shows enough courage and shouts at the note-taker. To show her spirit of defiance, she goes home in a taxi, though she is not afforded.

#### **Her Training**

Eliza has come to Higgin's house in a taxi to take lessons and would be ready to pay for it. Colonel Pickering challenges Higgins, if he can pass her off as a duchess at an Ambassador's party within six months. Higgins agrees. He starts the experiment at once. He asks Mrs. Pearce to clean the girl and to burn all her clothes. Eliza starts crying. Higgins offers her a chocolate. Though she is tempted, she refuses to eat it. She suspects them that they may be immoral men and there may a drug in the chocolate. Higgins eats half and puts the other half into her mouth. Higgins tells her that she will have plenty of chocolates, fine dresses, gold and diamonds and would move in taxi. The Colonel begins to address her as 'Miss Dolittle'. Higgins explains to the girl that she would be trained for six months and then put up before the king as duchess. If she is found that she is an imposter she will be hanged. If she passes the test she will be made a lady in a fashionable flower shop. The girl is bewildering. She is astonished to see the luxury of the bed room. Giving a dressing gown Mrs. Pearce asks her to remove all her clothes and wrap it round her. Removing underclothes seems to be in descent to her. Mrs. Pearce prepares warm bath water and pushes her into the bath tub. She screams. Alfred Dolittle comes to Higgin's house. While leaving, he sees a beautiful lady wearing a Japanese dress, coming. He cannot recognise Eliza. Higgins and Pickering are impressed. Higgins is severe. He makes her to pronounce every letter correctly. When she makes a mistake, he roars like a wounded lion and calls it 'splendid' when she says correctly. He warns her that she will be dragged round the room three times by the hair of her head if she makes the same mistake again. The girl fees like running away. But the Colonel give her fatherly advice. She makes good progress. She is taken to concerts and musical parties. She picks up all the tunes. She can pronounce African dialects. She plays well on the piano. She can reproduce the music of Beethoven and other masters. She can imitate other way of speaking.

#### **Her First Test**

Her education is not yet complete. Higgins tells his mother that he has invited a young girl to her house. Already Eliza was informed to talk only of the weather and everybody's health. Now Eliza comes there gracefully. She talks correctly about the

weather. But her upbringing betrays with she talks of her father's drinking and her aunt's death on influenza. Immediately Higgins mother says that Eliza is the success of a phonetician art. Her manners and the words she uses are not perfect. She is only a trainee.

### **Her final Test**

After six months, in an Ambassador's party, the Host and the Hostess are standing at the entrance to receive the guests, Higgins, Pickering and Eliza walk up to them. The Hostess is very much impressed by Eliza's beauty, graces of walking style and her accent. One of Higgins old students Nepommuck comes there. He knows thirty-two languages. The Hostess asks him to find out who Eliza is. So he comes to Eliza and talks with her. Then he comes to a conclusion that she is a foreign princess. He believes that foreigner who has been taught to speak English by an expert alone can speak English so perfectly. One lady tells Eliza that she spoke like Queen Victoria. Higgins has won his bet.

### **Her Awakening**

After the experiment is over, Higgins and Pickering have lost all interest in her. They ignore her completely. Eliza was free when she was selling flowers. Though she has fine clothes, she is a slave now. Her despair and frustration is expressed when she throws the slippers into Higgin's face. Now she seeks social identity. She asks Higgins what she is fit for and where she is to go and what to do. He tells her that she can attract anyone of the young men and marry him. She says that she sold flowers but not herself. Now she is not fit to sell anything. She asks him to leave her where he had found her. She asks him to return her clothes. Higgins asks her to take the whole house. She gives the jewels and the ring that he had purchased for her.

### **Conclusion**

Higgins has come to depend so much on Eliza. He cannot find things and does not know appointments without her. As she comes out of the house of Higgins at midnight, she meets Freddy. He is passionately in love with her. They are happily married. She sets up a flower shop with the help of Pickering. The business grows and flourishes. They live happily together.

## **2. PROFESSOR HENRY HIGGINS**

Professor Higgins is a professor of Phonetics. He is completely devoted to the subject. He is introduced in the play as a note-taker. He studies the various dialects spoken by the people. He can spot an Irish man or a Yorkshire man by his tongue. He can say exactly in which part of London and its suburbs one lives. By teaching fashionable speech to those who speak dialects, he earns money also. He is about 40 years of age. He is an energetic man. He is a scientific type of man. He is careless about himself and others including their feelings. He challenges the Colonel that he can pass Eliza off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party in three months or get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant where better English is required. Higgins is severe. He makes Eliza to pronounce every letter correctly. When she makes a mistake, he roars like a wounded lion and calls it 'splendid' when she says correctly.

Higgins is a tyrannical bully and a charmer. He is scientist with extravagant imagination. He thinks of himself as timid, modest, and different. He always bullies Eliza. He does not care

about her feelings. Higgins is severe. He makes Eliza to pronounce every letter correctly. When she makes a mistake, he roars like a wounded lion and calls it 'splendid' when she says correctly. He warns her that she will be dragged round the room three times by the hair of her head if she makes the same mistake again. When Eliza has won his bet he does not say thanks.

Higgins always use words like 'damn it', 'what the devil', 'bloody' etc. He comes to the breakfast table, not in proper dress but in his dressing gown. He always eats every items of food from the same plate. His manners are crude and unrefined. Higgins mother does not like his habit of entering the room with his hat on and talking with his hats in his pocket and using bad words while speaking. He used to offend her friends by pointing out their wrong pronunciation. His mother herself tells her guest that his celebrated son has no manners.

Higgins treats young girls like pupils. He cannot understand Eliza's problem. Eliza has developed an attachment with Higgins. She expected him to marry her. Later she realizes the Higgins has looked at her as a speaking machine. He tells her that she can attract anyone of the young men and marry him. Higgins has come to depend so much on Eliza. He cannot find things and does not know appointments without her.

Higgins **attitude to woman is** cynical. He had remained a bachelor upto forty. His mother was his ideal feminine intelligence. No young girl had come upto that level. Nobody can divert his attention from his mother and gets his love. Phonetics is his first love. He was interested to make Eliza speak. Her youth, beauty and charm could not attract him. Further he was her superior. So she feared he would bully her throughout her life. He says, "Women upset everything. When you let them into your life, you find that the woman is driving at one thing and you are driving at another".

Higgins is shrewd and practical. Alfred comes to blackmail Higgins. He demands to send her daughter along with him. Higgins agrees immediately. Alfred comes down at once. He had brought her little luggage. Higgins asks him why he had brought her luggage if he wanted to take her away. He tells Higgins that he wants 5 pounds. He goes away satisfied with five pounds. Higgins is a social rebel. He hates the shallow politeness of smart society. He will not practise shallow hypocrisies. He is witty. Interesting words and phrases are always at his command.

### **3. COLONEL PICKERING**

Colonel Pickering is an elderly gently man. He is much older than Professor Higgins. Eliza addresses him as "Captain". He has been a Colonel in the Indian Army. He is chivalrous and noble. He himself is a student of Indian dialects. He is the author of 'Spoken Sanskrit'. He had come from India to meet Prof. Higgins, the author of 'Universal Alphabet'. Pickering invites Higgins to come with him to Carlton Hotel where he is staying and dine with him. In the next morning he shifts his residence to the residence of Higgins. Higgins often calls him "Pick' affectionately.

Colonel Pickering is interested in Eliza and her education. He challenges Higgins, if he can pass her off as a duchess at an Ambassador's party within six months. If Higgins can, the Colonel will pay for the entire experiment. Higgins agrees. Colonel Pickering is a man of

high moral character. He asks Higgins how did he treat young girls while teaching. Higgins tells the Colonel that he treated young girls like pupils when he taught them. The Colonel feels satisfied that no advantage will be taken of Eliza's helpless position. Higgins is severe. He makes her to pronounce every letter correctly. He warns her that she will be dragged round the room three times by the hair of her head if she makes the same mistake again. The girl feels like running away. But the Colonel gives her fatherly advice.

In the Post Script we are informed that Pickering gave Eliza a wedding present of 500 pounds. It kept them for some time. Higgins and Pickering insisted her to stay with them. Pickering suggested Eliza to start a flower shop. So Eliza started a flower shop near Victoria and Albert Museum. In the beginning, Pickering helped them in making up the deficit. Slowly the shop started picking up. To Pickering she was his favourite daughter.

#### **Contrast between Pickering and Higgins**

Both Pickering and Higgins are equally enthusiastic about the education of Eliza. Both of them are old bachelors. Both of them congratulate themselves on their success but say not a word of thanks or appreciation to the poor girl, Eliza. They totally ignore her and her future. Colonel is calm and self-controlled. He does not lose his temper at trifles. But Higgins has a stormy temper. In spite of the fact that Colonel is a military man, he is gentle and tender. Higgins is untidy in his habits. He often uses words like 'damn', 'devil' and 'bloody'. But Pickering is a polished man. Both of them are scholars. Pickering is a refined scholar but Higgins is boorish. Higgins' mother does not like Higgins' habit of entering the room with his hat on and talking with his hats in his pocket and using bad words while speaking. Further he used to offend her friends by pointing out their wrong pronunciation. His mother herself tells her guest that his celebrated son has no manners. But Pickering is considerate and gentle. He behaves like a gentleman. Pickering enjoys social visits, social gatherings and social parties. But Higgins has scholarly contempt for them. As a scholar, Higgins is a towering figure. He alone could make Eliza a lady in six months. Higgins is a fertile source of fun and humour. Pickering lacks Higgins' wit and humour. Higgins is robust, vital but Pickering is mild, gentle, decent and humane.

#### **4. ALFRED DOLITTLE**

Alfred Dolittle is Eliza's father. He does not play any role in the development of the plot. Through him we come to know the background of Eliza. He has not married Eliza's mother. So Eliza was an illegitimate child. Eliza was beaten by him and by his sixth mistress when she was young. Shaw makes use of him to speak against middle class morality. Alfred is a lazy old man but vigorous. He is an unskilled workman. He is used for digging roads. As his name, he always tries to do little work. He is always taking money out of other people's pockets and keeps it in his pocket. He does not have fear and conscience. So that he is always self-confident and immoral.

When Alfred comes to know that Eliza is a Higgins house he comes to blackmail him. He is a black guard. He demands Higgins to send her daughter along with him. Higgins agrees immediately. Alfred comes down and says that he had brought her little luggage. Higgins asks him why he had brought her luggage if he wanted to take her away. He is upset. He does not want to take her away. He tells Higgins that he wants 5 pounds. Higgins

asks him if he has no morals. He replies that he is an undeserving poor who cannot afford morals.

Though Alfred speaks in his dialect, he speaks eloquently. With the help of this eloquence, Shaw exposes the injustice of the economic system of England and laughs at the conventional morality of the English middle class people. When Alfred Dolittle enters in the fifth Act, he is dressed in very fine cloths. Higgins had written to an American millionaire, Mr. Wannafeller, that Alfred Dolittle was the original moralist in England in those days. He left three thousand pounds per year to Alfred on condition that he should deliver up to six lectures a year. This had made him a gentleman. Now he has become a victim of middle class morality. He is ruined. It has destroyed his happiness. Generally when a poor, uneducated man becomes rich suddenly, he feels inferior in the company of upper class people. But Alfred does not feel such. Such is his powerful personality.

After becoming rich, Alfred Dolittle began to move with aristocrats. So his expenses became greater than his income. So he could not help the couple Eliza and Freddy.

Audiences and critics like his Character much. Most of the critics agree that Dolittle ranks first among the best character in the modern comedy.

#### **DRAMA : NON DETAILED**

#### **A DOLL'S HOUSE**

**Henrik Ibsen**

#### **Introduction**

A Doll's House is the most popular play of Ibsen. Many people remember Ibsen only as the author of A Doll's House. When it was first published in 1879, it ran into several editions and many translations also appeared in various European languages. The play created such a great commotion in the literary circles that it was not only discussed in magazines and journals but also in churches and homes. Bernard Shaw says that the play created tremendous impact on the social life in Europe.

The Norwegian title given to the play was Et Dukkehjem meaning "A Doll's House". The word 'doll' refers to a woman without a will or mind of her own. The title is very appropriate. The heroine of the play Nora has been a passive character for eight years. She has been treated by her husband as a pet or a doll. But, at the end, she rejects him as he fails to understand her sacrifice.

Ibsen calls this play, "a modern tragedy". It is a tragedy in the sense that it has a sad ending, with Nora leaving her husband and her children to face an uncertain future. It records the disintegration of the domestic life of a couple.

The plot of the play is simple. It is not very much different from that of an intrigue play. The heroine, Nora, is guilty of committing forgery, for which she is being black-mailed by the villain, Krogstad. Nora has committed this crime in order to save her husband's life. But her husband, Torvald Helmer, instead of appreciating her act, condemns her as a liar and a criminal. However, she is saved by the intervention of her old friend, Mrs. Linde, who brings about a change in Krogstad's heart. But, Nora does not want to live with her husband anymore. She leaves her home and her children to learn the way of the world.

Ibsen observes the three classical Unities of time, place and action. There is a subplot which is closely woven to the main plot and it does not injure the unity of action. The whole action takes place in three days. It is not such a long period to affect the unity of time. The whole action takes place in Helmer's house. The play opens just before the catastrophe and the preceding events are revealed through the dialogue in retrospect.

The most important theme of the play is the liberation of the individual from the restraints of custom and convention. It is the assertion of her rights by a wife. Nora asserts her rights and becomes an individual in her own right.

A Doll's House appears to be a feminist play even though Ibsen denied it. He said that it was not written to support or advocate feminism. His sympathetic attitude towards women was a by-product of his passionate belief in human freedom. He felt that women in society were denied the rights and opportunities to grow like men-folk.

Ibsen also employs symbolism to convey his ideas. Symbols such as the Christmas tree, the macaroons and the dance bring in a special significance to the readers.

Finally it is rewarding experience to read the play carefully.

## **Outline Story of 'A Doll's House**

### **Introduction**

A **Doll's House** is a drama of social criticism. The story takes place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Norway. It is a classic expression of the theme of woman's right.

### **Nora, her husband and her father**

On the day before Christmas, Nora Helmer was busy with the last minute shopping because this was the first Christmas since her marriage that she had no need for economy. Her husband, Torvald Helmer, had just been made manager of a bank and after the New Year their financial trouble would be over. She bought a Christmas tree and plenty of toys for the children. She also bought some macaroons, her favourite sweets. Her husband was not in favour of her eating macaroons. Torvald loved his wife dearly but he regarded her, as her father had done, as an amusing 'doll' – a plaything. She behaved like a child in her relations with her husband because her husband expected it. He would not have loved his wife without these childish pranks.

### **Nora borrowing money for the sake of her husband**

Nora was not actually a doll but a woman with a woman's loves, hopes and fears. This was shown seven years before, just after her first child was born, when her husband had been very ill. The doctor said that unless he went abroad immediately he would die. Nora was desperate. She could not seek Torvald's advice because he was always against borrowing money. She could not go to her father also for help because; he himself was a dying man. She did the only possible thing under the circumstances. She borrowed the required amount, two hundred and fifty pounds from Krogstad, a money-lender, forging her father's signature to the document, so that Torvald could have his holiday and treatment in Italy.

### **Nora earning to repay borrower money**

Nora had to find ways and means of repaying the loan. When Torvald gave her money for new dresses and other such expenses, she never spent more than half of it and saved the money for repaying the debt. Also she found other means to earn more money. During the winter season she did some copying work. All this was kept secret from Torvald because he had been on the impression that the money for his trip had come from her father.

### **Dismissal of Krogstad and appointment of Linde**

Krogstad was in the employ of the bank of which Torvald was the new manager. Torvald hated Krogstad for an offence committed by him and wanted to dismiss him from service. The opportunity came when Christine Linde, Nora's old friend, applied to Torvald for some job in the bank. Torvald decided to dismiss Krogstad and hire the services of Mrs. Linde in his place.

### **Nora requesting for Krogstad's reinstatement.**

When Krogstad discovered that he was to be dismissed, he called on Nora and informed her that if he were dismissed he would ruin her and her husband. He reminded her that the note signed by her father was dated three days after his death. Frightened at the turn of events, Nora unsuccessfully pleaded with her husband to reinstate Krogstad in the bank. But Krogstad received an official note of dismissal from the bank and he wrote a detailed letter about Nora's forgery and dropped the letter in the letter box of Nora's house.

### **Nora Trying to divert attention of Torvald.**

Torvald was in a holiday mood. The next evening they were to attend a fancy dress ball and Nora was to go as a Neapolitan fisher girl and perform the tarantella dance. To divert the attention of Torvald from the mailbox outside the house, Nora practised the dance for a long time before Torvald and his friend Dr. Rank. Nora was desperate, as she could find no way out from the situation. However, Torvald had promised not to go near the mailbox until after the ball.

### **Linde's offer to help Nora**

In the meantime she thought of confiding in Dr. Rank but she could not do so as he confessed his love for her. Her friend, Mrs. Linde offered to help her out. Mrs. Linde had been in love with Krogstad once but could not marry him because she had to think of her aged parents and young brothers. Mrs. Linde promised to do what she could to turn Krogstad from his purpose.

### **Nora worried about Torvald**

Nora was not so much worried about her fate but Torvald's. She imagined herself as already dead, drowned in icy black water. She pictured the grief-stricken Torvald taking on himself all the blame for what she had done and being disgraced for her sake.

### **Linde persuading Krogstad**

Mrs. Linde, in the meantime met Krogstad alone. By promising to marry him and look after his children, she succeeded in persuading him to withdraw all the accusations

against Nora. She also realised that since the affairs had come to a crisis. It was better for the Helmers, to discuss it and come to some good understanding.

### **Torvald reading Krogstad's letter**

The real crisis came when Torvald read Krogstad's letter. It was not as expected by Nora. He did not try to understand her sacrifice. He accused Nora of being a liar, a hypocrite, and a criminal of having no religion, no morality, no sense of duty. He declared that she was unfit to bring up his children. He also declared that Nora might remain in his house but she would no longer be part of the household.

### **The arrival of the second letter**

In a short while another letter arrived from Krogstad declaring that he was not going to take any action against the Helmers. The whole attitude of Torvald changed. With a great sigh of relief he boasted that he was saved. For the first time Nora saw her husband for what he was. He was a selfish, pretentious hypocrite with no regard for her position in the matter.

### **Nora announcing her decision of leaving Torvald**

Now, it was her turn to speak to him. She told him plainly that no marriage could be built on inequality, and announced her intention of leaving his house for ever. Torvald could not believe his ears and pleaded with her to remain with him. But Nora declared that she was going to try to become a reasonable human being, to understand the way of the world and to become a woman and not a 'doll' to flatter the selfish vanity of Torvald. She left the house and with irrevocable finality, slammed the door of her doll house behind her.

## **Character Studies**

### **1. Nora Helmer**

Nora Helmer, wife of Torvald Helmer, is the central character of A **Doll's House** around whom the whole plot revolves. She is a round character; and in her we notice a tremendous change. In the early part of the play we find her a happy, immature and romantically inclined person; but in the end she appears very mature and determined. She is portrayed in relation with all other characters. A close study of the play will indicate that Nora plays a dual role in the play – that of a child and a heroic woman in one.

### **Her innocence and childlike nature.**

Our first impression of Nora is that she is innocent and childlike. Her husband calls her a skylark or a squirrel or a spendthrift and she replies like a child. Even she has something to be proud of. She sacrifices her pleasures for the sake of husband.

### **His sacrifice for her husband**

The 'crime' Nora 'commits' in all innocence for her husband's sake, has given her something to be proud of and happy about. She borrows 250 pounds forging the signature of her father, in order to save her husband's life at the critical moment. She suffers quietly saving all the money she could, in order to pay back that loan. She keeps the whole matter a great secret, so that she could use it someday when occasion arises. But all her plans end in great confusion. Helmer does not understand her sacrifice behind her act of crime. Hence, she leaves him once and for all



### **Nominated by men from childhood**

Nora realises that her father had treated her as a doll-child and her husband has been treating her as a doll-wife. In her father's house she was compelled to adopt her father's views, and in her husband's house, she is to adopt her husband's opinions. Only in the end she thinks as an individual. She says that she has to educate herself by a first hand experience of the world. She becomes a new woman who represents a feminine revolt against male domination and in the end becomes a liberated woman.

### **A loving and affectionate mother**

We see Nora as a loving and affectionate mother. The second Act of the play shows to us how much she loves her children. She is very happy in playing with them. Therefore it comes as a great surprise to us that she actually leaves them in the end.

### **Her moral quality and decency**

Dr.Rank is a family friend to whom Nora has always been cordial. When Krogstad threatens to expose Nora, she makes up her mind to obtain the money from Dr.Rank and pay off Krogstad's loan at one stroke. But when Dr.Rank proposes love to her, she changes her mind and maintains a respectable distance. She is not ready to sell herself. Though she acts like a flirt she is not one in reality.

### **Her friendship with Linde**

She maintains an amiable and healthy relationship with her friend, Mrs. Christine Linde. She shares her secret about the loan with her. When Mrs.Linde is in need of a job, Nora strongly recommends her case to her husband, who also promises to give her Krogstad's post.

### **Demerits of her Character**

Nora shows some weaknesses also in her character. We find in her tendency to utter lies. She denies that she has eaten macaroons; and also denies that Krogstad had paid a visit to her. For eight years, she has concealed from her husband the transaction she had made with Krogstad. She hears about the death of Mrs. Linde's husband without much feeling. She tells her that she had been thinking of writing to her but fails to do so for three years.

### **Conclusion**

Nora is a realistic character. Her presentation is beautifully handled. There are two aspects of her character – one that is revealed in her traditional role as a housewife and another after she has made her decision to leave the house. However, it is not difficult for us to understand that the latter Nora is a logical growth of the earlier one. She is a modern woman, who is aware of her feminine rights as an individual.

## **Torvald Helmer**

### **Introduction**

Torvald Helmer is the second important character in *A Doll's House*, next only to Nora. He is a lawyer by profession. He is a young, middle-class person, quite content with his married life. He is good-looking and certainly admires his beautiful wife. He has the reputation of being a clean and efficient lawyer who has risen in life because of his ability. But at the same time he is a terribly dull and unimaginative person.

### **Symbol of male chauvinism**

The first thing that strikes us about the character of Helmer is that he is every inch a representative of the male-dominated rising middle-class society of Ibsen's period. For example, continuous financial and economic security and a stable and assured job are of the greatest importance to him. He feels threatened when these are in some trouble because of Nora's rash actions. Again like every middle-class husband, he argues with his wife over money matters and rebukes her for being a spendthrift. He has no ideas other than those which his society considers valid.

### **A real moralist and Puritan**

It is very clear from the play that Torvald Helmer is something of a Puritan or a strict moralist in his views on crime and punishment. He is very hard on those who break the moral and social laws of society. He believes that a guilty man should confess his guilt and take his punishment; otherwise he will have a wrong influence on his family and children. He judges Krogstad in the hardest terms. He is very upset with Nora and lays down harsh rules for condemning her. She should not even mingle with her children. There is no softness of heart or generosity of spirit in him.

### **He is utterly selfish**

Torvald Helmer is definitely a man without feelings or sensitiveness. He is selfish to the core. His selfishness is reflected in his failure to appreciate Nora's great sacrifice. The moment he hears that Krogstad has withdrawn his charges against Nora, he only says "I am saved! Nora, I am saved". Similarly, his reaction to his dying friend, Dr. Rank, is enough to prove how insensitive he can be to other people.

### **His poor treatment of Nora**

Torvald appears to be a romantic lover in his relationship with Nora. It is based only on game-playing and frequent exchange of pleasantries. He treats her as a doll-child and calls her by silly terms like 'lark', 'squirrel' or 'my sweet little song-bird'. To him Nora is only a 'pet', one of his beautiful possessions. A marriage between two such incomplete persons could not last long. The end is predictable. When a critical moment arises, he does not come to the help of his 'pet'. All his love for her vanishes into thin air.

### **His friendship with Dr. Rank**

Torvald's friendship with Dr. Rank is another instance to prove that there is something wrong with his character. Dr. Rank has been paying daily visits to Helmer's house. Torvald has complete confidence in him and fully trusts him with his wife, without suspecting in the least that the man can ever conceive a passion for her. But at the same time his sentiment

for his friend is not very deep. When he learns that Dr.Rank is going to die, he is not deeply grieved. He gets over the thought of Dr.Rank's death and gets ready to make love to Nora. It is only when Nora reminds him about the doctor, his passion cools down.

### **An example of a comic character**

At last he becomes a comic character. In the last scene he requests Nora to stay with him and look after her children. He offers to live with her as a brother, wants her permission to write to her and to send money if she needs it. Her answer to all his proposals is 'No'. His egocentricity, his self-complacency, his male-chauvinism, his own feeling of moral superiority and his possessive attitude towards Nora are the causes of his undoing.

### **Conclusion**

We can see that Ibsen has caricatured Helmer. It is not surprising that critics regard him as a totally comic character. The language given to him also is theatrical. It is made difficult for anyone to sympathise with him when Nora leaves him slamming the door behind her.

## **Nils Krogstad**

### **Introduction**

Nils Krogstad is an important character in Ibsen's **A Doll's House**. He appears to be the villain of the play; but becomes a good man in the end because of the influence of Mrs.Linde, whom he marries.

#### **1. Krogstad bringing crisis in Nora's Life**

Krogstad is the man responsible for creating a complication in Nora's life by bringing about a crisis in her life. He is the man from whom Nora had borrowed two hundred and fifty pounds in order to take her husband to a warm country to save his life. He has found that Nora has forged her father's signature on the bond. When an opportunity arises he uses the bond to blackmail Nora.

#### **2. Krogstad reason for tragedy**

Krogstad is in trouble in the bank as Torvald Helmer is planning to dismiss him from the bank and give the job to Christine Linde. Finding that his job is in danger, Krogstad approaches Nora and threatens her that he would expose her fraud if she does not speak to her husband to reinstate him in service. Though Nora has been paying her instalment regularly, he wants to blackmail her. If he produces the bond in the court, Nora would be in great danger. When Nora is not able to persuade Helmer to reinstate Krogstad, he writes to Helmer about the whole affair. He threatens to take legal action against his wife and bring down his position in society. Thus, it is due to Krogstad that the tragedy takes place.

#### **3. Dark traits of his character**

Krogstad is unscrupulous. He is not ashamed of torturing a woman. He has failed to win the favour of Helmer because of his rough and insulgin behaviour towards Helmer. Doctor Rank says that he is a case of 'moral affliction' and a person 'rotten to the core'.

#### **4. Krogstad's friendship with Helmer**

Krogstad was a boyhood friend of Helmer. When Helmer was promoted as the manager of the bank, where Krogstad was also working, he did not give due respect to Helmer as the manager. He takes undue advantage of his intimacy with him. This is another reason why Helmer wants to dismiss him. Also he was guilty of forgery in the bank.

#### **5. Krogstad becoming a good man**

Krogstad is transformed into a good man on the good influence of Christine Linde. Krogstad has a deep love for Christine. He was in love with her and they were about to get married. But Christine got married to a rich old man because of her family circumstance. Krogstad married another lady and had a large number of children. She died leaving the children. When he met Christine as a widow, he found that his love for her had not died and agree to marry her.

#### **6. Krogstad is not a total villain**

Krogstad is not a total villain. He has some redeeming qualities. He feels sorry for the act of forgery he had committed earlier and works hard to remove the black-mark in his character. Also when Christine Linde asks him not to proceed against Nora, he agrees and writes his second letter to Helmer that he has no intention to proceed against Nora legally. Thus we find him a changed man because of own circumstances have improved.

#### **7. Other characters and Krogstad**

Krogstad also can be contrasted with other characters in the play. Helmer and Doctor Rank are moralists. Krogstad is neither a moralist nor does he profess or practise any moral values. As a human being he responds to love. When Mrs. Linde promises to marry him, his villainy vanishes into thin air. He becomes a good man.

#### **Conclusion**

At first he appears to be a melodramatic villain who arrives on the Christmas Eve to collect a debt, but the caricature is a bit altered by the fact that he has also been embittered by the vagaries of life. When the situation improves, he changes. Though he is not a lovable character, we can at least tolerate him.