

INSPIRING EXPRESSIONS

Common course in English

II SEMESTER

(CUCBCSS)

(2014 Admission)



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O., MALAPPURAM, KERALA, INDIA - 673 635



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STUDY MATERIAL

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II SEMESTER

INSPIRING EXPRESSIONS

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ON HIS BLINDNESS

John Milton

John Milton, the poet, pamphleteer, and historian was born in Bread Street, London on December 9 1608. He was given the nickname *Lady of Christ* for his effeminate and youthful looks. He expressed his frustrations and scorn and was the champion of individual freedom. As a well educated, middle class writer, who had command over many languages and who dedicated the lion's share of the night to his studies, he produced many works of merit. A pastoral elegy, *Lycidas*, a masque, *Comus*, twin Horton poems *L'Allegro* and *Ill' Penseroso*, a prose treatise, *Areopagitica* are a few among his literary oeuvre. Milton is best known for *Paradise Lost*, the greatest epic poem in English. *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes* are the other works which confirms his reputation as one of the greatest English poets. The exact date and place of his death remain obscure. He likely died in London in 1674 from complications of the gout.

Summary of the poem

The sonnet *On His Blindness* is one of the best and well known poems written by Milton. It deals with a sublime theme described in a grand style by the use of simple language. The sonnet is written in Petrarchan style comprising an octave and a sestet with the rhyme scheme abba/abba/cde/cde. Though there is a turn of event after the octave, the octave and sestet is not divided. The sonnet differs from Petrarchan sonnet in the sense that Petrarchan sonnet deals with the theme of love, whereas, this sonnet deals with spiritual issue.

Milton's eyesight began to fade in 1644 and in 1652, when he was 44 years old, he became totally blind. The poem was written in 1655 when he was not accustomed to and reconciled with his loss. Thus, this 19th sonnet which is autobiographical gives vent to his sorrow and frustration on losing his eyesight when he was middle aged. He considers the life, the light and the intelligence he had wasted or spent before he became blind. He feels that God has gifted him with the greatest talent, i.e., poetic creativity. He expresses his utmost desire to serve God by using the maximum of the ability which God has bestowed upon him. Unfortunately he is unable to fulfil his wish to write the greatest epic and the greatest poems because of his handicap. Milton feels that God might scold him for not using his talents.

Milton asks whether God, the almighty, needs man's service. If God wants man to serve him why did He take away the light from his eyes? Had God needed any service from him He would not have taken away his eye sight. He wonders whether he will be able to produce great works being blind. Before he grows impatient Patience arrives with the reply that God never need man's service. Whoever is ready to bear the burden of life patiently has served God the best. God has servants all over the world who are all the time serving him over the land and the ocean without any rest. For God those people who are disabled and

cannot serve God as others do can patiently stand and wait and thus serve god. He realises the fact that God can never be wrong. God does not need man's service, nor does he take away the talents He has bestowed upon man. He is the supreme power, omnipresent, Lord of the whole universe and has countless servants. Indeed those people who endure all the thorns of life without questioning God serve him the most.

The poem describes Milton's philosophy of life. It tells us about a man who has completely given himself to God. Here is a man whose faith is strong and unwavering. A man who suffers his loss of eye sight with utmost patience and courage and firmly believes in the will of God is detailed in the poem. The poem has got a sublime theme penned in a grand but simple style.

Short answer questions

1. When did Milton write his sonnet On His Blindness?
2. What does Milton allude to by the word 'talent'?
3. What does Milton's soul wish?
4. "Who best bear His mild yoke". What does 'mild yoke' mean?

Paragraph questions

1. "They also serve who only stand and wait". Elucidate.
2. How does Milton express his philosophy of life through the poem On His Blindness?

Essay question

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem On His Blindness

TO HIS COY MISTRESS

Andrew Marvell

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) was born at Winstead at Holderness, Yorkshire as the son of a clergyman. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge and became Assistant Latin secretary to the commonwealth government. He served as a Member of Parliament for Hull from 1659 until his death. Being a poet of the metaphysical school, his poems reveal a surprising blend of passion and thought mixed with imagery, conceit and metaphors. His major works are *An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwells Return from Ireland* (1650), *The Rehearsal Transposed* (1678) and *Mr. Smirke or the Divine in Mode* (1676).

Summary of the poem

“To his Coy Mistress” is a poem in carpe diem tradition. It is a plea from a lover to his beloved to forget her coyness and engage in the pleasures of love. The poem begins abruptly with these words, “Had we but world enough and time”, he continues, “this coyness lady were no crime”. The reason for such a plea is being established using a series of hyperbolic comparisons. If there is enough time and space, then, the coyness that the lady shows would have been appreciated. Then, the poet would have sat by the river Humber in England and complained about the coyness of the lady who would be sitting on the banks of the river Ganges on the other side of the world. He would begin to love her ten years before the biblical flood and, she, if she wants, could refuse till the comparison of the Jews i.e. the end of time itself. Marvell argues that his vegetable love could slowly grow greater than the empires. If he had time, he would devote a hundred years to praise her eyes, two hundred two each breast, and thirty thousand to the rest of her. He would spend at least an age to admire every part and the last age might praise her heart.

In the second stanza, the poet portrays the picture of a man who lives with the fear of death. The awareness of times winged chariot hurrying near, frightens us all. In our destined tombs, the loved ones beauty will slowly but surely turn to dust. The virginity that she coyly preserves may be taken up by worms. He calls the grave, ‘a fine and private place’ though not a place of ‘embrace’. In the last stanza, Marvell reaches the conclusion that, as they are young and beautiful, rather than languishing as prisoners of time, ‘let us sport while we may’. He suggests that the strength of the man and the sweetness of the woman when united may ‘roll up’ into one ball. The violence of sexual art is described through the image ‘tear our pleasures’ which acts as an image of the desperation with which they try to defeat times winged chariot. Finally, with reference to an incident described in bible (when Joshua made sun stand still), he asserts that even time would not be able to cease their love. The poem convinces the readers about the pleasures of physical love with its syllogistic arguments and its unique tone mixing eroticism and wit.

Short answer questions

- 1) Mention the nature of 'time' in the poem.
- 2) Describe the term vegetable love.
- 3) What is being referred to as riding the winged chariot?
- 4) What does the term 'coy' in the title mean?

Paragraph questions

- 1) Explain the idea of 'quaint honour' turning to dust.
- 2) Describe the argument made by the poet regarding the passage of time.
- 3) Mention the metaphors used in the poem.
- 4) Find out the metaphysical elements being used in the poem.

Essay questions

- 1) Discuss "To his Coy Mistress" as a poem about love and time.
- 2) Analyse the various poetic devices used by Andrew Marvell in order to expose the sensual pleasures of love.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

John Keats

Often celebrated as the most passionate and persistent lover of beauty, and the poet of five senses, John Keats (1795-1821) stands among the greatest of English poets, not merely in promise but in performance. Son of a livery-keeper, Keats started his career as an apprentice to a surgeon. It did not take much time for him to realize that surgery was not his profession, and that he was more suited for literary expression. He started writing poems at the age of sixteen, and completed all his major works before he turned 25. Smitten by the dreadful disease, consumption, his health was failing rapidly during the most creative period of his life. This disease and financial difficulties did not enable him to marry the pretty seventeen year old Fanny Browne whom he loved passionately. The suffering caused by the death of his brother Tom, and his unrequited love for Fanny Browne found expression in his poetry, where he explores the recurring themes of impermanence, death, time and immortality. He wrote poetry primarily to delight rather than to teach and was often inspired by Greek mythology. Some of his outstanding poems include 'La Bella Dame Sans Merci', 'Lamia', 'Isabella', 'Endymion', 'Hyperion', the great odes like 'To a Nightingale', 'To Autumn', 'On a Grecian Urn', 'To Psyche', 'On Melancholy', and his collection of sonnets.

In his 'Ode to a Nightingale', Keats is trying to identify himself with the joy and perfection of the nightingale. His attempt to forget himself and the weariness of the world do not succeed for long. The beauty and happiness of the nightingale is contrasted with the trouble of suffering humanity.

Summary of the Poem

In the first stanza of the poem the poet describes how his heart begins to ache and a drowsy numbness overwhelms all his senses in hearing the melodious song of the nightingale from somewhere in the forest. The song acts on the poet like opiate, and he feels as if he was sinking into oblivion, forgetting all the weariness and horrors of life. These feelings are not induced by any sense of envy of the nightingale's happiness, but rather the bird's joy infects him too. He pictures the bird as filling some beechen green with its melodious music. Singing in its "full-throat ease", it makes the poet too experience a strange ecstasy.

In the next stanza, the poet wishes that he could taste some wine, "a draught of vintage", which would at once enable him to fly away with the bird into the dim forest, leaving the world and its travails behind him. The wine must be delicious indeed, cooled for ages under the earth, and redolent with the perfume of the forest and the villages where wine is made and which are the scenes of peasants' dances and songs. He also wishes to have had a cup full of red wine from the warm south, which is as inspiring as the water from Hippocrene, the fountain sacred to the goddess of poetry. This wine would make him forget the world and join the nightingale in its melodious flight over the dim forest.

In the third stanza, the poet pictures the misery and horrors of the world, which he would willingly leave in order to share the bird's felicity. He would like to forget altogether, with its consciousness that everything is mortal and nothing lasts, "the weariness, the fever and the fret "of human life, which the nightingale has never known. In the world, men seem destined to hear the heart-breaking sorrows of one another. Old people die in misery and young men, under some dreadful disease, grow thin and die. The poet's thought brings an inevitable train of sorrow along with it. Beauty fades away all too soon, and even love is transient. It is a miserable and an ugly world. The nightingale, spending its time joyously among the leaves, can never realize its horrors.

The poet again shares his desire to fly way with the bird in the fourth stanza. He says that he will no longer seek the intoxication of the wine to share the bliss the bird is enjoying. He will follow the bird through the "viewless wings" of poetry that is far sweeter and more intoxicating. He says that he is already with the bird in that joyous and enchanted region, on such a soft and lovely night where the moon is enthroned as the queen of the skies and the stars clustering around her. But in the world down below, it is dark. The moon's light does not stream down. it is hidden by the trees ,and only Some light fitfully glimmers in the world when the branches are blown by the breeze.

Sitting in the dark and listening to the bird's song, he is unable to see the flowers that blossom all round him or inhale the perfume that hangs upon the branches. The atmosphere is fragrant with the sweet smells and in that "embalmed darkness" he is trying to distinguish each sweet flower that may be found in the season by its scent in the dark. There is something in the atmosphere to ravish all his sense. The white hawthorn, violet and the eglantine are there; the musk-rose is filled with dewy wine, and the atmosphere, with the hum of flies.

He listens in the dark to the music of the bird, and often confesses that he has been "half in love" with the idea of death. In many sweet songs he has welcomed death so that it might take him away from this miserable world. Surrounded by the nightingale's song, he feels that it is the most glorious time to embrace death. He longs to "cease upon the midnight" painlessly while the nightingale pours its soul ecstatically forth. Even if he were to die and listen no more, the nightingale would eternally pour out its melody on to the world.

In the seventh stanza, the poet tells the nightingale that it is immortal unlike him. He is destined to die and longs for the easeful hand of Death, but the bird to whose song he is listening is immortal in its revelation of beauty. The misery and horrors of the world and the clammy hand of death can never touch it. It has always been in existence, filling with joy generation after generation. The song that enraptures him now might have been delighted the hearts of kings and peasants in ancient times. The same should have comforted Ruth too in her misery when she stood in tears amidst the fields of foreign land. He even says that the Magic casements looking out over "the foam/Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn," must have opened too for the song of the nightingale to float in.

In the eighth stanza of the poem, the word 'forlorn' tolls like a bell to restore the poet from his preoccupation with the nightingale and back to himself. It brings him rudely back to the world of ugly and unpleasant realities from that of the ideal beauty and enchantment, to which the bird had transported him. As the nightingale flies farther away from him, he laments that his imagination has failed him in keeping on with that illusion of joy, and says that he can no longer recall whether the nightingale's music was a "vision or waking dream". He bids goodbye to the vision. Now as the song has faded away, the poet wakes wondering whether it was all real or just a dream, and that he is awake or asleep.

Listening to the melodious song of the nightingale, Keats has been able to leave the world of reality, its weariness, fever, and fret and escapes into the enchanting world of perfect happiness-the world where the bird dwells. He feels that it is most appropriate to die without pain at midnight, listening to the bird singing in ecstasy. The bird, in contrast with human beings, is immortal as its song has been heard and enjoyed by generations of mankind in the past and it will continue to have the same effect on generations to come. At this point of his musings, he is suddenly tolled back to reality when the bird's song fades past the near meadows and is buried deep in the next valley glades. The poet finds himself perplexed, wondering whether he has had a vision or a dream, 'a waking dream'.

The poem explores the themes of creative expression and the mortality of human life. He describes at length how the music of this bird acts as an opiate on him. It fires all his senses with joy, makes him forget the weariness, the fever and the fret of the world and takes him away to some distant fairy land. The transient nature of human life and the tragedy of old age is set against the eternal renewal of the nightingale's melodious music. It suggests a sharp contrast between the pure delight, beauty and timelessness of the bird's song and the sorrow, imperfection and transience of beauty, love and joy in human life. The poem is characterized by the brilliant use of rich and sensuous imagery, focusing on immediate, concrete sensations and emotions. In the descriptions of the transports and raptures induced in him by the music of the bird, Keats has referred to all the senses and how they are delighted by the sudden onrush of joy.

Paragraph Questions

1. 'And with thee fade away into the forest dim'. Why does Keats wish to fade away with the bird?
2. 'Now more than ever seems it rich to die'. Which is the moment? Why is it rich to die then?
3. Why does the poet call the nightingale 'immortal'?
4. How does the beauty of the nightingale affect the poet?

Essay Questions

1. The "Ode to a Nightingale" is a poem of moods and sensations. Substantiate.
2. Write an appreciation of the images used in the poem
3. What does the nightingale come to symbolize for the poet over the course of poem? Use examples from the poem to illustrate your answer.
4. 'Keats is the poet of five senses'. Discuss with reference to the poem "Ode to a Nightingale".

MY LAST DUCHESS

Robert Browning

Robert Browning (1812-1889), one of the greatest poets of the Victorian period, began to write poetry at the age of twelve. His father possessed a large library that greatly influenced the young Robert. It was his mastery of the dramatic monologues which gained him popularity. His dramatic monologues like “Andrea Del Sarto”, “My Last Duchess” and “Fra Lippo Lippi” established his fame. Being an advocate of Victorian individualism, he believed in the sanctity of the individual. His acquaintance with the Italian renaissance is revealed in most of his poems. His major works include *Bells and Pomegranates* (1846), *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Men and Women* (1855).

Summary of the poem

‘My Last Duchess’ published in 1842 is written in the form of a dramatic monologue. In a dramatic monologue only person speaks in a specific situation at a critical moment. Though there is only one speaker, the monologue pre-supposes a listener who remains silent. In this poem, an Italian Duke of ancient lineage speaks to the messenger of a count whose daughter he proposes to make his next Duchess. The situation in the poem grows out of the Duke taking the messenger around his picture gallery and showing him the portrait of his last Duchess. The duke points out to the portrait and tells him that he alone uncovers the painting and nobody else is allowed to do so. He explains that the passionate look in the eyes of the Duchess does not come out of guilty love. The portrait was done not by an ordinary artist but by a monk namely Fra Pandolf. He finished the work within a day.

The Duchess had a very childish and a foolish nature. She was pleased with trifles and would thank others for even the slightest of favours that they happened to render her. She might blush if the painter mentioned that it is too difficult to reproduce the light pink glow on her throat. The Duke complains that she had a heart that was too soon made glad. She was equally happy with the sunset or the branches of cherry gifted to her. The Duke who came from a 900 year old family and who was very proud about it was unhappy with her ways. She ranked his name with that of others. There was no distinction between him and others in her eyes. Since he feared his own loss of dignity, he didn’t even try to correct her ways. She smiled the same smile she had for everyone looking at the Duke. When this grew intolerable, he gave commands and all the smiles stopped together. The Duke after his description of the portrait asks the messenger to come down where others are waiting. He talks to him about the rich dowry that he expects from the count even though his primary concern is the daughter. Finally, the Duke shows the messenger a rare bronze Neptune taming a seahorse that Claus of Innsbruck had cast for him.

Short answer questions

- 1) Why does the poet mention 'Fra Pandolf' by design?
- 2) Who is the silent listener in this poem?
- 3) What reasons are attributed to the smile on the face of the Duchess?
- 4) The Duke did not reveal his displeasure to the Duchess. Why?
- 5) "Then all smiles stopped together". Explain the meaning of this line.

Paragraph Questions

- 1) Mention the events that lead to the death of the Duchess.
- 2) The character of the Duchess.
- 3) Describe the situation in which the poet moulds the dramatic monologue.

Essay Questions

- 1) Write a critical appreciation of the poem.
- 2) Mention the features of a dramatic monologue with special reference to the poem "My last Duchess".

ULYSSES

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Alfred Lord Tennyson is one of the chief representative of the Victorian era. He was born on August 5, 1809 in Somersby, Lincolnshire. He studied at Trinity college and befriended Arthur Hallam who became his closest friend. His major poetic accomplishments include the elegy mourning the death of Arthur Hallam, “In Memmorian”, Idylls of the King, the Lady of Shalot, The Lotus Eaters, Morte d’ Arthur and Ulysses. Tennyson wrote several plays, among them the poetic dramas Queen Mary and Harold. He succeeded Wordsworth as the poet laureate in 1850

Ulysses is written in 1833 and was published with his *Poems* in 1842.. He takes up the hero from Homer’s Odyssey and the medieval hero of Dante’s Inferno and reworks on it to create a hero with insatiable thirst for knowledge. Ulysses makes this speech shortly after returning to Ithaca where he finds his wife aged and a rocky island which he is supposed to rule. The poem also describes Tennyson’s personal journey after the death of his dearest friend. He talks about the inevitable hour in everyone’s life and takes a strong resolution to move on though his friend is no more alive. The poem also did have a contemporary relevance. It talks about the desire to reach beyond the limits of human thought.

Summary of the poem

Ulysses is a dramatic monologue where Ulysses is speaking to his fellow mariners about his present situation and his attitude and ambition towards his life. He says that he does not want to waste his talents and time by ruling the ignorant masses of Ithaca whose only aim in life is to “hoard and sleep and feed” and is never able to understand his real value.

He proclaims the fact that he “cannot rest from travel”. He wants to live life to its fullest, wants to enjoy life to its last drop. He has always enjoyed his life. He has also had many setbacks in life which he had to endure patiently. He had experiences which he had enjoyed and suffered greatly both on land and sea and he considered himself as a symbol for adventure. He has a place wherever he went. His travels have exposed him to various people, manners, states, attitudes, climates and governments. But he feels that the more he travelled, the more untraveled world is left behind him.

Ulysses does not want to stay in one place, bored. He always wanted to shine in use and not to gather rust without doing anything at all. He feels that the purpose of life is not just to breathe but engage in worthy activities, to explore the new worlds, to amass more knowledge. He wanted heaps of life to enjoy and experience life to its fullest. His spirit always yearns to acquire and amass more and more knowledge and to “follow knowledge like a sinking star”.

Ulysses now talks about his son Telemachus who is so keen and responsible to rule the subjects of Ithaca. He will be his heir and rule Ithaca for the rest of his life. He is well equipped with the tactics to deal with the masses in Ithaca. He is always dutiful to pay homage to the household gods. Ulysses praises his son's abilities as an administrator and his sincerity in ruling the country and devotion to gods.

In the final stanza he encourages his mariners to move on in life. Though their bodies have grown old their minds and spirits are still strong enough to explore the unexplored lands. Though they are not able to fight with gods as they used to do in their salad days, their spirits have the potential to seek newer worlds. Before the "eternal silence" takes its hold on them they would like to do some work of noble note by making use of their old age. Perhaps they will reach the happy isles where they meet great Achilles. They are strong in will "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield".

Short answer questions

1. Who was Ulysses?
2. What are Happy isles?
3. What is the main idea of the poem?
4. Who will rule the island after Ulysses?

Paragraph questions

1. "I am a part of all that I have met" explain
2. Comment on the theme of action in the poem.
3. Ulysses as a dramatic monologue
4. Sketch the character of Ulysses.

Essay questions

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem
2. "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield" comment.

JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

T S Eliot

T S Eliot (1888-1965), poet, critic and dramatist, has depicted the agony of life after the First World War in his works. Though born in Missouri in U.S.A, he became a naturalised British subject in 1927. His first volume of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) revealed the emptiness and hopelessness of life of those days. He shot into fame with the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922. It portrayed the futile life of the post-war generation intermingled with a number of symbols and images. During the 1930s, his poetry marked a shift in thought and explored more religious thoughts. His other major works include *Ash Wednesday* (1930), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *Four Quartets* (1944), *The Cocktail Party* (1949) etc.

Summary of the poem

"Journey of the Magi", written in 1927, is one among the five poems contributed for a series of 38 pamphlets to be sent as Christmas cards by several authors collectively titled *Ariel Poems* and released by British publishing house Faber and Gwyer. Published in August 1927, "Journey of the Magi" was the eighth in the series and was accompanied by illustrations drawn by American-born artist Edward McKnight Kauffer. The poems, including "Journey of the Magi", were later published in both editions of Eliot's collected poems in 1936 and 1963.

The poem is in the form of dramatic monologue. It is written from the point of view of one among the Magi. The Magi refers to the three wise men from the East who visited the infant Christ at Bethlehem. The Magi had to face lots of difficulties during their journey to pay homage to infant Jesus. As per the gospel, the Magi were the three wise men namely Balthazar (King of Chaldea), Gaspar (King of Ethiopia) and Melchior (King of Nubia). The search for the birth place Christ symbolises the constant search for spirituality by people in this world. The poem opens with a quotation from a sermon of Lancelot Andrews preached in 1622.

The Magi started their journey during deadly winter season. They had to undergo a number of hardships like snow, deep cold and sharp weather. It was believed to be the worst time of the year. Often, during their voyage, they regretted for giving up the materialistic pleasures like summer palaces and embarking on such a long journey. The snow clad ways injured the camels. Even the camel men were cursing and grumbling because of the pains of winter. The villages were hostile to them and charged very high prices even though they were dirty. Therefore, they preferred to travel during the night without much sleep. There were voices that echoed in their ears with the words that 'this was all folly'. They were unable to distinguish between the right and the wrong.

The second stanza shows a complete change in the circumstances. The Magi reached a temperate valley which showed certain sprouts of active life. It showed them an insight into the future life of Christ, the saviour. It smelled of 'vegetation', with 'a running stream' and a 'water-mill beating the darkness'. The running stream seems to signify the timelessness of their journey while the water-mill symbolises the new belief fighting the ignorant old belief systems. Afterwards, they witnessed 'three trees on the low sky' which symbolises the three crosses at the Calvary. The Magi also observed a white horse, which is, in fact a metaphor for Christ and his teachings which reached around the world. Finally, 'six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver' refers to the betrayal of Christ by Judas and soldiers who played dice for Jesus' clothing. There was no information about the birth of Christ and therefore they travelled till the evening. At last, they reached the place of birth. There occurred a clash between the old and new beliefs. This could be easily understood from the statement: 'it was (you may say) satisfactory'. The last part describes the psychological changes in the minds of Magi. They couldn't realize whether it was time of 'Birth or Death'. The Magi remembers that the birth was a moment of agony for them 'like death'. It reveals the death of old faith and the uncertainty to embrace new faith. They went back to their own kingdoms with the old belief systems which had their own Gods and waited for their death. This death that they awaited is symbolic of the death of their old dispensations.

The poem portrays Eliot's own spiritual quest and his conversion to Anglicanism during his later life. The images that the Magi witnessed during their journey foretold the events in Christ's life. The poet uses this technique so as to make the readers believe that Christ's birth is significant as is his death.

Short answer questions

- 1) Who is being referred to as Magi in the poem?
- 2) Why did they travel during the night?
- 3) Mention the significance of 'old white horse'.
- 4) What do the scenes in the second stanza of the poem symbolise?
- 5) What was the attitude of the Magi as they went back to their kingdoms?

Paragraph questions

- 1) What difficulties did the Magi face during their journey?
- 2) Mention the events that happened in the life of Christ that were witnessed by the Magi.
- 3) What were the after effects of their journey?

Essay questions

- 1) Write a critical appreciation of the poem 'Journey of the Magi'.
- 2) How far do you agree with the view that the poem is about birth and death?
- 3) Comment on the symbolic significance of the life of Christ as evident in the poem.

THE SUMMER POEM

Jayanta Mahapatra

Jayanta Mahapatra, the first Indian English poet to receive the Sahitya Academy Award, was born on 22 October 1923 in Cuttack and belongs to a lower middle class family. He started writing at the age of 38. But this did not distort his achievements. He published his first collection of poems titled *Swayamvara and Other Poems* in 1971. His other collections include *Close the Sky*, *Ten By Ten*, *A Rain of Rites*, *Life Signs* etc. He won the Sahitya Academy Award in the year 1981 for his long poem *Relationship*.

Summary of the poem

The poem is typical of Mahapatra who, in most of his poems, projects the harsh realism of the contemporary India with a tinge of satire. In the first stanza itself we become aware of the shallow aspect of India where “priests chant louder than ever”. East is always noted for its profundity. Even our mystical elements like chanting became exteriorized in modern India.

The whole poem is an objective correlative. It correlates the shallow predicament of contemporary culture. This aspect is reiterated by images like crocodile which is associated with hypocrisy. Just like many of his poems he is obsessed with culture. Water symbolizes life; it is a symbol of culture. The crocodiles do not find a proper position in the contemporary world and it goes in search of the roots of culture.

There is an insubstantial effort to hide everything under the smoke. But the sun which signifies natural light exposes everything. There is a juxtaposing of nature and culture through the image of “smoke under the sun”.

Mahapatra also describes the predicament of Indian woman in this poem which is his major concern throughout his poems. Woman in India should always be ‘good’. But it need not happen always. The poet exploits the verbal ambiguity of the word ‘lies’ which literally means lie down in the bed but also connotes to a person who lies that she is good. The funeral pyres signify the loss of individuality. Her problem is unending in the sense that the afternoon is ‘long’. A man woman relationship is being described where the woman always become the sufferer.

Paragraph questions

1. What the highlights of an Indian summer are as depicted in the poem?
2. Explain the image of crocodiles. Why does the poet use this particular image?
3. Sound is an important element in the poem. Elucidate.

Essay questions

1. Explain the techniques used by Mahapatra to evoke the atmosphere of an Indian summer.
2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem.

KARMA

Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh was born in Hadali in present Pakistan and had his education in Delhi and England. A number of books were written by Singh on Sikh religion and history. There are several novels and articles in his credit. His major works include *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1961) and *Delhi: A Novel* (1993). He also served as a Member of Parliament from 1980 – 1986.

Summary of the story

Karma is a short story which was published in 1989 in Khushwant Singh's *The Collected Stories*. The story criticises the way in which an English-educated Indian adopts the upper class English ways of living and its consequences. He believes that English lifestyle is superior to that of Indian. Mohan Lal was a middle-aged man who worked under the British in India. Since he was ashamed to be an Indian, he always tried to speak in English or rather Queens English. He dressed like that of a British official and felt himself proud of that kind of imitation. While Lal was conscious about all such things, his wife Lachmi was not at all bothered about all these flaunts. One day, the couple were ready for a train journey and reached a railway station. Mohan Lal, with his anglicized look, waited for the first class compartment while his typical Indian wife was looking for the inter-class zenana compartment. She sat chewing a betel leaf and fanning herself with a newspaper. She chatted merrily with the coolie without any kind of dissatisfaction. When the train entered the station Lal sat comfortably in his seat as he believed that not much people would be there to board the first class compartment. He was eager to have a conversation in English with some of the British men travelling in the compartment. But the first class coupe was empty. He was happy to see two English soldiers walking down the platform with their luggage on their back. He was ready to welcome them to the coupe. As they reached the window, they saw Mohan, an Indian. The soldiers asked the guard to throw 'the nigger' out of the coupe. Even though Lal protested much, he was thrown out along with his luggage. He could only stare at his wife sitting comfortably in the inter-class compartment of the moving train.

The title of the story, "Karma", gives us the idea that one's actions one's destiny. In this story Mohan Lal's pride and his treatment of his wife lead to his fall. He assumed that his imitation of English life style will incur him the status of English. He looks upon Indians as 'inefficient, dirty and indifferent'. In the end, he realises that he is also regarded in the same manner by the British. Khushwant Singh humorously portrays the fall of a prejudiced Indian through this story.

Short answer questions

- 1) What is Mohan Lal's attitude towards Indians?
- 2) Why did Lachmi travel in the inter-class compartment?
- 3) Why did Mohan Lal always carry *The Times* during his train journey?
- 4) How did Mohan Lal often engage in a conversation with the English men?
- 5) Why was Mohan Lal thrown out of the train?

Paragraph questions

- 1) Describe the character of Mrs. Lal.
- 2) Elaborate the significance of the title "Karma".
- 3) Why does Mohan Lal choose a first class coupe while his wife preferred inter-class?
- 4) Describe the ways in which Lal allure the English men.

Essay questions

- 1) Bring out the contrast between the characters of Mr. Mohan Lal and his wife.
- 2) Lal is a victim of the mimicry of the colonised. Explain with the help of instances from the story.

THE MODEL MILLIONAIRE

Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde (1856- 1900) was born in Dublin, Ireland. Wilde became the most popular playwright of London in the early 1890's as part of the decadent school. His social satires revealed the problems within the contemporary society. He paints a picture of the upper class and their lifestyle. *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1895) is one of the well read plays of Wilde. His other works include *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *Salome* (1892), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) etc.

Summary

“The Model Millionaire” is a short story which portrays the materialistic nature of human beings. The protagonist, Hughie Ersline, never realised the need of money in this world. The story opens with a very interesting statement, “Unless one is wealthy there is no use in being a charming fellow. Romance is the privilege of the rich, not the profession of the unemployed. The poor should be practical and prosaic. It is better to have a permanent income than to be fascinating”. It is true in the case of Hughie. He has tried many things to make a living, including being a stock trader and also a merchant. Hughie is in love with Laura Merton, the daughter of a retired Colonel. Although the retired Colonel likes and approves of the young man, he will not give his daughter's hand in marriage unless Hughie is able to amass a wealth of £10,000, and then he will rethink the matter. Hughie does not have a profession and doesn't know how he will ever get the money.

Hughie often visits his friend, Alan Trevor, a renowned painter, whose paintings are always in demand. Alan happens to like Hughie, and allows him to visit even while he is working. One day when Hughie went to Alan, he is painting a beggar with a piteous and miserable look on his face. The two friends talk about the beggar and Hughie asks how much the model gets, and he learns a schilling for an hour while Alan gets 2000 guineas for the painting. Hughie declares that the model works as hard as the painter and should earn more.

A servant informs Alan that the frame maker wants to speak to him. While he is gone, the beggar takes the time to rest for a moment. Hughie looks at him, and he dips into his pocket and shares the little he has, thinking that the beggar needs it more than he does. The beggar is very grateful for the money. Anyway, later when he visits Laura and tells her what he did, she scolds him for being extravagant. That night, he visits the Palette Club and finds Alan there, sitting by himself smoking and drinking. Alan tells Hughie that he told the beggar all about him – about his financial situation and the £10,000 he has to amass before he can marry Laura. Hughie cannot understand why Alan would share his personal information with a beggar. He also tells Alan that he gave the beggar money. Alan discloses that the beggar isn't really a beggar, “that old beggar, as you call him, is one of the richest men in Europe.

He could buy all London tomorrow without overdrawing his account. He has a house in every capital, dines off gold plate, and can prevent Russia going to war when he chooses". The 'beggar', Baron Hausberg, commissioned the painter and posed for it. Hughie is not happy about the deception. The next morning while he is eating breakfast, his servant brings him a card from Monsieur Gustave Naudin who works for Baron Hausberg. Hughie thinks he has to apologize for giving a multimillionaire spare change. As it turns out, Baron Hausberg was touched by Hughie's kind gesture despite his financial situation. Monsieur Gustave Naudin delivers a cheque made out to Hughie Erskine for £10,000 so that he can marry his sweetheart.

The story portrays the value of kindness and compassion in a world of selfishness and cruelty. Hughie gave money to the beggar even though he was himself in need of it. Such actions are to be rewarded. Wilde is able to depict the story in an effective manner, in a humorous tone.

Short answer questions

- 1) Why did the colonel reject decision to marry his daughter?
- 2) Who is the beggar in the story?
- 3) Why did Hughie give money to the model?
- 4) How much does a model get for a sitting?
- 5) Why did Laurs scold Hughie?

Paragraph questions

- 1) Character of Hughie Erskine.
- 2) Describe the relationship between Hughie and Alan.
- 3) Significance of the title "The Model Millionaire".
- 4) Character of Baron Hausberg.

Essay questions

- 1) How does the author criticize the materialistic ways adopted by the society?
- 2) Describe in detail Hughie's feelings when he learnt that the model was actually a millionaire.
- 3) Comment on Trevor's attitude to art and to life.

THE LUNCHEON

Somerset Maugham

William Somerset Maugham was born on 25 December 1874 at the British Embassy in Paris, France. His parents died early, and after a long unhappy childhood he became a physician. But writing was his true vocation. He had firsthand experience of real poverty which helped him in his writing career. His reputation rests on four books: *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Six Pence*, *Cakes and Ale* and *The Razor's Edge*. He died in 1965 at the age of 91.

Summary

The text is narrated to us in the form of a flash back. The writer sees the lady in a theatre and recollects the day when they first met, twenty years ago. The narrator was a young, aspiring writer who could barely make both ends meet. The lady happened to read one of his books and wrote to him about her views on the book. Later she wrote another letter to him expressing her sincere wish to see him and talk to him about literary matters. This admirer of his short stories wanted to visit him in Foyot's, a five star restaurant where French senators eat. The narrator is a gullible person. "Foyot's is a restaurant at which the French senators eat and it was so far beyond my means that I had never even thought of going there. But I was flattered and I was too young to have learned to say no to a woman." He was trying to appear high class, sophisticated and wanted to keep up appearances but he never realised the fact that he cannot afford to entertain such a kind of a woman. Though initially he was flattered and excited by having lots of admirers and wanted to please his fan by whatever means he could, later he became angry, frightened, sarcastic and even revengeful at the lady.

The narrator had imagined meeting a very beautiful young lady and had almost pictured her in his mind. Once they met he found that she was neither young nor beautiful. She was a forty year old lady who was very talkative. When they entered the restaurant the lady comforted him by saying that she does not eat anything for lunch. But the incidents that followed really stunned him as the lady was ordering the most expensive items available in the hotel; salmon, asparagus, caviare, icecream, champagne and peech, when the narrator made himself satisfied with the cheapest available item; mutton chops and water. While the lady was enjoying the meal he was thinking about the bill that the waiter would bring. They had come to chat with each other about literary matters but we never hear them talking so. They were simply talking about eating nothing for lunch or overfilling the stomach with heavy food. The bill far exceeded the amount that he had estimated. He had estimated that the whole lunch will cost just fifteen francs and he need to cut down only two weeks' coffee, but now he had left before him a whole month and not a penny in the pocket. After recollecting the incident the writer comes to the present where the narrator says that God has helped him in revenging her. "Today she weighs twenty one stone" that is almost three hundred pounds.

The story humorously tells us about an upcoming writer who wanted always to increase and please his fans so as to ensure his presence in the literary scenario. A person who keeps up appearances before others without realising his actual, realistic conditions is described in the story. The title of the story itself is ironic. Luncheon literally means "a light snack" but this turns out to be an exorbitant, abundant and expensive meal.

THE NIGHT THE GHOST GOT IN

James Thurber

James Thurber was one of the most popular humorists of America during his time. He was born on December 8 1894, in Columbus, Ohio. He lost his eye in an accident while playing with his brothers. Later he became shy and withdrawn till he found fascination in writing. His major works include: *The Owl in the Attic*, *The Seal in the Bedroom* and *My Life and Hard Times*. He died in the year 1961.

The night the ghost got in is a light comedy published in Thurber's 1933 book *My Life and Hard Times*, a fictionalised account of his childhood in Columbus, Ohio. The story takes place on November 17 1915. It begins with a summary of what happened the night the ghost got in and then directly plunges into the story in a sequential manner.

It starts when the narrator was coming out after taking a shower, wearing a bath towel at 1.15 in the morning. He happened to hear a noise downstairs which he realised is the sound of footsteps in the dining hall. First he felt that it would be his father or his elder brother. Later he felt something fishy and called his brother Herman who is afraid at being called up in the middle of the night. Both of them tried to go downstairs but suddenly heard the noise again and rushed back and slammed the door behind. They understood that it was the sound of a ghost. The fact was that they did not hear the noise again but it wakened the mother who created a hullabaloo by calling the police.

Mother enquires about the sound and not getting a reply concludes that it would be burglars. As the telephone was downstairs she suddenly planned a scheme so as to inform the police. She threw a shoe through the window of the house next door where Mr. and Mrs. Bodwell lived. At first they thought that burglars were in their house but later they understood the situation and rings up the police.

The arrival of the police made the whole situation worse. They included "a Ford sedan full of them, two on motorcycles and a patrol wagon with about eight of them in it and a few reporters." They called out from the front door and when no one turned up to open the door they broke in. They searched the downstairs and moved on to upstairs and doubted the strange appearance of the narrator. The police found that all the windows and doors were bolted. But the mother went on insisting that there were burglars in the house. The police began to search all over pulling down all the furniture and closets. One policeman became curious about the old zither in the house.

The police force heard a noise from the attic. Before the narrator could explain that it was their grandfather sleeping there the police force rushed to the attic to get injured by the grandfather. He mistook the police force to be the general Meade's army and called them cowards and told them to go back to the battle front. He slapped one policeman, took one's gun from the holster and shot him twice and went back to bed. The police were quite confused for not having any one to arrest. The next day the grandfather was very cheerful and normal as if nothing had happened. The story ended with everyone smiling and normal.

Paragraph Questions

1. Sketch the character of the narrator.
2. What happened when the police arrived?
3. What happened when the police reached the grandfather's room?

Essay Questions

1. Elucidate on the humour in the story.
2. Was there really ghost in the house? What is your opinion?