

WORLD CLASSICS IN TRANSLATION



BA ENGLISH

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURS (ELECTIVE)

2014 Admission Onwards

575

**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O. 673 635

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Study Material

B.A. ENGLISH

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WORLD CLASSICS IN TRANSLATION

Prepared by : ABDUL NASIR VELLARAMPARA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR ON CONTRACT
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE, KONDOTTY,
VILAYIL, MALAPPURAM

Scrutinised by: Mr.ABDULATHEEF KAMPURAVAN
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
GOVT. ARTS & SCIENCE COLLEGE KONDOTTY

Settings & Lay Out By:

SDE Computer Cell

CONTENTS

Module 1	Poetry
Module II	Drama
Module III:	Fiction and Short Stories

Module 1: Poetry

A General Introduction to World Classics in Translation.

Poetry: A Brief Introduction.

For Detailed Study:-

Dante : *The Divine Comedy*-3. Paradiso Canto XX1.

Goethe : *The Reunion*.

A. S. Pushkin : *I Love You*.

For Non-detailed Study:-

An introduction to Homer and Virgil touching on *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*.

Module II: Drama

A brief introduction to world drama in general.

For Detailed Study:-

a) Sophocles : *Oedipus Rex*.

For Non-detailed Study:-

b) Bhasa : *Karnabharam*.

Module III: Fiction and Short Stories

a) Fiction: Non-detailed Study.

Dostoevsky : *Notes from Underground*.

Hermann Hesse : *Siddhartha*.

b) Short Fiction:- Detailed Study.

Leo Tolstoy : *The Repentant Sinner*.

MODULE I

POETRY

Introduction:

The paper titled “World Classics in Translation” has been included in the curriculum content of sixth semester B.A. English with an intention to familiarize the students with the literary classics ever written and translated from different parts of the world. The poetry section of the paper includes World Classics such as *The Divine Comedy* by the Italian writer Dante, *The Reunion* by the German writer Goethe, *I Love You* by A. S. Pushkin. A detailed note on *The Aeneid* by Virgil and the ancient classics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer is also included in this section. The drama section deals with the Greek classic *Oedipus Rex* written by Sophocles, and the Great Indian classic *Karnabharam* by Bhasa. The Russian classic writer Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, Hermann Hesse’s German Classic *Siddhartha* and Tolstoy’s short story *The Repentant Sinner* are given detailed analysis in the last section of the paper titled Fiction. World literature refers to the sum total of the world’s national literature. Translation helps the circulation of works into the wider world beyond their country of origin. Thus, literature produced at any corner of the world has now been viewed and evaluated in a wider global context.

Wolfgang von Goethe used the concept of *weltliteratur* in several of his essays in the early decades of the nineteenth century to describe the international circulation and reception of literary works in Europe, including works of non-western origin. Recently studies in the areas such as comparative literature and world classics have gained much popularity and the studies have been focused largely on the Greek and Roman classics and the literature of the major modern western European powers. But a confluence of factors in the late 1980s 1990s led to a great openness to the wider

world. The end of the Cold War, the growing globalization of the world economy, and new waves of immigrants from many parts of the world led to several efforts to open out the study of world classics.

The explosive growth in the range of cultures, geography, traditions studied under the rubric of world classics has inspired a variety of theoretical attempts to define and delimit the field and to propose effective modes of research and teaching. The field of world classics in translation continues to generate debate among the academicians arguing that too often the study of world literature in translation smooths out both the linguistic richness of the original and the political force a work can have in its original context.

Poetry:

Poetry is a word of Greek origin. It comes from a verb which means “to make” or “to create”. The poet is the creator and language is the material out of which the poet creates her/his work of art. The German poet Goethe observes that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times. Like any other literary works poetry is made up of words. But what is special about poetry? How is reading poetry different from reading prose? A good start to answering the question is to consider what poetry is concerned with.

A poem is a self-contained text, which makes sense as it stands. The careful choice and arrangement of words account for the unique quality of poetry. Structure and texture of the poem play a major role in conveying the message to the reader. In addition to the sound quality, a poem makes intense use of language, which results in a greater concentration of meaning than is commonly found in prose. In approaching a poem, it would be preferable to ask the text a few simple questions which would help you to understand the poem in a better way:

- What is the poem about?
- Who is the voice speaking in the poem?
- Who is the poem addressed to?
- What are the figures of speech used in the poem?
- What is the structure of the poem?
- What is the tone and mood of the poem?
- What is the setting and context of the poem?

PARADISO

Canto XXI: The Seventh Sphere: Saturn

Dante

About the Poet:

Durante Degli Alighieri, simply called Dante (1265-1321), was a major Italian poet of the late middle ages. His Divine Comedy is widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature. Dante has been called “the Father of the Italian language” and one of the greatest poets of world literature. In Italy, Dante is often referred to as *il Sommo Poeta* (“The Supreme Poet”). Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio are also called “the three fountains” or “the three crowns”.

Paradiso Canto XXI: The Sphere of Saturn

AGAIN mine eyes were fix'd on Beatrice;
And, with mine eyes, my soul that in her looks

Found all contentment. Yet no smile she wore:
And, "Did I smile," quoth she, "thou wouldst be straight
Like Semele when into ashes turn'd; 5
For, mounting these eternal palace-stairs,
My beauty, which the loftier it climbs,
As thou hast noted, still doth kindle more,
So shines, that, were no tempering interposed,
Thy mortal puissance would from its rays 10
Shrink, as the leaf doth from the thunderbolt.
Into the seventh splendour are we wafted,
That, underneath the burning lion's breast,
Beams, in this hour, commingled with his might.
Thy mind be with thine eyes; and, in them, mirror'd 15
The shape, which in this mirror shall be shown."
Whoso can deem, how fondly I had fed
My sight upon her blissful countenance,
May know, when to new thoughts I changed, what joy
To do the bidding of my heavenly guide; 20
In equal balance, poising either weight.
Within the crystal, which records the name
(As its remoter circle girds the world)
Of that loved monarch, in whose happy reign
No ill had power to harm, I saw rear'd up, 25
In colour like to sun-illumined gold,
A ladder, which my ken pursued in vain,
So lofty was the summit; down whose steps

I saw the splendours in such multitude
Descending, every light in Heaven, methought, 30
Was shed thence. As the rooks, at dawn of day,
Bestirring them to dry their feathers chill,
Some speed their way a-field; and homeward some,
Returning, cross their flight; while some abide,
And wheel around their airy lodge: so seem'd 35
That glitterance, afted on alternate wing,
As upon certain stair it came, and clash'd
Its shining. And one, lingering near us, wax'd
So bright, that in my thought I said: "The love,
Which this betokens me, admits no doubt." 40
Unwillingly from question I refrain;
To her, by whom my silence and my speech
Are order'd, looking for a sign: whence she,
Who in the sight of Him, that seeth all,
Saw wherefore I was silent, prompted me 45
To indulge the fervent wish; and I began:
"I am not worthy, of my own desert,
That thou shouldst answer me: but for her sake,
Who hath vouchsafed my asking, spirit blest,
That in thy joy art shrouded! say the cause, 50
Which bringeth thee so near: and wherefore, say,
Doth the sweet symphony of Paradise
Keep silence here, pervading with such sounds
Of rapt devotion every lower sphere?"

“Mortal art thou in hearing, as in sight;” 55
Was the reply: “and what forbade the smile
Of Beatrice interrupts our song.
Only to yield thee gladness of my voice,
And of the light that vests me, I thus far
Descend these hallow’d steps; not that more love 60
Invites me; for, lo! there aloft, as much
Or more of love is witness’d in those flames:
But such my lot by charity assign’d,
That makes us ready servants, as thou seest,
To execute the counsel of the Highest.” 65
“That in this court,” said I, “O sacred lamp!
Love no compulsion needs, but follows free
The eternal Providence, I well discern:
This harder find to deem: why, of thy peers,
Thou only, to this office wert foredoom’d.” 70
I had not ended, when, like rapid mill,
Upon its centre whirl’d the light; and then
The love that did inhabit there, replied:
“Splendour eternal, piercing through these folds,
Its virtue to my vision knits; and thus 75
Supported, lifts me so above myself,
That on the sovran Essence, which it wells from,
I have the power to gaze: and hence the joy,
Wherewith I sparkle, equaling with my blaze
The keenness of my sight. But not the soul, 80

That is in Heaven most lustrous, nor the Seraph,
That hath his eyes most fix'd on God, shall solve
What thou hast ask'd: for in the abyss it lies
Of th' everlasting statute sunks so low,
That no created ken may fathom it. 85
And, to the mortal world when thou return'st,
Be this reported: that none henceforth dare
Direct his footsteps to so dread a bourn.
The mind, that here is radiant, on the earth
Is wrapt in mist. Look then if she may do 90
Below, what passeth her ability
When she is ta'en to Heaven." By words like these
Admonish'd, I the question urged no more;
And of the spirit humbly sued alone
To instruct me of its state. "Twixt either shore 95
Of Italy, nor distant from thy land,
A stony ridge ariseth; in such sort,
The thunder doth not lift his voice so high.
They call it Catria: at whose foot, a cell
Is sacred to the lonely Eremite; 100
For worship set apart and holy rites."
A third time thus it spake; then added: "There
So firmly to God's service I adhered,
That with no costlier viands than the juice
Of olives, easily I pass'd the heats 105
Of summer and the winter frosts; content

In heaven-ward musings. Rich were the returns
And fertile, which that cloister once was used
To render to these Heavens: now 'tis fallen
Into a waste so empty, that ere long 110
Detection must lay bare its vanity.
Pietro Damiano there was I y-clept:
Pietro the sinner, when before I dwelt,
Beside the Adriatic, in the house
Of our blest Lady. Near upon my close 115
Of mortal life, through much importuning
I was constrain'd to weat the hat, that still
From bad to worse is shifted.—Cephas came:
He came, who was the Holy Spirit's vessel;
Barefoot and lean; eating their bread, as chanced, 120
At the first table. Modern Shepherds need
Those who on either hand may prop and lead them,
So burly are they grown; and from behind,
Others to hoist them. Down the palfrey's sides
Spread their broad mantles, so as both the beasts 125
Are cover'd with one skin. O patience! thou
That look'st on this, and dost endure so long.”
I at those accents saw the splendours down
From step to step alight, and wheel, and wax,
Each circuiting, more beautiful. Round this 130
They came, and stay'd them; utter'd then a shout
So loud, it hath no likeness here: nor I

Wist what it spake, so deafening was the thunder.

Summary of the Poem *The Divine Comedy*

The poem opens with Dante's invocation to Apollo and the Muses, asking blessings for his divine task. He and Beatrice ascend from the Earthly Paradise to different layers of the Heaven. Beatrice outlines the structure of the universe. Dante warns the readers not to follow him now into Heaven for fear of getting lost in the turbulent waters.

Dante and Beatrice arrive in the First Heaven, sphere of the Moon. Beatrice vigorously quizzes Dante and then corrects his views on the cause of the moon spots. Dante first sees the blessed souls as points of light. He meets Piccarda Donati, who explains the souls' happiness with their place in Heaven. She explains that the moon houses souls who broke their vows. Beatrice explains why Dante sees the souls in these heavens, when they are all located in the Empyrean, (the Tenth Heaven). Then she explains vows in terms of absolute and contingent will.

They ascend to the Second Heaven, sphere of Mercury. Justinian explains the history and destiny of Rome. He tells Dante that the souls in Mercury were all just, but motivated by fame. Beatrice explains God's just vengeance on Jerusalem.

They ascend to the Third Heaven, sphere of Venus. Dante meets Charles Martel, an early French emperor, and he explains why sons can end up so different from their fathers. Dante meets Cunizza da Romano and Folco of Marseille, who points out Rahab to Dante.

Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Fourth Heaven, sphere of the Sun. St. Thomas and eleven other souls form a crown around our heroes. Dante denounces the senseless cares of mortals. St. Thomas discusses the life of St. Francis and the

Franciscans. A second crown forms around the first. St. Bonaventure talks about the life of St. Dominic and the Dominicans. The crowns dance. St. Thomas explains the wisdom of King Solomon and warns Dante not to judge hastily. Solomon explains the source of the blessed souls' light.

They ascend to the Fifth Heaven, sphere of Mars. The souls form an image of the Cross. Dante meets Cacciaguida, who expounds on the virtue of ancient Florence. Dante indulges in a rare proud moment over the nobility of his birth. Cacciaguida talks about the noble Florentine families. Then, he tells Dante about his destiny of exile, but tempers it with encouragement to Dante to fulfill his poetic mission.

Dante and Beatrice move on to the Sixth Heaven, Sphere of Jupiter. The souls spell out the message *Diligite iustitiam, que iudicatis terram* ("Love justice, you who judge the earth"), and then form the Eagle. The Eagle explains Divine Justice and the inscrutability of God's Mind. It introduces the six spirits that form its eye and explains why the Emperor Trajan and Ripheus are there.

They continue to the Seventh Heaven, sphere of Saturn. Dante sees the golden ladder. Dante meets St. Peter Damian, who denounces degenerate prelates. The spirits cry out in encouragement and Dante faints from the force. Dante meets St. Benedict.

Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Eighth Heaven, sphere of the Fixed Stars. Dante gazes down on Earth and realizes how small and petty it is. They witness the coronation and re-ascension of Mary and Christ into the Empyrean. St. Peter examines Dante on faith. Dante conveys his hope of returning to Florence one day to be crowned as a poet. St. James examines Dante on hope. Dante goes blind. St.

John examines Dante on charity. Adam answers Dante's four questions. St. Peter denounces corrupt popes.

Beatrice and Dante then move on the Ninth Heaven, Primum Mobile. Beatrice prophesies the coming redemption of the world. Dante observes the model of the nine Angelic Intelligences orbiting a shining Point. Beatrice explains the order of the universe, and clears up the question about the number of extant angels.

They ascend into the Tenth Heaven, the Empyrean. Dante sees the illusion and then real Celestial Rose. Beatrice points out the seat reserved for Henry VIII. Beatrice disappears and is replaced by St. Bernard. Dante prays his thanks to Beatrice.

Next, Dante gazes upon Mary. St. Bernard explains the placement of the blessed in the Celestial Rose, including that of the innocent infants. St. Bernard prays to Mary to intercede to God on Dante's behalf so that the poet may look upon God. Mary approves. Dante looks into the Eternal Light, and sees within it the image of the Holy Trinity. He ponders the mystery of the incarnation. God bestows the answer upon him in a flash of light and Dante's soul is, finally, at one with God's.

Paradise Canto XXI: (Seventh Heaven: Sphere of Saturn)

Dante ascends with Beatrice to the seventh Heaven, which is the planet Saturn. He turns to face Beatrice, but she is not smiling. She explains that if she smiles, Dante would turn to ashes because they've climbed so high that they've reached the point where Dante's mortal senses cannot bear the brilliance of God's reflected love. She announces that they are now in the Seventh Heaven. Beatrice tells him to look where he'd usually look and he'll see the reflected image of what comes next.

So Dante looks at Beatrice's eyes. There he sees the landscape of Saturn reflected. And rising from it is a magnificent golden ladder extending so high that

Dante cannot see its top. Climbing down the steps of the ladder are thousands upon thousands of souls. Dante compares their movements, gathering together and flitting about once they reach the surface of Saturn, to the movement of a flock of jackdaws.

Dante turns his attention to the nearest soul and thinks that he is so bright, he must be eager to speak. But he must await permission from Beatrice before speaking to the soul. At this unspoken thought, Beatrice promptly gives the signal and Dante's words are unleashed. Dante asks the aforementioned soul why he stepped up so close and why there's an unnatural silence in this sphere, whereas every other sphere is thundered with glorious music.

The soul chooses to answer the second question first. It's quiet here, he says, if we sing, it would burst your eardrums. In other words, Dante's mortal hearing could not handle the glory of song at this level of Heaven.

In response to the first question, the soul answers that he descended the golden ladder with the purpose of meeting Dante. But he qualifies his answer with a humbling remark: it's not that God particularly favors this soul more than the others, only that this soul is governed by God's will and thus obeys when told to move down the ladder. Ok, says Dante, I understand that you've aligned your will with God's, but I still don't understand why you in particular were predestined to meet me.

Before he can even say the last words, the spirit begins spinning as fast as it can go. Predictably, his spinning only makes the soul grow brighter, and he replies, my sight is good which is why God blesses me with so much grace, but stop asking why, Dante. Nobody can know the mind of God. And you would do well to remind your fellow men of that when you return below.

His haughty words make Dante take a step back. Thoroughly humbled, Dante meekly asks the soul his identity. The blazing soul responds that he once worshipped God in a place called Catria, specifically in the monastery of Santa Croce di Forte

Avellana. In his meditation there, he was happy to live on a diet of veggies cooked only in olive juice.

That monastery, the soul continues, used to turn out virtuous souls like clockwork, but “it is now barren.” Then he names himself as St. Peter Damian. Dante nods in realization. St. Peter Damian continues his story. He was called “Peter the Sinner” when he first came to the monastery. From this place, he was reluctantly dragged out and eventually became a cardinal.

This gives Peter an opportunity to blast the Papal Seat. He recounts how popes were once good, as when St. Paul wore the hat; he walked “barefoot” and was “lean.” But now, Peter shakes his head, the popes are “so plump / that they have need of one to prop them up / on this side, one of that, and one in front, / and one to hoist them saddleward.” Peter’s words have attracted the souls, who are now gathered round in a spectacle of light; when Peter stops speaking, they cry out in agreement. And Dante drops like an anchor. Their combined voices have over whelmed his senses, as St. Peter warned before.

Note on Important characters:-

Piccarda Donati: was a 13th century Italian noblewoman. She is the first character Dante encounters in Paradise. She is on the Sphere of the Moon, the lowest sphere of Heaven. She explains to Dante that her placement is due to “vows neglected and, in part, no longer valid”.

Justinian I: Traditionally known as Justinian the Great was a Byzantine Emperor from 527-565.

Venus: The second planet from the Sun and the sixth largest. It was named after the Roman goddess of love and beauty.

Charles Martel: A Frankish statesman and military leader. Charles successfully asserted his claims to power as successor to his father as the power behind the throne in Frankish politics.

St. Peter Damian: A Benedictine monk and cardinal in the circle Pope Leo IX. He was also a great predecessor of Saint Francis of Assisi and he was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1828.

St. Benedict: Benedict of Nursia is a Christian saint, who is venerated in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. He is a patron saint of Europe.

Major Themes:-

Language and Communication

Paradiso hints at the inadequacy of language in expressing God and his blessed. Most of what Dante encounters cannot be adequately described in words.

Love

In Dante's Christian universe, every motion – from the petty choices of humans to the cosmic revolutions of the stars – is motivated by love.

Rules and Order

Christian theology claims that the universe is very strictly ordered because it reflects the mind of God, its creator.

Faith

In Heaven, one must come to terms with the fact that mortals cannot understand everything they see. For Dante, this means trusting to faith.

Fate and Free Will

The difference between the free will of the blessed and that of other men is the blessed have aligned their free will with God's, which is Fate. Thus, they are content wherever God places them.

Spirituality

In Dante's vision of Heaven, souls do not resemble material bodies, as they do in Hell or Purgatory, but are depicted as rays of light.

Education

Perspective is the most important element to possess in the act of learning. It allows one to see things as they truly are, and to perceive their big – picture significance.

Time

According to Dante, time is a bad thing for mortals. *Paradise* claims that since God created the universe and time, nothing can be more perfect than what He creates.

Art and Culture

The act of creation in *Paradise* is seen as a work of art. Artistic pieces – like the Cross, Eagle, Rose, music of the spheres, and the universe itself – are meticulously crafted and ordered.

Questions:-

1. Who was called the father of Italian language?
2. Who was referred to as “the Supreme Poet”?
3. Who are the three crowns of Italian poetic tradition?
4. How does Dante's *The Divine Comedy* begin?
5. Which is the Seventh Heaven in *The Divine Comedy*?
6. Who was St. Peter Damian?
7. Who was St. Benedict?
8. What are the major themes of the poem *The Divine Comedy*?
9. How does Dante's *The Divine Comedy* end?

THE REUNION

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

About the Author:

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was a German writer and statesman. He has contributed much to various literary genres such as epic, lyric poetry, prose and verse dramas, memoirs, autobiography, literary and aesthetic criticism and novels. He was called the “Last true polymath to walk on the earth”. Goethe’s early education was somewhat irregular and informal, and already he was marked by that apparent feeling of superiority that stayed by him throughout his life. When he was about 16 he was sent to Leipzig, ostensibly to study law. He apparently studied more life than law and put in his time expressing his reactions through some form of writing. On at least two occasions, this form was dramatic.

In 1771 Goethe returned to Frankfurt, nominally to practice law, but he was soon deep in work on what was to be his first dramatic success, *Gotz von Berlichingen*. While this was actually the story of a robber baron of the 16th century it rally represented Goethe’s youthful protest against the established order and his demand for intellectual freedom. Its success made its hitherto unknown author the literary leader of Germany. The writing of *Faust*, however, that best known of Goethe’s works, extended over practically the whole of Goethe’s literary life, a period of 57 years. It was finally finished when Goethe was 81. *Faust* is in reality a dramatic poem rather than a piece for the stage. While based on the same legend as Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, it far transcends both its legendary source and the English play. The latter is little more than a Morality play illustrating the punishment of sin; Goethe’s work is a drama of redemption.

Others of Goethe's works which have stood the test of time include: *Clavigo*, *Egmont*, *Stella*, *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*.

THE REUNION

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

CAN it be! of stars the star,
Do I press thee to my heart?
In the night of distance far,
What deep gulf, what bitter smart!
Yes, 'tis thou, indeed at last,
Of my joys the partner dear!
Mindful, though, of sorrows past,
I the present needs must fear.

When the still unfashioned earth
Lay on God's eternal breast,
He ordained its hour of birth,
With creative joy possessed.
Then a heavy sigh arose,
When He spake the sentence: -- "Be!"
And the All, with mighty throes,
Burst into reality.

And when thus was born the light,
Darkness near it feared to stay,
And the elements with might

Fled on every side away;
Each on some far-distant trace,
Each with visions wild employed,
Numb, in boundless realms of space,
Harmony and feeling-void.

Dumb was all, all still and dead,
For the first time, God alone!
Then He formed the morning-red,
Which soon made its kindness known:
It unravelled from the waste
Bright and glowing harmony,
And once more with love was graced
What contended formerly.

And with earnest, noble strife,
Each its own peculiar sought;
Back to full, unbounded life,
Sight and feeling soon were brought.
Wherefore, if 'tis done, explore
How? why give the manner, name?
Allah need create no more,
We his world ourselves can frame.

So, with morning pinions brought,
To thy mouth was I impelled;
Stamped with thousand seals by night,

Star-clear is the bond fast held.
Paragons on earth are we
Both of grief and joy sublime,
And a second sentence: -- "Be!"
Parts us not a second time.

Analysis of the Poem *The Reunion*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German writer, here philosophically presents how dear the Almighty God is to him. In the analysis of this theme, he gives even the minute details of His creation and the utmost care and balance He keeps in the maintenance of the universe.

The poem is divided into six stanzas. In the first stanza of the poem, Goethe expresses how dear the Almighty God is to him. As the poem progresses, the poet exclaims on the super powers of Almighty as he observes the craftsmanship of God in the creation and maintenance of the Earth and the whole universe.

When He spake the sentence:-- "Be!"

And the All, with mighty throes,

Burst into reality."

When the Mighty Power created light, darkness was wiped out forever and it created a special kind of magical ambiance in the universe. In the coming stanzas, the poet describes the beauty and glow spread on the Earth due to the creation of morning red and then was brought life, sight and feeling to it. With the sixth stanza, the poet concludes the poem adding different perspective to God's creativity.

And a second sentence:-- "Be!"

Parts us not a second time.”

Questions:

1. Who was called the “last true polymath to walk on the earth”?
2. Who is the author of *Gotz von Berlichingen*?
3. Which is the most popular work authored by Goethe?
4. What is the theme of the poem *The Reunion*?
5. How does Goethe describe the creativity of Almighty?

I LOVE YOU

A.S. Pushkin

About the Poet:

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799-1837) was a Russian poet, playwright and novelist of the Romantic era. He is considered to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. Pushkin was believed to be incredibly intelligent and started writing his poems at an early age of 14. He wrote his poems in the Russian language and there have been several translations of his poems. Pushkin used his poems to address his feelings concerning the political views in Russian. Between 1814 and 1817 he published about 130 poems and for this the leaders did not like him much. Pushkin got into great debt because of his wife’s luxurious life. Pushkin was shot and killed in 1837 by his brother-in-law whom he suspected of having an affair with his wife when he confronted him about it. Some of his works include *Ruslan and Ludmila*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin*, *The Bridegroom*.

I LOVE YOU

Alexander Pushkin

I loved you; even now I must confess,
Some embers of my love their fire retain;
But do not let it cause you more distress,
I do not want to sadden you again.
Hopeless and tonguetied, yet I loved you dearly
With pangs the jealous and the timid know;
So tenderly I love you, so sincerely,
I pray God grant another love you so.

Summary of the Poem

The poem, *I Love You* by Alexander Pushkin, was originally written in the Russian language. Here Pushkin expresses his affectionate feelings about a lady. He is quite fascinated by the woman's beauty and personality. The poet confesses his deepest and warmest feelings about this girl. The mood in the poem cannot be characterized as either being a sad one or happy one. It is simply the poet lost in his dreams of this girl who seemingly has paid little attention to how the poet feels about her.

From the poem we can clearly infer that the poet is aware that the girl will no longer belong to him. From the manner the poet describes his passionate feelings in the last line 'as May God grant you to be loved again' he seems to have lost this amazing girl. He is concerned about the happiness of this lady whom he idolizes as the love of his life. He is willing to let go of her if that is what would make her happy and does not 'wish to cause her any pain'.

The poet holds very respectful attitude for this love that he seems to have lost. From line three ‘let my love no longer trouble you’ the feelings of the poet seem quite sincere in the manner in which they are expressed. He truly wishes his heroine happiness yet it seems his delicate heart will be broken by the loss of his love. The poet does not wish to fight for this girl’s affections and therefore is not after selfish gains. Throughout the poem the poet is very sincere about his feelings. Even though he still carries a lot of love for this girl in his heart he is not just concerned about his own happiness. ‘And for a while the feelings may remain’, this shows he is still deeply in love with her. He does conceal his feelings. ‘I loved you and hopelessly I knew’; the poet is very open about his affections. He even reveals the fact that he is jealous, ‘the jealousy the shyness... though in vain’.

The greatest expression of love is the willingness to let go despite obvious feelings of love, his prayer is that God grants another to love her. This last line gives the poem a true quality of love that it is not self seeking.

Questions:-

1. What is the theme of the poem “I Love You”?
2. Comment on the nature of the poet’s love towards the girl.
3. What does the poet pray for?
4. Give a critical evaluation of the poem “I Love You”.

An Introduction to Epic

An epic or heroic poem is a long verse narrative which deals with a serious subject. It is told in a formal and elevated style. It is centered on heroic or quasi-divine figures on whose action depends on the fate of a tribe, a nation or the entire human race as in the instance of John Milton’s *The Paradise Lost*. Epics may be

traditional or literary. Traditional epics are called folk epics. The traditional epics were the written version of oral poems about a tribal or national hero during a warlike age. Among these are the Iliad and Odyssey that are attributed to Homer, the Greek poet. Literary epics were composed in deliberate imitation of the traditional epics. Virgil's Latin poem the Aeneid is of this kind. This epic later served as a model for Milton's Paradise Lost.

Some features of Epics

The hero of an epic is a figure of great national importance. In the Iliad, the hero is the Greek warrior Achilles, who is the son of the sea nymph Thetis, and Virgil's Aeneas is the son of the goddesses Aphrodite. The setting of the poem is ample in scale and may be worldwide or even larger. Odysseus wanders over the Mediterranean basin and in Book XI he descends into the underworlds as does Virgil's Aeneas. The action involves superhuman deeds in battle such as Achilles' feats in the Trojan War, or a long, odious and dangerous journey such as the wanderings of Odysseus on his way back to his homeland in the face of opposition by some of the gods. In the great actions, the gods and other supernatural beings take an interest or an active part. The Olympian gods in Homer is an instance.

An epic poem is a ceremonial performance, and is narrated in a ceremonial style which is deliberately distanced from the ordinary speech and proportioned to the grandeur and formality of the heroic subject.

The Epic Conventions

The narrator begins by stating his argument for epic theme, invokes a muse or guiding spirit to inspire him in his great undertaking. The narrative starts in media-res or in the middle of the story. There are catalogues of some of the principal characters introduced in a formal detail. The term *epic* is often applied to narratives which differ in many respects from this model but manifest the epic spirit and grandeur in the scale, the scope and the profound

human importance of their subject. In this broad sense Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* are often called epics.

Homer

In the Western Classical tradition, Homer is the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and is revered as the greatest of ancient Greek epic poets. These epics lie at the beginning of the Western canon of literature, and have had an enormous influence on the history of literature. When he lived is unknown. Herodotus estimates that Homer lived 400 years before his own time, which would place him at around 850 BC while other ancient sources claim that he lived much nearer to the supposed time of the Trojan War, in the early 12th century BC. Most modern researchers place Homer in the 7th or 8th centuries BC.

The formative influence of the Homeric epics in shaping Greek culture was widely recognized, and Homer was described as the teacher of Greece. Homer's works, which are about fifty percent speeches, provided models in persuasive speaking and writing that were emulated throughout the medieval Greek worlds.

ILIAD

Homer

The *Iliad* is an ancient Greek epic poem, traditionally attributed to Homer. Set during the Trojan War, the ten-year siege of the city of Troy (Ilium) by a coalition of Greek states, it tells of the battles and events during the weeks of a quarrel between King Agamemnon and the warrior Achilles. The *Iliad* is paired with something of a sequel, the *Odyssey*, also attributed to Homer. Along with the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad* is among the oldest extant works of Western literature, and its written version is usually dated to around the eighth century BC.

Synopsis

After an invocation to the Muses, the story launches *in Medias res* (in the middle of things) towards the end of the Trojan War between the Trojans and the besieging Greeks. Chryses, a Trojan priest of Apollo, offers the Greeks wealth for the return of his daughter Chryseis, a captive of Agamemnon, the Greek leader. Although most of the Greek army is in favour of the offer, Agamemnon refuses. Chryses prays for Apollo's help, and Apollo causes a plague throughout the Greek army. After nine days of plague, Achilles, the leader of the Myrmidon contingent, calls an assembly to solve the plague problem. Under pressure, Agamemnon agrees to return Chryseis to her father, but also decides to take Achilles's captive, Briseis, as compensation. Angered, Achilles declares that he and his men will no longer fight for Agamemnon, but will go home. Odysseus takes a ship and brings Chryseis to her father, whereupon Apollo ends the plague.

In the meantime, Agamemnon's messengers take Briseis away, and Achilles asks his mother, Thetis, to ask Zeus that the Greeks be brought to the breaking point by the Trojans, so Agamemnon will realize how much the Greeks need Achilles. Thetis does so, and Zeus agrees. Zeus sends a dream to Agamemnon, urging him to attack the city. Agamemnon heeds the dream but decides to first test the morale of the Greek army by telling them to go home.

The plan backfires, and only the intervention of Odysseus, inspired by Athena, stops a rout.

Odysseus confronts and beats Thersites, a common soldier who voices discontent at fighting Agamemnon's war. After a meal, the Greeks deploy in companies upon the Trojan plain. The poet takes the opportunity to describe the Greek and their allies. When news of the Greek deployment reaches king Priam, the Trojans too deploy upon the plain.

The poet describes the Trojans and their allies.

The armies of Trojans and Greeks approach each other on the plain, but before they meet, Paris offers to end the war by fighting a duel with Menelaus, urged by his brother and head of the Trojan army, Hector. While Helen tells Priam about the Greek commanders from the walls of Troy, both sides swear a truce and promise to abide by the outcome of the duel. Paris is beaten, but Aphrodite rescues him and leads him to bed with Helen before Menelaus could kill him. Pressured by Hera's hatred of Troy, Zeus arranges for the Trojan Pandaros to break the truce by wounding Menelaus with an arrow. Agamemnon rouses the Greeks, and battle is joined. In the fighting, Diomedes kills many Trojans, including Pandaros, and defeats Aeneas, whom again Aphrodite rescues, but Diomedes attacks and wounds the goddess. Apollo faces Diomedes, and warns him against warring with gods. Many heroes and commanders join in, including Hector, and the gods supporting each side try to influence the battle. Emboldened by Athena, Diomedes wounds Ares and puts him out of action. Hector rallies the Trojans and stops a rout; the Greek Diomedes and the Trojan Glaukos find common ground and exchange unequal gifts. Hector enters the city, urges prayers and sacrifices, incites Paris to battle, bids his wife Andromache and son Astyanax farewell on the city walls, and rejoins the battle. Hector duels with Ajax, but nightfall interrupts the fight and both sides retire. The Greeks agree to burn their dead and build a wall to protect their ships and camp, while the Trojans quarrel about returning Helen. Paris offers to return the treasure he took, and give further wealth as compensation, but without returning Helen, and the offer is refused. A day's truce is agreed for burning the dead, during which the Greeks also build their wall and trench.

The next morning, Zeus prohibits the gods from interfering, and fighting begins anew. The Trojans prevail and force the Greeks back to their wall while Hera and Athena are forbidden from helping. Night falls before the Trojans can assail the Greek wall. They camp in the field to attack at first light, and their watch fires light

the plain like stars. Meanwhile, the Greeks are desperate. Agamemnon admits his error, and sends an embassy composed of Odysseus, Ajax, Phoenix, and two heralds to offer Briseis an extensive gift to Achilles, who has been camped next to his ships throughout, if only he would return to the fighting. Achilles and his companion Patroclus receive the embassy well, but Achilles angrily refuses Agamemnon's offer, and declares that he would only return to battle if the Trojans reach his ships and threaten them with fire. The embassy returns empty-handed.

Later that night, Odysseus and Diomedes venture out to the Trojan lines, killing the Trojan Dolon and wreaking havoc in the camps of some Thracian allies of Troy. In the morning, the fighting is fierce and Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus are all wounded. Achilles sends Patroclus from his camp to inquire about the Greek casualties, and while there Patroclus is moved to pity by a speech of Nestor. The Trojans assault the Greek wall on foot. Hector, ignoring an omen, leads the terrible fighting. The Greeks are overwhelmed in rout, the wall's gate is broken, and Hector charges in. Many fall on both sides. The Trojan seer Polydamas urges Hector to fall back and warns him about Achilles, but is ignored. Hera seduces Zeus and lures him to sleep, allowing Poseidon to help the Greeks, and the Trojans are driven back onto the plain.

Zeus awakes and is enraged by Poseidon's intervention. Against the mounting discontent of the Greek-supporting gods, Zeus sends Apollo to aid the Trojans, who once again breach the wall, and the battle reaches the ships.

Patroclus can stand to watch no longer, and begs Achilles to be allowed to defend the ships. Achilles relents, and lends Patroclus his armour, but sends him off with a stern admonition not to pursue the Trojans, lest he take Achilles's glory. Patroclus leads the Myrmidons to battle and arrives as the Trojans set fire to the first ships. The Trojans are routed by the sudden onslaught, and Patroclus begins his assault by killing the Trojan hero Sarpedon. Patroclus, ignoring Achilles's command, pursues and reaches

the gates of Troy, where Apollo himself stops him. Patroclus is set upon by Apollo and Euphorbos, and is finally killed by Hector. Hector takes Achilles's armour from the fallen Patroclus, but fighting develops around Patroclus' body.

Achilles is mad with grief when he hears of Patroclus's death, and vows to take vengeance on Hector; his mother Thetis grieves, too, knowing that Achilles is fated to die young if he kills Hector. Achilles is urged to help retrieve Patroclus' body, but has no armour. Made brilliant by Athena, Achilles stands next to the Greek wall and roars in rage. The Trojans are dismayed by his appearance and the Greeks manage to bear Patroclus' body away. Again Polydamas urges Hector to withdraw into the city, again Hector refuses, and the Trojans camp in the plain at nightfall. Patroclus is mourned, and meanwhile, at Thetis' request, Hephaistos fashions a new set of armour for Achilles, among which is a magnificently wrought shield.

In the morning, Agamemnon gives Achilles all the promised gifts, including Briseis, but he is indifferent to them. Achilles fasts while the Greeks take their meal, and straps on his new armour, and heaves his great spear. His horse Xanthus prophesies to Achilles his death. Achilles drives his chariot into battle. Zeus lifts the ban on the gods' interference, and the gods freely intervene on both sides. The onslaught of Achilles, burning with rage and grief, is terrible, and he slays many. Driving the Trojans before him, Achilles cuts off half in the river Skamandros and proceeds to slaughter them and fills the river with the dead. The river, angry at the killing, confronts Achilles, but is beaten back by Hephaestus' firestorm. The gods fight among themselves. The great gates of the city are opened to receive the fleeing Trojans, and Apollo leads Achilles away from the city by pretending to be a Trojan. When Apollo reveals himself to Achilles, the Trojans had retreated into the city, all except for Hector, who, having twice ignored the counsels of Polydamas, feels the shame of rout and resolves to face Achilles, in spite of the pleas of Priam and Hecuba, his parents. When Achilles approaches, Hector's will fails him, and he is

chased around the city by Achilles. Finally, Athena tricks him to stop running, and he turns to face his opponent. After a brief duel, Achilles stabs Hector through the neck. Before dying, Hector reminds Achilles that he is fated to die in the war as well. Achilles takes Hector's body and dishonours it.

The ghost of Patroclus comes to Achilles in a dream and urges the burial of his body. The Greeks hold a day of funeral games, and Achilles gives out the prizes. Dismayed by Achilles' continued abuse of Hector's body, Zeus decides that it must be returned to Priam. Led by Hermes, Priam takes a wagon out of Troy, across the plains, and enters the Greek camp unnoticed. He grasps Achilles by the knees and begs to have his son's body. Achilles is moved to tears, and the two lament their losses in the war. After a meal, Priam carries Hector's body back into Troy. Hector is buried, and the city mourns.

THE ODYSSEY

Homer

Plot Overview

Ten years have passed since the fall of Troy, and the Greek hero Odysseus still has not returned to his kingdom in Ithaca. A large and rowdy mob of suitors who have overrun Odysseus's palace and pillaged his land continue to court his wife, Penelope. She has remained faithful to Odysseus. Odysseus's son wants desperately to throw them out but does not have the confidence or experience to fight them. One of the suitors, Antinous, plans to assassinate the young prince, eliminating the only opposition to their dominion over the palace.

Unknown to the suitors, Odysseus is still alive. The beautiful nymph Calypso, possessed by love for him, has imprisoned him on her island, Ogygia. He longs to return to his wife and son, but he has no ship or crew to help him escape. While the

gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus debate Odysseus's future, Athena, Odysseus's strongest supporter among the gods, resolves to help Telemachus. Disguised as a friend of the prince's grandfather, Laertes, she convinces the prince to call a meeting of the assembly at which he reproaches the suitors. Athena also prepares him for a great journey to Pylos and Sparta. Where the kings Nestor and Menelaus, Odysseus's companions during the war, inform him that Odysseus is alive and trapped on Calypso's island. Telemachus makes plans to return home, while, back in Ithaca, Antinous and the other suitors prepare an ambush to kill him when he reaches port.

On mount Olympus, Zeus sends Hermes to rescue Odysseus from Calypso. Hermes persuades Calypso to let Odysseus build a ship and leave. The homesick hero sets sail, but when Poseidon, god of the sea, finds him sailing home, he sends a storm to wreck Odysseus's ship. Poseidon has harbored bitter grudge against Odysseus since the hero blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, earlier in his travels. Athena intervenes to save Odysseus from Poseidon's wrath, and the beleaguered king lands at Scheria, home of the Phaeacians. Nausica, the Phaeacian princess, shows him to the royal palace, and Odysseus receives a warm welcome from the king and queen. When he identifies himself as Odysseus, his hosts, who have heard of his exploits at Troy, are stunned. They promise to give him safe passage to Ithaca, but first they beg to hear the story of his adventures.

Odysseus spends the night describing the fantastic chain of events leading up to his arrival on Calypso's island. He recounts his trip to the Land of the Lotus Eaters, his battle with Polyphemus the Cyclops, his love affair with the witch goddess Circe, his temptation by the deadly Sirens, his journey into Hades to consult the prophet Tiresias, and his fight with the sea monster Scylla. When he finishes his story, the Phaeacians return Odysseus to Ithaca, where he seeks out the hut of his

faithful swineherd, Eumaeus. Though Athena has disguised Odysseus as a beggar, Eumaeus warmly receive and nourishes him in the hut. He soon encounters Telemachus, who has returned from Pylos and Sparta despite the suitors' ambush, and reveals to him his true identity. Odysseus and Telemachus devise a plan to massacre the suitors and regain control of Ithaca.

When Odysseus arrives at the palace the next day, still disguised as a beggar, he endures abuse and insults from the suitors. The only person who recognizes him is his old nurse, Eurycleia, but she swears not to disclose his secret. Penelope takes an interest in this strange beggar, suspecting that he might be her long – lost husband. Quite crafty herself, Penelope organizes an archery contest the following day and promises to marry any man who can string Odysseus's great bow and fire an arrow through a row of twelve axes – a feat that only Odysseus has ever been able to accomplish. At the contest, each suitor tries to string the bow and fails. Odysseus steps up to the bow and with little effort, fires an arrow through all twelve axes. He then turns the bow on the suitors. He and Telemachus, assisted by a few faithful servants, kill every last suitor.

Odysseus reveals himself to the entire palace and reunites with his loving Penelope. He travels to the outskirts of Ithaca to see his aging father, Laertes. They come under attack from the vengeful family members of the dead suitors, but Laertes, reinvigorated by his son's arrival, successfully kills Antinous's father and puts a stop to the attack. Zeus dispatches Athena to restore peace. With his power secure and his family reunited, Odysseus's ordeal comes to an end.

VIRGIL

Publius Vergilius Macro (70 BC – 19 BC), usually called Virgil or Vergil in English, was an ancient Roman poet of the Augustan period. He is known for three

major works of Latin literature: the Eclogues (or Bucolics), the Georgics, and the epic Aeneid. A number of minor poems, collected in the Appendix Vergiliana, are sometimes attributed to him.

Virgil is traditionally ranked as one of Rome's greatest poets. His Aeneid has been considered the national epic of ancient Rome from the time of its composition to the present day. Modeled after Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, the Aeneid follows the Trojan refugee Aeneas as he struggles to fulfill his destiny and arrive on the shores of Italy in Roman mythology, the founding act of Rome. Virgil's work has had wide and deep influence of Western literature. Most notably the Divine Comedy of Dante, in which Virgil appears as Dante's guide through hell and purgatory.

THE AENEID

Virgil

The *Aeneid* is a Latin epic poem, written by Virgil between 29 and 19 BC, that tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. It is composed of 9,896 lines. The first six of the poem's twelve books tell the story of Aeneas' wanderings from Troy to Italy, and the poem's second half tells of the Trojans' ultimately victorious war upon the Latins, under whose name Aeneas and his Trojan followers are destined to be subsumed.

The hero Aeneas was already known to Greco-Roman legend and myth, having been a character in the *Iliad*, composed in the 8th century BC. Virgil took the disconnected tales of Aeneas' wanderings, his vague association with the foundation of Rome and a personage of no fixed characteristics other than a scrupulous piety, and fashioned this into a national epic that at once tied Rome to the legends of Troy, explained the Punic wars, glorified traditional Roman virtues and legitimized the

Julio-Claudian dynasty as descendants of the founders, heroes and gods of Rome and Troy.

The *Aeneid* can be divided into two halves based on the disparate subject matter of Books 1–6 (Aeneas' journey to Latium in Italy) and Books 7–12 (the war in Latium). These two halves are commonly regarded as reflecting Virgil's ambition to rival Homer by treating both the *Odyssey's* wandering theme and the *Iliad's* warfare themes. This is, however, a rough correspondence, the limitations of which should be borne in mind.

Plot Overview

On the Mediterranean Sea, Aeneas and his fellow Trojans flee from their home city of Troy, which has been destroyed by the Greeks. They sail for Italy, where Aeneas is destined to found Rome. As they near their destination, a fierce storm throws them off course and lands them in Carthage. Dido Carthage's founder and queen, welcomes them. Aeneas relates to Dido the long and painful story of his group's travels thus far.

Aeneas tells of the sack of Troy that ended the Trojan War after ten years of Greek siege. In the final campaign, the Trojans were tricked when they accepted into their city walls a wooden horse that, unbeknownst to them, harbored several Greek soldiers in its hollow belly. He tells how he escaped the burning city with his father,, Anchises; his son, Ascanius; and the hearth gods that represent their fallen city. Assured by the gods that a glorious future awaited him in Italy, he set sail with a fleet containing the surviving citizens of Troy. Aeneas relates the ordeals they faced on their journey. Twice they attempted to build a new city, only to be driven away by bad omens and plagues. Harpies, creatures that are part woman and part bird, cursed them, but they also encountered friendly countrymen unexpectedly.

Finally, after the loss of Anchises and a bout of terrible weather, they made their way to Carthage.

Impressed by Aeneas's exploits and sympathetic to his suffering, Dido, a Phoenician princess who fled her home and founded Carthage after her brother murdered her husband, falls in love with Aeneas. They live together as lovers for a period, until the gods remind Aeneas of his duty to found a new city. He determines to set sail once again. Dido is devastated by his departure, and kills herself by ordering a huge pyre to be built with Aeneas's castaway possessions, climbing upon it, and stabbing herself with the sword Aeneas leaves behind.

As the Trojans make for Italy, bad weather blows them to Sicily, where they hold funeral games for the dead Anchises. The women, tired of the voyage, begin to burn the ships, but a downpour puts the fires out. Some of the travel – weary stay behind, while Aeneas, reinvigorated after his father visits him in a dream, takes the rest on toward Italy. Once there, Aeneas descends into the underworld, guided by the Sibyl of Cumae, to visit his father. He is shown a pageant of the future history and heroes of Rome, which helps him to understand the importance of his mission. Aeneas returns from the underworld, and the Trojans continue up the coast to the region of Latium.

The arrival of Trojans in Italy begins peacefully. King Latinus, the Italian ruler, extends his hospitality, hoping that Aeneas will prove to be the foreigner whom, according to a prophecy, his daughter Lavinia is supposed to marry. But Latinus's wife, Amata, has other ideas. She means for Lavinia to marry Turnus, a local suitor. Amata and Turnus cultivate enmity toward the newly arrived Trojans. Meanwhile, Ascanius hunts a stag that was a pet of the local herdsmen. A fight

breaks out, and several people are killed. Turnus, riding this current of anger, begins a war.

Aeneas, at the suggestion of the river god Tiberinus, sails north up the Tiber to seek military support among the neighboring tribes. During this voyage, his mother, Venus, descends to give him a new set of weapons, wrought by Vulcan. While the Trojan leader is away, Turnus attacks them. Aeneas returns to find his countrymen embroiled in battle. Pallas, the son of Aeneas' new ally Evander, is killed by Turnus. Aeneas flies into a violent fury and many more are slain by the day's end.

The two sides agree to a truce so that they can bury the dead, and the Latin leaders discuss where to continue the battle. They decide to spare any further unnecessary carnage by proposing a hand- to – hand duel between Aeneas and Turnus. When the two leaders face off, however, the other men begin to quarrel, and full – scale battle resumes. Aeneas is wounded in the thigh, but eventually the Trojans threaten the enemy city. Turnus rushes out to meet Aeneas, who wounds Turnus badly. Aeneas nearly spares Turnus but, remembering the slain Pallas, slays him instead.

Story in detail:

Journey to Italy (books 1–6)

Virgil begins his poem with a statement of his theme- "I sing of arms and of a man ..." and an invocation to the Muse, falling some seven lines after the poem's inception, "O Muse, recount to me the causes ...". He then explains the reason for the principal conflict in the story: the resentment held by the goddess Juno against the Trojan people. This is consistent with her role throughout the Homeric epics.

Flight from Troy

Also in the manner of Homer, the story proper begins in *medias res* (in the middle of things), with the Trojan fleet in the eastern Mediterranean, heading in the direction of Italy. The fleet, led by Aeneas, is on a voyage to find a second home. It has been foretold that in Italy, he will give rise to a race both noble and courageous, a race which will become known to all nations. Juno is wrathful, because she had not been chosen in the judgment of Paris, and because her favorite city, Carthage, will be destroyed by Aeneas' descendants. Also, Ganymede, a Trojan prince, was chosen to be the cup bearer to her husband, Jupiter—replacing Juno's daughter, Hebe. Juno proceeds to Aeolus, King of the Winds, and asks that he release the winds to stir up a storm in exchange for a bribe (Deiopea, the loveliest of all her sea nymphs, as a wife). Aeolus does not accept the bribe, but agrees to carry out Juno's orders (line 77, "my task is to fulfill your commands"); the storm then devastates the fleet. Neptune takes notice: although he himself is no friend of the Trojans, he is infuriated by Juno's intrusion into his domain, and stills the winds and calms the waters, after making sure that Aeolus would not try again. The fleet takes shelter on the coast of Africa. There, Aeneas' mother, Venus, in the form of a hunting woman very similar to the goddess Diana, encourages him and recounts to him the history of the city. Eventually, Aeneas ventures into Carthage, and in the temple of Juno, he seeks and gains the favor of Dido, queen of the city, which has only recently been founded by refugees from Tyre and which will later become a great imperial rival and enemy to Rome.

Trojan Horse

At a banquet given in honour of the Trojans, Aeneas sadly recounts the events that occasioned the Trojans' arrival. He begins the tale shortly after the war described in the *Iliad*: Crafty Ulysses devised a way for Greek warriors to gain entry into Troy by hiding in a large wooden horse. The Greeks pretended to sail away, leaving a warrior, Sinon, to inform the Trojans that the horse was an offering and that if it were

taken into the city, the Trojans would be able to conquer Greece. The Trojan priest Laocoön saw through the Greek plot and urged the horse's destruction, but his protests fell on deaf ears, so he hurled his spear at the horse. Then, in what would be seen by the Trojans as punishment from the Gods, two serpents emerged from the sea and devoured Laocoön, along with his two sons. The Trojans then took the horse inside the fortified walls, and after nightfall the armed Greeks emerged from it, opening the city's gates to allow the returned Greek army to slaughter the Trojans.

In a dream, Hector, the fallen Trojan prince, advised Aeneas to flee with his family. Aeneas awoke and saw with horror what was happening to his beloved city. At first he tried to fight the enemy, but soon he lost his comrades and was left alone to fend off the Greeks. He witnessed the murder of Priam by Achilles' son Pyrrhus. His mother, Venus, appeared to him and led him back to his house. Aeneas tells of his escape with his son, Ascanius, and father, Anchises, after the occurrence of various omens (Ascanius' head catching fire without his being harmed, a clap of thunder and a shooting star). After fleeing Troy, he goes back for his wife, Creusa, but she has been killed. Her ghost tells him that his destiny is to found a new city in the West.

Flight continued

He tells of how, rallying the other survivors, he built a fleet of ships and made landfall at various locations in the Mediterranean: Thrace, where they find the last remains of a fellow Trojan, Polydorus; The Strophades, where they encounter the Harpy Celaeno; Crete, which they believe to be the land where they are to build their city (but they are set straight by Apollo); and Buthrotum. This last city had been built in an attempt to replicate Troy. In Buthrotum, Aeneas meets Andromache, the widow of Hector. She is still lamenting the loss of her valiant husband and beloved child. There, too, Aeneas sees and meets Helenus, one of Priam's sons, who has the gift of prophecy. Through him, Aeneas learns the destiny laid out for him: he is divinely

advised to seek out the land of Italy (also known as *Ausonia* or *Hesperia*), where his descendants will not only prosper, but in time rule the entire known world. In addition, Helenus also bids him go to the Sibyl in Cumae. Heading into the open sea, Aeneas leaves Buthrotum, rounds Italy's boot and makes his way towards Sicily (Trinacria). There, they are caught in the whirlpool of Charybdis and driven out to sea. Soon they come ashore at the land of the Cyclops. There they meet a Greek, Achaemenides, one of Ulysses' men, who has been left behind when his comrades escaped the cave of Polyphemus. They take Achaemenides on board and narrowly escape Polyphemus. Shortly after, Anchises dies peacefully of old age. Meanwhile, Venus has her own plans. She goes to her son, Aeneas' half brother Cupid, and tells him to imitate Ascanius. Disguised as such, Cupid goes to Dido and offers the gifts expected from a guest. With her motherly love revived in the presence of the boy, Dido's heart is pierced and she falls in love with both the boy and his father. During the banquet, Dido realizes that she has fallen madly in love with Aeneas, although, she had previously sworn fidelity to the soul of her late husband, Sychaeus, who had been murdered by her brother, Pygmalion. Juno seizes upon this opportunity to make a deal with Venus, Aeneas' mother, with the intention of distracting him from his destiny of founding a city in Italy. Aeneas is inclined to return Dido's love, and during a hunting expedition, a storm drives them into a cave in which Aeneas and Dido presumably have sex, an event that Dido takes to indicate a marriage between them. But when Jupiter sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his duty, he has no choice but to part. Her heart broken, Dido commits suicide by stabbing herself upon a pyre with Aeneas' sword. Before dying, she predicts eternal strife between Aeneas' people and hers; "rise up from my bones, avenging spirit" (4.625, trans. Fitzgerald) is an obvious invocation to Hannibal. Looking back from the deck of his ship, Aeneas sees the smoke of Dido's funeral pyre and knows its

meaning only too clearly. Nevertheless, destiny calls, and the Trojan fleet sails on to Italy.

Sicily

Book 5 takes place on Sicily and centers on the funeral games that Aeneas organizes for the anniversary of his father's death. Aeneas and his men have left Carthage for Sicily, where Aeneas organizes celebratory games—a boat race, a foot race, a boxing match, and an archery contest. In all those contests, Aeneas is careful to reward winners and losers, showing his leadership qualities by not allowing for antagonism even after foul play. Each of these contests comments on past events or prefigures future events: the boxing match, for instance, is "a preview of the final encounter of Aeneas and Turnus", and the dove, the target during the archery contest, is connected to the deaths of Polites and King Priam in Book 2 and that of Camilla in Book 11. Afterward, Ascanius leads the boys in a military parade and mock battle, a tradition he will teach the Latins while building the walls of Alba Longa. During these events (in which only men participate), Juno incites the womenfolk to burn the fleet and prevent the Trojans from ever reaching Italy, but her plan is thwarted when Ascanius and Aeneas intervene. Aeneas prays to Jupiter to quench the fires, which the god does with a torrential rainstorm. An anxious Aeneas is comforted by a vision of his father, who tells him to go to the underworld to receive a vision of his and Rome's future, which he will do in Book 6. In return for safe passage to Italy, the gods, by order of Jupiter, will receive one of Aeneas' men as a sacrifice: Palinurus, who steers Aeneas' ship by night, falls overboard.

Underworld

In Book 6, Aeneas, with the guidance of the Cumaean Sibyl, descends into the underworld through an opening at Cumae; there he speaks with the spirit of his father and is offered a prophetic vision of the destiny of Rome.

War in Italy (books 7–12)

Upon returning to the land of the living, Aeneas leads the Trojans to settle in Latium, where he courts Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus. Although Aeneas wished to avoid a war, hostilities break out. Juno is heavily involved in bringing about this war—she has persuaded the Queen of Latium to demand that Lavinia be married to Turnus, the ruler of a local people, the Rutuli. Juno continues to stir up trouble, even summoning the fury Alecto to ensure that a war takes place.

Seeing the masses of warriors that Turnus has brought against him, Aeneas seeks help from the Tuscans, enemies of the Rutuli. He meets King Evander of Arcadia, whose son Pallas agrees to lead troops against the other Italians. Meanwhile, the Trojan camp is attacked, and a midnight raid leads to the deaths of Nisus and his companion, Euryalus. The gates, however, are defended until Aeneas returns with his Tuscan and Arcadian reinforcements. In the battling that follows, many are slain—notably Pallas, who is killed by Turnus, and Mezentius, Turnus' close associate. The latter, who has allowed his son to be killed while he himself fled, reproaches himself and faces Aeneas in single combat—an honorable but essentially futile endeavour. Another notable, Camilla, a sort of Amazon character, fights bravely but is killed. She has been a virgin devoted to Diana and to her nation; the man who kills her is struck dead by Diana's sentinel, Opis. Single combat is then proposed between Aeneas and Turnus, but Aeneas is so obviously superior that the Italians, urged on by Turnus' divine sister, Juturna, break the truce. Aeneas is injured, but returns to the battle. Turnus and Aeneas dominate the battle on opposite wings, but when Aeneas makes a daring attack at the city of Latium (causing the queen of Latium to hang herself in despair), he forces Turnus into single combat once more. Turnus' strength deserts him as he tries to hurl a rock, and he is struck in the leg by Aeneas' spear. As Turnus is begging on his knees for his life, the epic ends with Aeneas killing him in rage when he sees that Turnus is wearing the belt of his friend Pallas as a trophy.

Critical review of the *Aeneid*

Critics of the *Aeneid* focus on a variety of issues. The tone of the poem as a whole is a particular matter of debate; some see the poem as ultimately pessimistic and politically subversive to the Augustan regime, while others view it as a celebration of the new imperial dynasty. Virgil makes use of the symbolism of the Augustan regime, and some scholars see strong associations between Augustus and Aeneas, the one as founder and the other as re-founder of Rome.

The *Aeneid* is full of prophecies about the future of Rome, the deeds of Augustus, his ancestors, and famous Romans, and the Carthaginian Wars; the shield of Aeneas even depicts Augustus' victory at Actium in 31 BC. A further focus of study is the character of Aeneas. As the protagonist of the poem, Aeneas seems to constantly waver between his emotions and commitment to his prophetic duty to found Rome; critics note the breakdown of Aeneas' emotional control in the last sections of the poem where the "pious" and "righteous" Aeneas mercilessly slaughters Turnus. The *Aeneid* appears to have been a great success. Virgil is said to have recited Books 2, 4 and 6 to Augustus. The mention of her son, Marcellus, in book 6 apparently caused Augustus' sister Octavia to faint. The poem was unfinished at Virgil's death in 19 BC.

Theme

Pietas

The Roman ideal of *pietas* ("piety, dutiful respect"), which can be loosely translated from the Latin as a selfless sense of duty toward one's filial, religious, and societal obligations, was a crux of ancient Roman morality. Throughout *The Aeneid*, Aeneas serves as the embodiment of *pietas*, with the phrase "pious Aeneas" occurring 20 times throughout the poem thereby fulfilling his capacity as the father of the Roman people. For instance, in Book 2 Aeneas describes how he carried his father Anchises from the burning city of Troy: "No help/ Or hope of help existed./ So I

resigned myself, picked up my father,/ And turned my face toward the mountain range. Furthermore, Aeneas ventures into the underworld, thereby fulfilling Anchises' wishes. His father's gratitude is presented in the text by the following lines: "Have you at last come, has that loyalty/ your father counted on conquered the journey? However, Aeneas' *pietas* extend beyond his devotion to his father; we also see several examples of his religious fervour. Aeneas is consistently subservient to the gods, even if it is contradictory to his own desires, as he responds to one such divine command, "I sail to Italy not of my own free will". In addition to his religious and familial *pietas*, Aeneas also displays fervent patriotism and devotion to his people, particularly in a military capacity. For instance, as he and his followers leave Troy, Aeneas swears that he will "take up/ the combat once again. We shall not all/ Die this day un-avenged. Aeneas is a symbol of *pietas* in all of its forms, serving as a moral paragon to which a Roman should aspire.

Divine Intervention

One of the themes that occur in *The Aeneid* is that of **divine intervention**. Throughout the poem, the gods are constantly influencing the main characters and trying to change and impact the outcome, regardless of the fate that they all know will occur. For example, Juno comes down and acts as a phantom Aeneas to drive Turnus away from the real Aeneas and all of his rage from the death of Pallas. Even though Juno knows in the end that Aeneas will triumph over Turnus, she does all she can to delay and avoid this outcome. Divine intervention occurs multiple times in Book 4 especially. Aeneas falls in love with Dido, delaying his ultimate fate of traveling to Italy. However, it is actually the gods who inspired the love, as Juno plots:

Dido and the Trojan captain [will come]
To one same cavern. I shall be on hand,
And if I can be certain you are willing,

There I shall marry them and call her his.

A wedding, this will be.

Juno is speaking to Venus, making an agreement and influencing the lives and emotions of both Dido and Aeneas. Later in the same book, Jupiter steps in and restores what is the true fate and path for Aeneas, sending Mercury down to Aeneas' dreams, telling him that he must travel to Italy and leave his new-found lover. As Aeneas later pleads with Dido: The gods' interpreter, sent by Jove himself--

I swear it by your head and mine-- has brought

Commands down through the racing winds!

I sail for Italy not of my own free will.

Several of the gods try to intervene against the powers of fate, even though they know what the eventual outcome will be. The interventions are really just distractions to continue the conflict and postpone the inevitable. If the gods represent humans, just as the human characters engage in conflicts and power struggles, so too do the gods.

Fate

Fate, described as a preordained destiny that men and gods have to follow, is a major theme in *The Aeneid*. One example is when Aeneas is reminded of his fate through Jupiter and Mercury while he is falling in love with Dido. Mercury urges, "Think of your expectations of your heir, / Iulus, to whom the whole Italian realm, the land/ Of Rome, are due." Mercury is referring to Aeneas' preordained fate to found Rome, as well as

Rome's preordained fate to rule the world:

He was to be ruler of Italy,

Potential empire, armourer of war;

To father men from Teucer's noble blood

And bring the whole world under law's dominion

It is important to recognize that there is a marked difference between fate and divine intervention, as even though the gods might remind mortals of their eventual fate, the gods themselves are not in control of it. For example, the opening lines of the poem specify that Aeneas "came to Italy by destiny," but is also harassed by the separate force of "baleful Juno in her sleepless rage." Even though Juno might intervene, Aeneas' fate is set in stone and cannot be changed. Later in Book 6 when Aeneas visits the underworld, his father Anchises introduces him to the larger fate of the Roman people, as contrasted against his own personal fate to found Rome:

So raptly, everywhere, father and son
Wandered the airy plain and viewed it all.
After Anchises had conducted him
To every region and had fired his love
Of glory in the years to come, he spoke
Of wars that he might fight, of Laurentines,
And of Latinus' city, then of how
He might avoid or bear each toil to come

Violence and Conflict

From the very beginning of *The Aeneid*, **violence and conflict** are used as a means of survival and conquest. Aeneas' voyage is caused by the Trojan War and the destruction of Troy. Aeneas describes to Dido in Book 2 the massive amount of destruction that occurs after the Greeks sneak into Troy. He recalls that he asks his men to "defend/ A city lost in flames. Come, let us die,/ We'll make a rush into the thick of it. This is one of the first examples of how violence begets violence: even though the Trojans know they have lost the battle, they continue to fight for their country.

This violence continues as Aeneas makes his journey. Dido kills herself in an excessively violent way over a pyre in order to end and escape her worldly problem:

being heartbroken over the departure of her "husband" Aeneas. Queen Dido's suicide is a double edged sword. While releasing herself from the burden of her pain through violence, her last words implore her people to view Aeneas' people with hate for all eternity:

This is my last cry, as my last blood flows.

Then, O my Tyrians, besiege with hate

His progeny and all his race to come:

Make this your offering to my dust. No love,

No pact must be between our peoples.

Furthermore, her people, hearing of their queen's death, have only one avenue on which to direct the blame: the already-departed Trojans. Thus, Dido's request of her people and her people's only recourse for closure align in their mutual hate for Aeneas and his Trojans. In effect, Dido's violent suicide leads to the violent nature of the later relationship between Carthage and Rome. Finally, when Aeneas arrives in Latium, conflict inevitably arises. Juno sends Alecto, one of the Furies, to cause Turnus to go against Aeneas. In the ensuing battles, Turnus kills Pallas, who is supposed to be under Aeneas' protection. This act of violence causes Aeneas to be consumed with fury. Although Turnus asks for mercy in their final encounter, when Aeneas sees that Turnus has taken Pallas' sword belt, Aeneas proclaims:

You in your plunder, torn from one of mine,

Shall I be robbed of you? This wound will come

From Pallas: Pallas makes this offering

And from your criminal blood exacts his due

This final act of violence shows how Turnus' violence—the act of killing Pallas—inevitably leads to more violence and his own death. It is possible that the recurring theme of violence in *The Aeneid* is a subtle commentary on the bloody violence contemporary readers would have just experienced during the Late

Republican civil wars. *The Aeneid* potentially explores whether the violence of the civil wars was necessary to establish a lasting peace under Augustus, or whether it would just lead to more violence in the future.

Propaganda

Written under the reign of Augustus, *The Aeneid* presents the hero Aeneas as a strong and powerful leader. The favorable representation of Aeneas parallels Augustus in that it portrays his reign in a progressive and admirable light, and allows Augustus to be positively associated with the portrayal of Aeneas. Although Virgil's patron Maecenas was obviously not Augustus himself, he was still a high figure within Augustus' administration and could have personally benefitted from representing Aeneas in a positive light.

In *The Aeneid*, Aeneas is portrayed as the singular hope for the rebirth of the Trojan people. Charged with the preservation of his people by divine authority, Aeneas is utilized as symbolic of Augustus' own accomplishments in establishing order after the long period of chaos of the Roman civil wars. Augustus as the light of savior and the last hope of the Roman people is a parallel to Aeneas as the savior of the Trojans. This parallel functions as propaganda in support of Augustus, as it depicts the Trojan people, future Romans themselves, as uniting behind a single leader who will lead them out of ruin:

New refugees in a great crowd: men and women
Gathered for exile, young-pitiful people
Coming from every quarter, minds made up,
With their belongings, for whatever lands
I'd lead them to by sea

Later in Book 6, Aeneas travels to the underworld where he sees his father Anchises, who tells him of his own destiny as well as that of the Roman people.

Anchises describes how Aeneas' descendant Romulus will found the great city of Rome, which will eventually be ruled by Caesar Augustus:

Turn your two eyes

This way and see this people, your own Romans.

Here is Caesar, and all the line of Iulus,

All who shall one day pass under the dome

Of the great sky: this is the man, this one,

Of whom so often you have heard the promise,

Caesar Augustus, son of the deified,

Who shall bring once again an Age of Gold

To Latium, to the land where Saturn reigned

In early times, Virgil wrote about the fated future of the city that Aeneas will found, which will in turn lead directly to the golden reign of Augustus. Virgil is using a form of literary propaganda to demonstrate the Augustan regime's destiny to bring glory and peace to Rome. Rather than use Aeneas indirectly as a positive parallel to Augustus as in other parts of the poem, Virgil outright praises the emperor in Book 6, referring to Augustus as a harbinger for the glory of Rome and new levels of prosperity.

Allegory

The poem abounds with smaller and greater allegories. Two of the debated allegorical sections pertain to the exit from the underworld and to Pallas's belt. There are two gates of Sleep, one said to be of horn, whereby the true shades pass with ease, the other *all white ivory agleam without a flaw, and yet false dreams are sent* through this one by the ghost to the upper world. Anchises now, his last instructions given, took son and Sibyl and let them *go by the Ivory Gate*. —Book VI, lines 1211–1218, Aeneas' leaving the underworld through the gate of false dreams has been variously

interpreted: One suggestion is that the passage simply refers to the time of day at which Aeneas returned to the world of the living; another is that it implies that all of Aeneas' actions in the remainder of the poem are somehow "false". In an extension of the latter interpretation, it has been suggested that Virgil is conveying that the history of the world since the foundation of Rome is but a lie. Then to his glance appeared the sword belt surmounting Turnus' shoulder, shining with its familiar studs—the strap Young Pallas wore when Turnus wounded him and left him dead upon the field; now Turnus bore that enemy token on his shoulder—enemy still. For when the sight came home to him, Aeneas *raged* at the relic of his anguish worn by this man as trophy. *Blazing up and terrible in his anger*, he called out: "You in your plunder, torn from one of mine, shall I be robbed of you? This wound will come from Pallas: Pallas makes this offering, and from your criminal blood exacts his due." *He sank his blade in fury* in Turnus' chest... —Book XII, lines 1281–1295.

This section has been interpreted to mean that for the entire passage of the poem, Aeneas who symbolizes *pietas* (reason) in a moment becomes *furor* (fury), thus destroying what is essentially the primary theme of the poem itself. Many have argued over these two sections. Some claim that Virgil meant to change them before he died, while others find that the location of the two passages, at the very end of the so-called Volume I (Books 1–6, the *Odyssey*), and Volume II (Books 7–12, the *Iliad*), and their short length, which contrasts with the lengthy nature of the poem, are evidence that Virgil placed them purposefully there.

Analysis of Major Characters

Odysseus

Odysseus' name means "trouble" in Greek, referring to both the giving and receiving of trouble—as is often the case in his wanderings. An early example of this is the boar hunt that gave Odysseus the scar by which Eurycleia recognizes him;

Odysseus is injured by the boar and responds by killing it. Odysseus' heroic trait is his *mētis*, or "cunning intelligence": he is often described as the "Peer of Zeus in Counsel." This intelligence is most often manifested by his use of disguise and deceptive speech. His disguises take forms both physical (altering his appearance) and verbal, such as telling the Cyclops Polyphemus that his name is "Nobody", and then escaping after blinding Polyphemus. When asked by other Cyclopes why he is screaming, Polyphemus replies that "Nobody" is hurting him, so the others assume that, "If alone as you are [Polyphemus] none uses violence on you, why, there is no avoiding the sickness sent by great Zeus; so you had better pray to your father, the lord Poseidon". The most evident flaw that Odysseus sports are that of his arrogance and his pride, or *hubris*. As he sails away from the island of the Cyclopes, he shouts his name and boasts that nobody can defeat the "Great Odysseus". The Cyclops then throws the top half of a mountain at him and prays to his father, Poseidon, saying that Odysseus has blinded him. This enrages Poseidon, causing the god to thwart Odysseus' homecoming for a very long time.

Achilles

Although Achilles possesses superhuman strength and has a close relationship with the gods, he may strike modern readers as less than heroic. He has all the marks of a great warrior, and indeed proves the mightiest man in the Achaean army, but his deep-seated character flaws constantly impede his ability to act with nobility and integrity. He cannot control his pride or the rage that surges up when that pride is injured. This attribute so poisons him that he abandons his comrades and even prays that the Trojans will slaughter them, all because he has been slighted at the hands of his commander, Agamemnon. Achilles is driven primarily by a thirst for glory. Part of him yearns to live a long, easy life, but he knows that his personal fate forces him to choose between the two. Ultimately, he is willing to sacrifice

everything else so that his name will be remembered. Like most Homeric characters, Achilles does not develop significantly over the course of the epic. Although the death of Patroclus prompts him to seek reconciliation with Agamemnon, it does not alleviate his rage, but instead redirects it toward Hector. The event does not make Achilles a more deliberative or self-reflective.

Character Bloodlust, wrath, and pride continue to consume him. He mercilessly mauls his opponents, brazenly takes on the river Xanthus, ignobly desecrates the body of Hector, and savagely sacrifices twelve Trojan men at the funeral of Patroclus. He does not relent in this brutality until the final book of the epic, when King Priam, begging for the return of Hector's desecrated corpse, appeals to Achilles' memory of his father, Peleus. Yet it remains unclear whether a father's heartbroken pleas really have transformed Achilles, or whether this scene merely testifies to Achilles' capacity for grief and acquaintance with anguish, which were already proven in his intense mourning of Patroclus.

Agamemnon

Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and commander-in-chief of the Achaean army, resembles Achilles in some respects. Though not nearly as strong, he has a similarly hot temper and prideful streak. When Agamemnon's insulting demand that Achilles relinquish his war prize, Briseis, causes Achilles to withdraw angrily from battle, the suffering that results for the Greek army owes as much to Agamemnon's stubbornness as to that of Achilles. But Agamemnon's pride makes him more arrogant than Achilles. While Achilles' pride flares up after it is injured, Agamemnon uses every opportunity to make others feel the effects of his. He always expects the largest portions of the plunder, even though he takes the fewest risks in battle. Additionally, he insists upon leading the army, even though his younger brother

Menelaus, whose wife, Helen, was stolen by Paris, possesses the real grievance against the Trojans. He never allows the Achaeans to forget his kingly status.

Agamemnon also differs from Achilles in his appreciation of subtlety. Achilles remains fiercely devoted to those who love him but devotedly vicious to those who do him harm; he sees no shaded of gray. Agamemnon, however, remains fundamentally concerned with himself, and he has the cunning to manipulate people and situations for his own benefit. He does not trust his troops blindly, but tests their loyalty, as in Book 2. Although he reconciles with Achilles in Book 19, he shirks personal responsibility with a forked – tongued indictment of Fate, Ruin, and the gods. Whereas Achilles is wholly consumed by his emotions, Agamemnon demonstrates a deft ability to keep himself and others under control. When he commits wrongs, he does so not out of blind rage and frustration like Achilles, but out of amoral, self-serving cunning. For this reason, Homer's portrait of Agamemnon ultimately proves unkind, and the reader never feels the same sympathy for him as for Achilles.

Hector

Hector is the mightiest warrior in the Trojan army. Although he meets his match in Achilles, he wreaks havoc on the Achaean army during Achilles' period of absence. He leads the assault that finally penetrates the Achaean ramparts, he is the first and only Trojan to set fire to an Achaean ship, and he kills Patroclus. Yet his leadership contains discernible flaws, especially towards the end of the epic, when the participation of first Patroclus and then Achilles reinvigorates the Achaean army. He demonstrates a certain cowardice when, twice in Book 17, he flees Great Ajax. Indeed, he recovers his courage only after receiving the insults of his comrades – first Glaucus and then Aeneas. He can often become emotionally carried away as

well, treating Patroclus and his other victims with rash cruelty. Later, swept up by a burst of confidence, he foolishly orders the Trojans to camp outside Troy's walls the night before Achilles returns to battle, thus causing a crucial downfall the next day.

But although Hector may prove overly impulsive and insufficiently prudent, he does not come across as arrogant or overbearing, as Achaean commanders, allows Homer to develop him as a tender, family – oriented man. Hector shows deep, sincere love for his wife and children. Indeed, he even treats his brother Paris with forgiveness and indulgence, despite the man's lack of spirit and preference for lovemaking over military duty. Hector never turns violent with him, merely aiming frustrated words at his cowardly brother,. Moreover, although Hector loves his family, he never loses sight of his responsibility to Troy. Admittedly, he runs from Achilles at first and briefly entertains the delusional hope of negotiating his way out of a duel. However, in the end he stands up to the mighty warrior, even when he realizes that the gods, have abandoned him. His refusal to flee even in the face of vastly superior forces makes him the most tragic figure in the poem.

Structure

The Odyssey was written in dactylic hexameter. The *Odyssey* opens *in medias res*, in the middle of the overall story, with prior events described through flashbacks or storytelling. This device is also used by later authors of literary epics, such as Virgil in the *Aeneid*, Luís de Camões in *Os Lusíadas* and Alexander Pope in *The Rape of the Lock*. In the first episodes, we trace Telemachus' efforts to assert control of the household, and then, at Athena's advice, to search for news of his long-lost father. Then the scene shifts: Odysseus has been a captive of the beautiful nymph Calypso, with whom he has spent seven of his ten lost years. Released by the intercession of his patroness Athena, through the aid of Hermes, he departs, but his raft is destroyed by his divine enemy Poseidon, who is angry because Odysseus

blinded his son, Polyphemus. When Odysseus washes up on Scherie, home to the Phaeacians, he is assisted by the young Nausicaa and is treated hospitably. In return, he satisfies the Phaeacians' curiosity, telling them, and the reader, of all his adventures since departing from Troy. The shipbuilding Phaeacians then loan him a ship to return to Ithaca, where he is aided by the swineherd Eumaeus, meets Telemachus, regains his household, kills the Suitors, and is reunited with his faithful wife, Penelope. All ancient and nearly all modern editions and translations of the *Odyssey* are divided into 24 books. This division is convenient but it may not be original. Many scholars believe it was developed by Alexandrian editors of the 3rd century BC. In the Classical period, moreover, several of the books (individually and in groups) were given their own titles: the first four books, focusing on Telemachus, are commonly known as the *Telemachy*. Odysseus' narrative, Book 9, featuring his encounter with the cyclops Polyphemus, is traditionally called the *Cyclopeia*. Book 11, the section describing his meeting with the spirits of the dead is known as the *Nekuia*. Books 9 through 12, wherein Odysseus recalls his adventures for his Phaeacian hosts, are collectively referred to as the *Apologoi*: Odysseus' "stories". Book 22, wherein Odysseus kills all the Suitors, has been given the title *Mnesterophonia*: "slaughter of the Suitors".

Module II: Drama

Introduction to the World Drama

Drama is a literary composition meant to be staged. The term drama is derived from the Greek word ‘dran’ which means ‘to act’. Drama originated in ancient Greece. Ancient Greek drama took its origin to certain religious rituals performed during the worship of **Dionysus**, the God of wine and fertility. During the festivals of Dionysus, there was much ritualized dancing and singing. Two types of plays originated from such celebrations. They are tragedy which represented the serious side and comedy which represented the lighter side of human life. In England drama originated from the religious performances of the Middle Ages. Priests played the roles of characters and plays were usually performed inside the church. The plays produced by Trade Guilds on religious themes became popular as **Mystery Plays** and **Miracle plays**. Mysteries have themes from the Bible and the **Miracles** dealt with the lives of saints. **Morality plays** were plays in which the characters represented abstract qualities. The word theatre has been derived from the Greek word ‘theatrons’ which means a place for viewing. It refers to the space used for a dramatic performance; theatre is a form of self-expression and self-realization. It is a communal art involving the actors and the spectators alike. Theatre is a medium to entertain people. It portrays conflicts and struggles of the times. It is also used as a means of propaganda.

Theatres can be of different types. It can be a house or an open space. Thespis was the first actor playwright in Greece. He is supposed to have initiated the one-actor tradition in theatre performance. Early Greek performances were staged in huge amphitheaters situated in open areas. The audience sat on tiers about 60 to 70 feet across around the stage. The theatre was rich in music, rituals and dance. Since there were no barriers between the actors and the audience, the actor-audience participation

was high. There were only a few actors. The tragic actors wore masks, padded costumes and thick, high heeled shoes. The comic actors wore light-weight shoes. The masks prevented the actors from changing expressions and hence the actor's facial expression remained unchanged throughout performance.

Chorus

Drama is an objective and impersonal representation of life. The Chorus of the ancient Greek tragedies often functions as the author's mouth piece. (The chorus was a group of people wearing masks, who sang or chanted verses while performing dancelike maneuvers at religious festivals). A similar chorus played a part in Greek tragedies. The main function of the chorus was to narrate the events that took place off the stage and to make some comments on the morality of the actions represented on the stage. In modern plays, the place of the chorus is taken by one of the characters in the play. Ritual and ceremonial drama usually make use of stylized enactments constructed by selecting the essence of a situation. Ritual performance incorporates all devices like music, dance, speech, masks, costumes, acting space, performers and the audience. The actors are highly skilled and disciplined. Great musical skill was required of the actors of the ancient Greek plays for in these plays the dialogues were all in verse.

In Greek Drama, the hero is called the protagonist and the rival is called the antagonist. The deuteragonist is the character who supported the hero throughout the narrative. A 'foil' is a character who exhibits opposite traits or some traits in a greater or lesser degree. A confidant is someone in whom the central character confides. Classical Greek drama often borrowed theme from epics, myths, legends and histories. Aristotle regarded tragedy as the highest form of poetry. He identified six elements of tragedy. They are plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle. Of these, he considers plot as the most significant element. He divides plot into simple and complex plots on the basis of the presence or absence of peripeteia and/or

anagnorisis. The former means the reversal of situation and the latter means recognition. The simple plot is devoid of these two puzzling situations. Aristotle considers the Greek tragedy,

Oedipus Rex as par excellence, for it contains in its plot both peripeteia and anagnorisis. Aristotle defined tragedy as ‘the imitation of an action that is serious and of certain magnitude in language embellished with all kinds of artistic elements the several kinds being found in the separate parts of the play in the form of an action not of narrative arousing pity and fear and effecting the catharsis of such emotions”

Aristotle says that the tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and fear if only he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both. Such a man is exhibited as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his hamartia- his ‘error of judgment’ or tragic flaw. One common form of hamartia in Greek tragedies was Hubris or pride or overweening self-confidence which leads a protagonist to disregard a divine warning or to violate an important moral law. The tragic hero like Oedipus in Sophocles’ “Oedipus Rex’ moves us to pity because, since he is not an evil man, his misfortune is greater than he deserves, but he moves us also to fear, because we recognize similar possibilities of error in our own lesser and fallible selves. It can be said that the Aristotelian poetics of tragedy is derived from his close analyses of the Sophoclean tragedy on the life of Oedipus.

Introduction to the Greek theatre

Theatron, the Greek word that gave us ‘theatre’ in English, meant both ‘viewing place’ and the assembled viewers. These ancient viewers (thetan) were in some ways very different from their modern counterparts, they were participants in a religious festival and they went to watch plays only on certain days in a year, when shows were put on in honor of Dionysus. At Athens, the main Dionysus festival held in the spring was one of the most important events attracting large number of citizen

and visitors from elsewhere in the Greek world. It is not known for certain whether women attended. Like football matches, dramatics festivals were open-air occasions, and the performances were put on the day light rather than with state lighting in a darkened auditorium. The famous stone theater at Epidauros built about 330 BC, and often taken as typical, has a circular orchestra, but in the fifth century it was normal practice for theatres to have a low wooden stage in front of the 'skene', for use by the actors, who also interacted with the chorus in the orchestra. The Greek plays that have survived, particularly the tragedies, are extremely economical in their design, with no sub-plots or complications in the action which audiences might find distracting or confusing. Acting style, too, seems to have relied on large gestures and avoidance of fussy detail; we know from the size some of the surviving theatres that many spectators would be sitting too far away to catch small-scale gestures or stage business.

Some plays make powerful use of props, like Ajax's sword, Philoctetes bow, or the head of Pentheus in *Bacchae*, but all these are carefully chosen to be easily seen and interpreted. Above all, actors seem to have depended on their highly trained voices in order to captivate audiences and stir their emotions. By the middle of the fifth century there was a prize for the best actor in the tragic competition, as well as for the playwright and the financial sponsor of the performance, and comedy followed suit a little later. What was most admired in the leading actors who were entitled to compete for this prize was the ability to play a series of different and very demanding parts in a single day to be a brilliant singer as well as a compelling speaker of verse; many of the main parts involve solo songs or complex exchanges between actor and chorus. Overall, the best plays and performances must have offered audiences a great charge of energy and excitement: the chance to see a group of chorus men dancing and singing in a sequence of different guises, as young maidens, old counselors, ecstatic maenads, and exuberant satyrs; to which

supernatural beings- gods, Furies, ghosts- come into contact with human beings; to listen to intense debates and hear the blood-curdling offstage cries that heralded the arrival of a messenger with an account of terrifying deeds within, and then to see the bodies brought out and witness the lamentations. Far more ‘happened’ in most plays than we can easily imagine from the bare text on the page; this must help to account for the continuing appeal of drama throughout antiquity and across the Greco-Roman world.

From the fourth century onwards dramatic festivals became popular wherever there were communities of Greek speakers, and other gods besides Dionysus were honored with performances of plays. Actors, dancers and musicians organized themselves for professional touring-some of them achieved star status and earned huge fees-and famous old plays were revived as part of the repertoire. Some of the plays that had been first performed for Athenian citizens in the fifth century became classics for very different audiences- women as well as men, Latin speakers as well as Greeks- and took on new kinds of meaning in their new environment. But theatre was very far from being an antiquarian institution, new plays, new dramatic forms like mime and pantomime, changes in theatre design, staging, masks and costumes all demonstrate its continuing vitality in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. Nearly all the Greek plays that have survived into modern times are ones that had a long theatrical life in antiquity; this perhaps helps to explain why modern actors, directors and audiences have been able to rediscover their power.

The Trio in Greek Drama

Aesculus, Sophocles and Euripides, were the predominant playwrights of the Greek drama. Sophocles was born in the village of Clonus near Athens. Even though he was born in a rich family he had no formal education. Aesculus was the most prominent Greek playwright of the time Sophocles must have watched his plays. Sophocles had great zest for music. He entered in to the world of art in 489 BC. In a

naval battle which took place near the island of Salamis; the Greek defeated the Persian army they celebrated the victory dancing in which Sophocles was the hero. He was then only 16 years of age 10 years later Sophocles became greater than his predecessor. In Greece, dramatic performances were celebrated as a part of religious festival conducted annually there was a custom to award the plays submitted for the performance of the occasion. Sophocles always won the first or the second rank for a continuous period of 40 years. Legends say that he had composed more around 100 plays but only 7 were preserved.

The three plays of Sophocles

The most famous plays of Sophocles are those which deal with the three stages of the same story- the story of king Oedipus who happened to marry his own mother not knowing the truth. According to Aristotle, 'Oedipus Rex' was the one which fulfills all the features of a good tragedy it is from this play that Aristotle evolved his poetics. 'Oedipus at Colonus' was the perfect play of Sophocles it deals with the last moment of Oedipus' life. 'Antigone' was one of the earliest plays written by Sophocles. Artistically it is not as great as the other two plays.

Sophocles

Oedipus the King, also known by the Latin title *Oedipus Rex*, is an Athenian tragedy by Sophocles that was first performed c. 429 BC. It was the second of Sophocles' three Theban plays to be produced, but it comes first in the internal chronology, followed by *Oedipus at Colonus* and then *Antigone*. *Oedipus Rex* chronicles the story of Oedipus, a man that becomes the king of Thebes and was always destined from birth to murder his father Laius and marry his mother Jocasta. The play is an example of a classic tragedy, noticeably containing an emphasis on how Oedipus's own faults contribute to the tragic hero's downfall, as opposed to having fate be the sole cause. Over the centuries, *Oedipus Rex* has come to be regarded by many as the Greek tragedy *par excellence*.

Plot Background

As is the case in most climactic drama, much of what constitutes the myth of Oedipus takes place before the opening scene of the play. In his youth, Laius was a guest of King Pelops of Elis, and became the tutor of Chrysippus, youngest of the king's sons, in chariot racing. He then violated the sacred laws of hospitality by abducting and raping Chrysippus, who according to some versions killed him in shame. This cast a doom over Laius and his descendants.

The protagonist of the tragedy is the son of King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes. After Laius learns from an oracle that "he is doomed/to perish by the hand of his own son", he tightly binds the feet of the infant together with a pin and orders Jocasta to kill the infant. Hesitant to do so, she orders a servant to commit the act for her. Instead, the servant takes the baby to a mountain top to die from exposure. A shepherd rescues the infant and names him Oedipus (or "swollen feet") (The servant directly hands it to the shepherd in some versions). The shepherd carries the baby with him to Corinth, where Oedipus is taken in and raised in the court of the childless King Polybus of Corinth as if he were his own.

As a young man in Corinth, Oedipus hears a rumor that he is not the biological son of Polybus and his wife Merope. When Oedipus questions the King and Queen, they deny it, but, still suspicious, he asks the Delphic Oracle who his parents really are. The Oracle seems to ignore this question, telling him instead that he is destined to "*Mate with [his] own mother and shed/with [his] own hands the blood of [his] own sire*". Desperate to avoid his foretold fate, Oedipus leaves Corinth in the belief that Polybus and Merope are indeed his true parents and that, once away from them, he will never harm them. On the road to Thebes, he meets Laius, his true father, with several other men. Unaware of each other's identities, Laius and Oedipus quarrel over whose chariot has right-of-way.

King Laius moves to strike the insolent youth with his sceptre, but Oedipus throws him down from the chariot and kills him, thus fulfilling part of the oracle's prophecy. He kills all but one of the other men. Shortly after, Oedipus solves the riddle of the Sphinx, which has baffled many a diviner:

"What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three in the evening?" To this Oedipus replies, "Man" (who crawls on all fours as an infant, walks upright later, and needs a walking stick in old age), and the distraught Sphinx throws herself off the Cliffside. Oedipus's reward for freeing the kingdom of Thebes from her curse is the kingship and the hand of Queen Dowager Jocasta, his biological mother. The prophecy is thus fulfilled, although none of the main characters know it.

The action of the play

A priest and the chorus of Thebans arrive at the palace to call upon their King, Oedipus, to aid them with the plague. Oedipus had sent his brother-in-law Creon to ask help of the oracle at Delphi, and he returns at that moment. Creon says the plague is the result of religious pollution, caused because the murderer of their former King, Laius, had never been caught. Oedipus vows to find the murderer and curses him for the plague that he has caused. Oedipus summons the blind prophet Tiresias for help. When Tiresias arrives he claims to know the answers to Oedipus's questions, but refuses to speak, instead telling Oedipus to abandon his search. Oedipus is enraged by Tiresias' refusal, and says the prophet must be complicit in the murder. Outraged, Tiresias tells the king that Oedipus himself is the murderer. Oedipus cannot see how this could be, and concludes that the prophet must have been paid off by Creon in an attempt to undermine him. The two argue vehemently and eventually Tiresias leaves, muttering darkly that when the murderer is discovered he shall be a native citizen of Thebes; brother and father to his own children; and son and husband to his own mother. Creon arrives to face Oedipus's accusations. The King demands that Creon

be executed, however the chorus persuades him to let Creon live. Jocasta enters and attempts to comfort Oedipus, telling him he should take no notice of prophets. Many years ago she and Laius received an oracle which never came true. It was said that Laius would be killed by his own son, but, as all Thebes knows, Laius was killed by bandits at a crossroads on the way to Delphi. The mention of this crossroads causes Oedipus to pause and ask for more details. He asks Jocasta what Laius looked like, and Oedipus suddenly becomes worried that Tiresias' accusations were true. Oedipus then sends for the one surviving witness of the attack to be brought to the palace from the fields where he now works as a shepherd. Jocasta, confused, asks Oedipus what the matter is, and he tells her.

Many years ago, at a banquet in Corinth, a man drunkenly accused Oedipus of not being his father's son. Bothered by the comment Oedipus went to Delphi and asked the oracle about his parentage. Instead of answers he was given a prophecy that he would one day murder his father and sleep with his mother. Upon hearing this he resolved to leave Corinth and never return. While traveling he came to the very crossroads where Laius was killed, and encountered a carriage which attempted to drive him off the road. An argument ensued and Oedipus killed the travelers, including a man who matches Jocasta's description of Laius. Oedipus has hope, however, because the story is that Laius was murdered by *several* robbers. If the shepherd confirms that Laius was attacked by many men, then Oedipus is in the clear.

A man arrives from Corinth with the message that Oedipus's father has died. Oedipus, to the surprise of the messenger, is made ecstatic by this news, for it proves one half of the prophecy false, for now he can never kill his father. However, he still fears that he may somehow commit incest with his mother. The messenger, eager to ease Oedipus's mind, tells him not to worry, because Merope was not in fact his real mother. It emerges that this messenger was formerly a shepherd on Mount Cithaeron, and that he was given a baby, which the childless Polybus then adopted. The baby, he

says, was given to him by another shepherd from the Laius household, who had been told to get rid of the child. Oedipus asks the chorus if anyone knows who this man was, or where he might be now. They respond that he is the *same shepherd* who was witness to the murder of Laius, and whom Oedipus had already sent for. Jocasta, who has by now realized the truth, desperately begs Oedipus to stop asking questions, but he refuses and Jocasta runs into the palace.

When the shepherd arrives Oedipus questions him, but he begs to be allowed to leave without answering further. However, Oedipus presses him, finally threatening him with torture or execution. It emerges that the child he gave away was Laius's own son, and that Jocasta had given the baby to the shepherd to secretly be exposed upon the mountainside. This was done in fear of the prophecy that Jocasta said had never come true: that the child would kill its father. Everything is at last revealed, and Oedipus curses himself and fate before leaving the stage. The chorus laments how even a great man can be felled by fate, and following this, a servant exits the palace to speak of what has happened inside. When Jocasta enters the house, she runs to the palace bedroom and hangs herself there. Shortly afterward, Oedipus enters in a fury, calling on his servants to bring him a sword so that he might cut out his mother's womb. He then rages through the house, until he comes upon Jocasta's body. Giving a cry, Oedipus takes her down and removes the long gold pins that held her dress together, before plunging them into his own eyes in despair.

A blind Oedipus now exits the palace and begs to be exiled as soon as possible. Creon enters, saying that Oedipus shall be taken into the house until oracles can be consulted regarding what is best to be done. Oedipus's two daughters (and half-sisters), Antigone and Ismene, are sent out, and Oedipus laments that they should be born to such a cursed family. He asks Creon to watch over them and Creon agrees, before sending Oedipus back into the palace. On an empty stage the chorus repeats

the common Greek maxim, that no man should be considered fortunate until he is dead.

Relationship with mythic tradition

The two cities of Troy and Thebes were the major focus of Greek epic poetry. The events surrounding the Trojan War were chronicled in the Epic Cycle, of which much remains, and those about Thebes in the Theban Cycle, which have been lost. The Theban Cycle recounted the sequence of tragedies that befell the house of Laius, of which the story of Oedipus is a part. Homer's *Odyssey* (XI.271ff.) contains the earliest account of the Oedipus myth when Odysseus encounters Jocasta (named Epicaste) in the underworld. Homer briefly summarizes the story of Oedipus, including the incest, patricide, and Jocasta's subsequent suicide. However, in the Homeric version, Oedipus remains King of Thebes after the revelation and neither blinds himself, nor is sent into exile. In particular, it is said that the gods made the matter of his paternity known, whilst in *Oedipus the King*; Oedipus very much discovers the truth himself. In 467 BC, Sophocles' fellow tragedian Aeschylus won first prize at the City Dionysia with a trilogy about the House of Laius, comprising *Laius*, *Oedipus* and *Seven against Thebes* (the only play which survives). Since he did not write connected trilogies as Aeschylus did, *Oedipus the King* focuses on the titular character while hinting at the larger myth obliquely, this was already known to the audience in Athens at the time.

The trilogy containing *Oedipus the King* took second prize in the City Dionysia at its original performance. Aeschylus's nephew Philocles took first prize at that competition. However, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle considered *Oedipus the King* to be the tragedy which best matched his prescription for how drama should be made. Many modern critics agree with Aristotle on the quality of *Oedipus the King*, even if they don't always agree on the reasons. For example, Richard Claverhouse Jebb claimed that "The *Oedipus Tyrannus* is in one sense the masterpiece of Attic tragedy.

No other shows an equal degree of art in the development of the plot; and this excellence depends on the powerful and subtle drawing of the characters." Cedric Whitman noted that "the *Oedipus Rex* passes almost universally for the greatest extant Greek play..." Whitman himself regarded the play as "the fullest expression of this conception of tragedy," that is the conception of tragedy as a 'revelation of the evil lot of man', where a man may have "all the equipment for glory and honor" but still have "the greatest effort to do good" end in "the evil of an unbearable self for which one is not responsible. Edith Hall, the critic, referred to *Oedipus the King* as "this definitive tragedy" and notes that "the magisterial subtlety of Sophocles' characterization thus lend credibility to the breathtaking coincidences," and notes the irony that "Oedipus can only fulfill his exceptional god-ordained destiny because Oedipus is a preeminently capable and intelligent human being." H. D. F. Kitto said about *Oedipus the King* that "it is true to say that the perfection of its form implies a world order," although Kitto notes that whether or not those worlds order "is beneficent, Sophocles does not say."

The science revolution attributed to Thales began gaining political force, and this play offered a warning to the new thinkers. Oedipus (symbolized reason) destroying the sphinx (symbolizing the gods) and being cursed through a misunderstanding of the gods (the oracle). Kitto interprets the play as Sophocles' retort to the sophists, by dramatizing a situation in which humans face undeserved suffering through no fault of their own, but despite the apparent randomness of the events, the fact that they have been prophesied by the gods implies that the events are not random, despite the reasons being beyond human comprehension. Through the play, according to Kitto, Sophocles declares "that it is wrong, in the face of the incomprehensible and unmoral, to deny the moral laws and accept chaos. What is right is to recognize facts and not delude ourselves. The universe is a unity; if, sometimes, we can see neither rhyme nor reason in it we should not suppose it

is random. There is so much that we cannot know and cannot control that we should not think and behave as if we do know and can control.

Themes and motifs:-

Fate and free will

Fate is a theme that often occurs in Greek writing, tragedies in particular. The idea that attempting to avoid an oracle is the very thing which brings it about is a common motif in many Greek myths, and similarities to Oedipus can for example be seen in the myth of the birth of Perseus. Two oracles in particular dominate the plot of *Oedipus the King*. In lines 711 to 714, Jocasta relates the prophecy that was told to Laius before the birth of Oedipus. The implication of Laius's oracle is ambiguous. A prominent school of thought argues that the presentation of Laius's oracle in this play differs from that found in (e.g.) Aeschylus's Oedipus trilogy produced in 467 BC. Helaine Smith argues: Sophocles had the option of making the oracle to Laius conditional (*if* Laius has a son, that son will kill him) or unconditional (Laius *will* have a son who will kill him). Both Aeschylus and Euripides write plays in which the oracle is conditional; Sophocles...chooses to make Laius's oracle unconditional and thus removes culpability for his sins from Oedipus, for he could not have done other than what he did, no matter what action he took.

Whatever the meaning of Laius's oracle, the one delivered to Oedipus is clearly unconditional. Given our modern conception of fate and fatalism, readers of the play have a tendency to view Oedipus as a mere puppet controlled by greater forces, a man crushed by the gods and fate for no good reason. This, however, is not an entirely accurate reading. While it is a mythological truism that oracles exist to be fulfilled, oracles do not cause the events that led up to the outcome. In his landmark essay "On Misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*", E.R. Dodds draws a comparison with Jesus's prophecy at the Last Supper that Peter would deny him three times. Jesus *knows* that Peter will do this, but

readers would in no way suggest that Peter was a puppet of fate being *forced* to deny Christ. Free will and predestination are by no means mutually exclusive, and such is the case with Oedipus.

The oracle delivered to Oedipus what is often called a "self-fulfilling prophecy", in that the prophecy itself sets in motion events that conclude with its own fulfillment. This, however, is not to say that Oedipus is a victim of fate and has no free will. The oracle inspires a series of specific choices, freely made by Oedipus, which lead him to kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus *chooses* not to return to Corinth after hearing the oracle, just as he chooses to head toward Thebes, to kill Laius, to marry and to take Jocasta specifically as his bride; in response to the plague at Thebes, he *chooses* to send Creon to the Oracle for advice and then to follow that advice, initiating the investigation into Laius's murder. None of these choices is predetermined.

Another characteristic of oracles in myth is that they are almost always misunderstood by those who hear them; hence Oedipus's misunderstanding the significance of the Delphic Oracle. He visits Delphi to find out who his real parents are and assumes that the Oracle refuses to answer that question, offering instead an unrelated prophecy which forecasts patricide and incest.

State control

The exploration of this theme in *Oedipus the King* is paralleled by the examination of the conflict between the individual and the state in *Antigone*. The dilemma that Oedipus faces here is similar to that of the tyrannical Creon: each man has, as king, made a decision that his subjects question or disobey; each king also misconstrues both his own role as a sovereign and the role of the rebel. When informed by the blind prophet Tiresias that religious forces are against him, each king claims that the priest has been corrupted. It is here, however, that their similarities

come to an end: while Creon, seeing the havoc he has wreaked, tries to amend his mistakes, Oedipus refuses to listen to anyone.

Sight and blindness

Literal and metaphorical references to eyesight appear throughout *Oedipus the King*. Clear vision serves as a metaphor for insight and knowledge, but the clear-eyed Oedipus is blind to the truth about his origins and inadvertent crimes. The prophet Tiresias, on the other hand, although literally blind, "sees" the truth and relays what is revealed to him. Only after Oedipus has physically blinded himself does he gain a limited prophetic ability, as seen in *Oedipus at Colonus*. It is deliberately ironic that the "seer" can "see" better than Oedipus, despite being blind. In one line (Oedipus the king, 469), Tiresias says: "*So, you mock my blindness? Let me tell you this. You [Oedipus] with your precious eyes, you're blind to the corruption of your life ...*"

Questions:

1. Who are the big trio of ancient Greek Drama?
2. Who are the parents of Oedipus?
 - a. What was the frightening matter King Lius and Jocasta heard from the oracle?
3. What is the question raised by the Sphynx?
4. What is the hamartia of Oedipus?
5. What is the role of Chorus in *Oedipus Rex*?
6. Writ a brief note on ancient Greek theatre.
7. Give a brief account of the role of Tiresias in *Oedipus Rex*.
8. Why does Oedipus blind himself?
9. How does Jocasta die?
10. Fate and free will can be considered to be the theme of the play. Elaborate.

KARNABHARAM

Bhasa

About the author

Bhasa is one of the earliest and popular Indian playwrights in Sanskrit. Very little is known about him. He is dated between the second century BCE and second century CE. He does not follow the dictates of the *Natya Sastra* and it has been taken as a proof of their antiquity. The *Uru Bhanga* and *Karnabharam* are the only known tragic Sanskrit plays in ancient India. The plays are generally short compared to later playwrights and most of them draw the theme from the Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Though he is firmly on the side of the heroes of the epic, Bhasa treats their opponents with great sympathy. He takes a lot of liberties with the story to achieve this. The *Karnabharam* ends with the premonitions of the sad end of Karna. Early plays in India, inspired by *Natya Sastra*, strictly considered sad endings inappropriate.

About the Play

Mahakavi Bhasa portrays in his classic work ‘*Karmabharam*’ the downfall of the mighty epic hero Karna, projecting the inner conflict that develops in him when he enters Kurukshethra to wage a crucial battle with the Pandavas.

A man endowed with supreme qualities made out of the best elements of nature falling for no fault of his own. When you probe into the reason you may have to land at the primordial sources of a cosmic microcosm which involved an individual which readily has to respond to inevitable dictates that come from above. Here two major components of human nature can be located, one owning zealously

and the other disowning strongly the poor man who is ultimately the victim of a universal conspiracy of the celestials.

The incidents in the life of Karna that are related in this play are taken from different sections of the Mahabharata. The story of his learning missiles under Parasuram and the latter's curse is briefly narrated in chapter iii of Santi-Parva. The episode of Karna giving away the armour and the ear-rings in exchange for a magic spear to Indra who came in the disguise of a Brahmin is narrated in chapter 310 of Vana-Parva. Kunti's request and Karna's promise that he would not kill any one of her sons except Arjuna are narrated in chapter 146 of Udyogaparva. Karna's march to the battle field in his chariot driven by

Salya is the subject matter of Karna-Parva. Though the plot is drawn from the above sections, Bhasa has introduced some important changes to suit his dramatic purpose. Even the sequence of events is altered.

The Development of the Plot in *Karnabharam*

Karna took over command of the Kaurava army on the sixteenth day of the Great War, after the death of Dronacharya. The most favourable warrior on the side of Yudhishtira was Arjuna and Duryodhana wanted Arjuna to be killed first. Karna undertook to fight Arjuna and he was even confident of killing him in the battle provided he had Salya to drive his chariot skillfully as Arjuna had Krishna for his charioteer. Duryodhana somehow managed to prevail on Salya who at last agreed to drive Karna's chariot on condition that Karna would not take offence if he was free with his tongue on certain occasions and made unpleasant remarks.

The play begins with the opposing armies of Duryodhana and Yudhishtira getting ready to start fighting on the 17th day of the Great War. The war cry of the soldiers is heard and Duryodhana goes to the battle field after sending a messenger to

Karna. The messenger finds Karna also coming to the battle field with Salya driving his chariot. He is surprised to see the gloomy face of Karna. He wonders what could be the reason for this misery in Karna who delights in the joys of battle and whose valour in battle is well-known. He describes Karna as the bright sun in summer obscured by a mass of cloud. Karna asks Salya to drive the chariot to where Arjuna is and remarks that he will bring joy to the Kurus if only he meets Arjuna in the battle as no one whom he has met in the battle has gone alive. Salya drives the chariot. Now Karna feels in his heart that weight of some black misery and exclaims sadly ‘‘How is it that in this very hour of battle, despair creeps into my heart while I am really a catch even to the furious God of Death in big battles?’’ His mind is obsessed with the recently known truth that the sons of Pandu whom he regarded as his worst enemies are really his younger brothers and, though known as the son of Radha, he was actually born of Kunthi. His glorious hour of leading the Kuru army and of meeting the sons of Pandu in the battle field has come but the request of his mother Kunthi to spare the lives of her sons comes to his mind and that holds him back. Above all, his mind is distressed more by the recollections of his preceptor’s curse that his weapon would become useless at the crucial hour of need. Karna tries to unburden his mind by narrating the story of his learning the various missiles from the great sage Parasurama; Salya listens to his narration with genuine interest.

Karna tells how, some years ago, he approached the great sage Parasurama and expressed his desire to learn the use of all weapons from him. When the sage said that he would teach only Brahmins and not the Kshatriyas, Karna said that he was a Brahmin and not a Kshatriya and started receiving instructions. The Guru was pleased with Karna, taught him everything about weapons. One day Rama, who became tired on account of his wanderings in the wood, took a nap placing his head on Karna’s lap. As ill-luck would have it, an insect called Vajramukha moved through Karna’s thighs but he bore the pain with fortitude and did not stir so that his

Guru's sleep would not be disturbed. But alas, the warm blood gushing from the thighs of Karna woke him up and he at once guessed that Karna was not a Brahmin. When the truth was known, he blazed into a fury and uttered a curse that the weapons would be useless in time of need. Salya who listens to the story with keen interest feels sympathy for Karna and remarks that it was very dreadful indeed for the sage to say like that. Karna then says that his weapons seem to have lost all their power. Moreover these horses and elephants appear helpless. Frequently stumbling with closed eyes, they suggest retreat in battle. The conches and kettle-drums emit a dull sound. Salya is shocked and pained to see such a state of Karna's weapons and cries out---“ Oh this is frightful.” Karna tells Salya not to get disheartened. He says “If killed in battle one goes to heaven and if victorious, he wins fame. Both are held in esteem in this world. So fighting is never fruitless.”

Karna further tries to brace himself up by speaking about the excellent qualities of his horses that had never failed him in battle and by invoking the blessings of cows, Brahmins, faithful wives and good warriors who do not turn their backs in the battle. Finally he pays for good luck to himself whose opportune movement has come and proclaims that he now feels happy and that he will penetrate into the Pandava ranks, capture Yudhishthira, overthrow Arjuna and make it easy for the Kuru army to enter and crush the enemy ranks. Thus, having somehow overcome his mental gloom and his spirit revived, Karna again asks Salya to drive his chariot to where Arjuna is and Salya drives on. Just then a Brahmin stops him and begs a big boon. This is Indra in disguise, come with the only purpose of depriving Karna of his amour and ear-ring by exploiting his generosity and thus ensuring the victory of Arjuna. The voice of the Brahmin is so bold and majestic that the galloping horses stop suddenly and Karna concludes that he must be a noble and rich Brahmin. Being one who delights in giving gifts and honoring Brahmins, Karna prostrates at his feet with great joy.

Now Indra is in awkward situations. He does not want to bless Karna saying “you may live long”. But he must say something. Thinking for a while, he says, “May the fame be eternal as the Sun, the Moon, the Himalayas and the ocean”. Karna is astonished to hear such a strange benediction and asks the Brahmin why he would not say “May you live long” in the usual way. Then he consoles himself saying that one should strive only for virtues because they last long in the form of fame when the body is slain. Karna then asks the Brahmin what he wants but the Brahmin simply repeats his request for a mighty boon without specifying the thing he requires. Then Karna who probably feels his pride wounded by the repetitions of the words ‘mighty boon’ offers in turn excellent cows, fine horses, big elephants, unlimited gold, the whole earth, and even his own head if the Brahmin so desires; but all these offers are rejected as not of much use to him.

At last Karna, whose vanity is tickled, offers his unbreakable armour and ear-rings born with him, if they will please him. With great joy, the Brahmin says “give give”. Now Karna suspects the foul play and doubts whether it might be a trick played by the witty Krishna. Whatever it may be, he decided to give because it is a shame to repent. Salya warns him not to give but Karna saying that gifts and sacrifices last forever, while all other things--- learning, wealth etc, are lost by lapse of time, cuts off the armour and ear-rings and gives them to Indra who goes away saying “I have done what the Gods decreed as essential for the victory of Arjuna”. Salya does not tell Karna that he has been cheated by Indra but Karna says that he has cheated Indra because he who is propitiated by learned Brahmins in sacrifices has come and begged a favour of him. A giver is always superior to the supplicant. Now an angel comes and offers an unfailing spear named Vimala to Karna saying that Indra who is filled with remorse for taking away the amour ear-rings has sent this unfailing weapon to kill one of the Pandavas. Karna refused to take a return for his gifts but when told that it may be taken at a Brahmin’s biddings, he accepts it saying

that he has never disregarded a Brahmin's bidding. After the departure of the angel, Karna hears the sound of Arjuna's conch and commands Salya to drive his chariot to where Arjuna is and Salya drives on.

With this the play comes to an end. And he tries to overcome it by repeatedly asking Salya to drive his chariot to the very place where Arjuna stands. There is a tragic note in the speech of Karna who is rushing towards an inevitable doom. Karna has a great responsibility as the supreme commander of the Kaurava army. The loss of the armour and the ear-rings at the most critical time add to the psychological burden of Karna though he does not express it in so many words. The word *bhara* in the title may also mean the weight of the armour and ear-rings that were merely a burden to who carried their weight all these years and lost them at the time of need.

The title of the play

Karna bhara is the play in which the burden is the central theme. From the beginning of the play, Karna's mind is burdened with many distressing thoughts and he tries to unburden his mind by telling his charioteer Salya the story of his acquiring weapons from Parasurama and the latter's curse that the weapon would be useless at the time of need. The brotherly feeling towards the Pandavas is kindled by Kunthi's request and he promises to her not to kill any of her sons except Arjuna. It also casts a heavy gloom in Karna's mind which pervades the whole action of drama. Karna is conscious of the psychological burden.

Deviations from the original story

In the play the purpose of the dramatist is to focus the personality of Karna by pointing to the central trait of his character- his limitless and self-effacing generosity which ultimately leads to his own doom. The deviations are all made with purpose. The most important deviation from the original is in the time and the manner in which Indra begs for the armour and ear-rings and in the way Karna gives them away. In the Mahabharata Indra comes to Karna and receives the gift of the Kavacha and

Kundala much earlier when the Pandavas were in exile and Karna was offering daily worship to Surya to acquire more powers. In the play the incident occurs on the 17th day of the Great War when Karna is on the march to meet Arjuna in a decisive battle with a determination to kill him or to be slain by him. This change of time makes the gift of Karna more significant and enhances his reputation as a giver of gift. It further contributes to heighten the tragedy that surrounds Karna in this play from the beginning to the end. Again in the original, Karna demands the Sakti from Indra in return for the gift of is Kavacha and Kundala but in the play he refuses anything offered in return for his gift. This deviation shows Karna in better colours as a true gift giver. The incident of Surya, Karna's father, appearing in a dream and warning Karna against Indra's trickery is omitted in the play. The arrival of Indra in the play has an element of surprise in it and the offer of various objects by the unsuspecting Karna has a thrilling dramatic effect. Indra feeling sorry for taking away the Kavacha and Kundala and sending an angel with a Sakti to be given to Karna is also an innovation of the dramatist calculated to improve the character of Karna and heighten the tragedy.

Another important deviation is in the character of Salya. Salya of the play is altogether different from the Salya of Mahabharata. There, he often criticizes Karna, discourages him, speaks harsh words and quarrels with him. But here he is represented as a true friend and well-wisher of Karna. He warns Karna that he should not give away his Kavacha and Kundala to the Brahmin and sympathizes with him when told about the curse of Parasuram. This change in the character of Salya serves the dramatic purpose of heightening the tragic element which the dramatist has developed in this play. A criticizing Salya would have marred the tragic note of the play. Another significant innovation is in Karna's frame of mind. There is a black misery lying in Karna's heart. He tries to get rid of it by successive events like the test of the weapons and the arrival of Indra. The innovations in the play are intended

to draw the readers' sympathy towards Karna and develop the tragic element. In spite of his courage, valour and many other merits, Karna in the play is driven towards his doom by adverse circumstances over which he has little or no control. There is a reference in the play to the request of Kunthi to Karna. (i.e. not to kill any more of his own brother.), but the details are not given. It appears as if the request of Kunthi is fresh in Karna's mind and his heart is moved by the fact that the Pandavs are his younger brothers. Karna also seems to feel sorry for his fate which separated him from his real mother and brothers and hence his inability to overcome his mental gloom. In the original work Karna is not at all disturbed by such feelings.

The character sketch of Karna

Bhasa has shown great dramatic skill and psychological insight in portraying the character of Karna. The noble traits of Karna are raised to sublime heights and grandeur. Karna has been presented as a hero doomed by destiny and the dramatist has succeeded in drawing out the sympathy of the readers towards the great Karna. Karna, the King of Anga has just assumed command of the Kaurava army and Duryodhana has placed all his hopes of victory on him. He is hopeful to his friends and allies, the Kurus, and is eager to please them by slaying Arjuna in the battle. Karna leaves his tent and marches towards the battlefield even before the messenger of Duryodhana goes to him. He realizes his responsibility and is always ready to discharge the same. His skill in war is well known and we are told that he delights in the joys of war. Yet the messenger notices a gloom in Karna on that particular day. Karna too is aware of this misery in his mind and wonders how such a misery has crept into his heart at the hour of fighting. His mind is filled with sad thoughts – the request of his mother Kunthi and the curse of his teacher Parasurama. He tries to unburden his mind by narrating the story.

Yet Karna is not disheartened. Invoking the blessing of cows, Brahmins etc., and relying on the skill and strength of his excellent horses, he commands Salva to

drive his chariot to where Arjuna is. Karna has great respect for Brahmins and he delights in giving gifts to them. There is nothing that he will not gladly give to them. By the time Karna regains his mental steadiness, Indra comes in the guise of a Brahmin and cleverly manages to exploit his generosity and carry away his armour and ear-rings which are most essential to protect him from the arrows of Arjuna. When the Brahmin accepts the gift with great happiness after rejecting all the previous gifts, Karna suspects that it might be a trick played by Krishna and yet he unhesitatingly cuts and gives his Kavacha and Kundala. Here we find the character of Karna rising to the sublime heights. He refuses to accept anything in return for his gifts. He accepts the Sakti only because of his respect for the bidding of a Brahmin. He does not repent for giving away his armour and ear-rings. He rises to a mood of self-exaltation while giving the gift and finally marches against his enemy with a firm determination to fight to the finish. His mind is filled with evil premonition and yet he is not frightened.

Tragedy broods over Karna and we know that he is driving to his death but Karna is unaffected and he continues to be the great hero. With great psychological insight Bhasa has described Karna's worrying about his mother Kunthi's request and his teacher's curse. These worries have actually robbed him of his hold on life and that is perhaps the real tragedy of Karna.

The production of this play synthesizes traditional forms, like Koodiyattam, Kadhakali, Kalarippayattu, Padayani, Sopanasageetham etc., to form a modern theatrical idiom in harmony with the cultural heritage of the land. This is the result of the search for an indigenous Indian theatre. The style of acting, movement pattern and choreography, music and costumes are thus, modern and at the same time traditional. A unique lighting is used to add to the theatrical ecstasy. It is an actor's play which breaks away from set patterns.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the protagonist in the play *Karnabharam*?
2. What is the name of Karna's mother?
3. What is the theme of the play *Karnabharam*?
4. Give a character sketch of Karna.
5. What is the anguish of Karna?
6. Comment on the time setting of the play *Karnabharam*.
7. Write a paragraph on the theatrical techniques employed in the play.
8. Who takes the Kavacha and Kundala away from Karna?
9. Comment on the ending of the play *Karnabharam*.

Module III

Fiction and Short Stories

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

Fyodor Dostoevsky

About the Author

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was a Russian novelist, short story writer, essayist, journalist and philosopher. His works explore human psychology in the troubled political, social and spiritual atmosphere of 19th century Russia and engage with a variety of philosophical and religious themes. His major works include *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *Demons*, *The Brothers of Karamazov* etc. *Notes from Underground*, his 1864 novella, is considered to be one of the first works of existentialist literature.

About the Novella

Notes from Underground (also translated in English as *Notes from the Underground* or *Letters from the Underworld*) is an 1864 novella by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Notes are considered by many to be the first existentialist novel. It presents itself as an excerpt from the rambling memoirs of a bitter, isolated, unnamed narrator (Generally referred to by critics as the Underground Man) who is a retired civil servant living in St. Petersburg. The first part of the story is told in monologue form, or the underground man's diary and attacks emerging western philosophy, especially Nikolay Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* The second part of the book is called "Apropos of the Wet Snow", and describes certain events that, it seems are destroying and sometimes renewing the underground man who acts as a first person, unreliable narrator.

The novel is divided into two parts.

Part 1: “Underground”

It consists of an introduction of an introduction, three main sections and a conclusion. (i) The short introduction propounds a number of riddles whose meanings will be further developed. (I) Chapters two, three and four deal with suffering and the enjoyment of suffering; (2) chapters five and six with intellectual and moral vacillation and with conscious “inertia” inaction; (3) chapters seven through nine with theories of reason and logic; © the last two chapters are a summary and a transition into Part 2.

War is described as people’s rebellion against the assumption that everything needs to happen for a purpose, because humans do things without purpose, and this is what determines human history.

Secondly, the narrator’s desire for happiness is exemplified by his liver pain and toothache. This parallels Raskolnikov’s behavior in Dostoyevsky’s later novel, *Crime and Punishment*. He says that, due to the cruelty of society, human beings only moan about pain in order to spread their suffering to others. He builds up his own paranoia to the point he is incapable of looking his co-workers in the eye.

The main issue for the Underground Man is that he has reached a point of ennui and inactivity. Unlike most people, who typically act out of revenge because they believe justice is the end, the Underground Man is conscious of his problems, feels the desire for revenge, but he does not find it virtuous; this incongruity leads to spite and spite towards the act itself with its concomitant circumstances. He feels that others like him exist, yet continuously concentrates on his spitefulness instead of

on actions that would avoid the problems he is so concerned with. He even admits at one point that he'd rather be inactive out of laziness.

The first part also gives a harsh criticism of determinism and intellectual attempts at dictating human action and behavior by logic, which the Underground Man mentions in terms of a simple math problem two times two makes four. He states that despite humanity's attempt to create the "Crystal Palace," a reference to a famous symbol of utopianism in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What is to be done?*, one cannot avoid the simple fact that anyone at any time can decide to act in a way which might not be considered good, and some will do so simply to validate their existence and to protest and confirm that they exist as individuals. For good as a general term is subjective and in the case of the Underground Man the good here he's ridiculing is enlightened self-interest (egoism, selfishness). It is this position being depicted as logical and valid that the novel's protagonist despises. Since his romantic embracing of this ideal, he seems to blame it for his current base unhappiness. This type of rebellion is critical to later works of Dostoyevsky as it is used by adolescents to validate their own existence, uniqueness, and independence.

In other works, Dostoyevsky again confronts the concept of free will and constructs a negative argument to validate free will against determinism in the character Kirillov's suicide in his novel *The Demons*. *Notes from Underground* marks the starting point of Dostoyevsky's move from psychological and sociological themed novels to novels based on existential and general human experience in crisis.

Part 2: "Apropos of the Wet Snow"

The second part is the actual story and consists of three main segments that lead to a furthering of the Underground Man's consciousness.

The first is his obsession with an officer who physically moves him out of the way without a word or warning. He sees the officer on the street and thinks of ways to take revenge, eventually deciding to bump into him, which he does, finding to his surprise that the officer does not seem to even notice it happened.

The second segment is a dinner party with some old school friends to wish Zverkov, one of their number, goodbye as he is being transferred out of the city. The underground man hated them when he was younger, but after. But after a random visit to Simonov's, he decides to meet them at the appointed location. They fail to tell him that the time has been changed to six instead of five, so he arrives early. He gets into an argument with the four after a short time, declaring to all his hatred of society and using them as the symbol of it. At the end, they go off without him to a secret brothel, and, in his rage, the underground man follows them there to confront Zverkov once and for all, regardless if he is beaten or not. He arrives to find Zverkov and company have left, but, it is there that meets Liza, a young prostitute.

The story cuts to Liza and the underground man lying silently in the dark together. The underground man confronts Liza with an image of her future, by which she is unmoved at first, but, she eventually realizes the plight of her position and how she will slowly become useless and will descend more and more, until she is no longer wanted by anyone. The thought of dying such a terribly disgraceful death brings her to realize her position, and she then finds herself enthralled by the underground man's seemingly poignant grasp of society's ills. He gives her his address and leaves.

After this, he is overcome by the fear of her actually arriving at his dilapidated apartment after appearing such a "hero" to her and, in the middle of an argument with his servant, she arrives. He then curses her and takes back everything he said to her,

saying he was, in fact, laughing at her and reiterates the truth of her miserable position. Near the end of his painful rage he wells up in tears after saying that he was only seeking to have power over her and desires to humiliate her. He begins to criticize himself and states that he is in fact horrified by his own poverty and embarrassed by his situation. Liza realizes how pitiful he is and tenderly embraces him. The underground man cries out “They – they won’t let me – I – I can’t be good!”

After all this, he still acts terribly towards, her, and before she leaves, he stuffs a five ruble note into her hand, which she throws onto the table. He tries to catch her as he goes out onto the street but cannot find her and never hears from her again. He tries to stop the pain in the heart by “fantasizing”, “And isn’t it better, won’t it be better? Insult – after all, it’s purification: it’s the most caustic, painful consciousness! Only tomorrow I would have defiled her soul and wearied her heart. But now the insult will never ever die within her, and however repulsive the filth that awaits her, the insult will elevate her, it will cleanse her...|” He recalls this moment as making him unhappy whenever he thinks of it, yet again proving the first section that his spite for society and his inability to act like it makes him unable to act better than it.

Critical Evaluation

Often referred to as a novel narrated by the first antihero in modern literature, *Notes From Underground* is considered by most literary critics as Fyodor Dostoevsky’s first great work, the germ from which his later masterpieces would evolve. *Notes from Underground* was originally published in Russia as a two-part serialized story in January and February of 1864. It was the featured story in the journal *Epoch*, which Dostoevsky published with his older brother, Mikhail. The story has a rather dismal tone, which might reflect the particularly difficult time

Dostoevsky was experiencing when he wrote it. Some of Dostoevsky's biographers have called this period the lowest point of the author's life

The most obvious tone of the unnamed narrator of *Notes from Underground* is a bitter one. He never quite fits in his social environment. At the time the story begins, the narrator has completely receded from society. Through a detailed discussion of his philosophy, the narrator uses the first part of the novel to explain why he has withdrawn. It is in the second part of the novel that the narrator offers examples of his social interactions, those that led to his isolation. However, throughout the story, the narrator frequently contradicts himself and becomes somewhat defensive as he tries to justify his actions.

Notes from Underground is also Dostoevsky's first clear representation of some of his most intimate reflections on life. However, critics are not sure if the narrator of this novel represents Dostoevsky's actual beliefs or if he was meant to satirize popular philosophies of the time. What is agreed upon is that the narrator believes that man can just as easily be irrational as he can be rational. And this antihero narrator argues that, perhaps, irrationality might be the more valid state.

Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* is set in nineteenth – century Russia and reflects some of the prevailing philosophical discourses of the times. As Russia struggles to identify its future, the novel's unnamed narrator – the Underground Man – Presents arguments that are meant to dissuade his audience (probably Russian intellectuals) from leaning toward European Scientific and mathematical solutions to human problems. The narrator champions the concept of free will, and he takes his argument to the point of absurdity to make his opinion heard. The narrator is not a very likable character. In fact, he has been dubbed the first literary antihero. The entire novel is told through the Underground Man's eyes and experience. Although

his tale is not always comfortable to hear, the story of the Underground is invested in the inner workings of a person's mind – the Underground man's tormented thoughts and feelings.

Analysis of the Novella

Part 1:

The first part presents us with the psychology and the ideas of the novel's protagonist. The narrator of the novel – the Underground Man – introduces himself to us. He says that he is a sick man and a spiteful man. He was a civil servant and tortured petitioners who came to see him. Almost instantly, however, he reverses his position, claiming instead that he is not at all spiteful but merely wanted to be. He could never become spiteful or anything else because his nature did not allow him to have any character. Only men of action who are not intelligent can have any kind of character. The Underground Man tells us that he could never have character because his consciousness has become overdeveloped as a result of being too cultured. The Underground Man accepts the doctrine of determinism, which claims that all our actions are determined by the laws of nature and are thus not up to us. Consciousness causes humiliation by allowing us to recognize our own powerlessness against these laws of nature. Eventually the Underground Man came to find pleasure in humiliation.

The Underground Man then insists that he is very proud, but if someone slapped him in the face, he would not be able to avenge himself. People who can take revenge usually act without thinking. Though such people are very stupid, the Underground Man envies them. He himself has an overdeveloped conscience, and as a result is incapable of carrying out any action such as revenge. The moment he decides to act, he is plagued by so many doubts that in the end he is forced to retreat.

This retreat always brings him shame, but he cannot avoid it. Men of action will gladly stop when faced with impossibility caused by the laws of nature; this impossibility consoles them. The Underground Man, on the other hand claims that he hates the laws of nature. Since these laws determine every action, there is never anyone to blame for anything.

The narrator uses the example of a toothache to explain why he hates the laws of nature. Like the laws of nature, a toothache is something that causes us pain but that we have no control over. The only response to this powerlessness is spite. If we listen to the moans of a cultured man with a toothache, we will realize that he is moaning only out of spite, to annoy himself and no one with consciousness can over respect himself. Human being with consciousness can only act by deceiving themselves. Men of action can act because they think they have reasons for acting. Anyone with consciousness, however, can see that there are never good reasons for acting. For example, one may try to seek revenge out of a sense of justice, but when one thinks about justice, one sees that there is really no such thing. The laws of nature are responsible for everything. People with consciousness, then can never do anything, so they are overtaken by inertia and get very bored. The Underground Man wishes that he did nothing not because of consciousness but simply out of laziness. He would love to be a sluggard, or a glutton who sat around drinking to everything and “He would be very glad to hear others calling him a sluggard”.

The Underground Man criticizes the idealists who claim that human beings only do bad things because they don’t realize that it is always in their best interests to do the Good. If human beings were enlightened as to their best interests and they used their reason, they would always do good. The Underground Man claims that throughout history, human beings have consistently done things that were obviously not in their best interests. There must be some other interest that is even more

advantageous than peace and prosperity. He goes on to say that utopian theories are just logical exercise with no grounding in reality. The utopians argue that science will show that human beings are nothing more than piano keys under the control of the laws of utopia is attained, the crystal palace can be built. The Underground Man responds that such a world be very rational and boring and someone would certainly destroy it despite all its advantages. What human beings need is not rational desire, but their own desire. Utopian theories ignore the human need to make independent decisions, based on nothing more than one whim and free will.

The utopians might reply that science will show that free will does not exist. Eventually science will help explain the reasons for every action one makes, so that people will only act according to mathematical tables of actions. The Underground Man argues that human beings will never agree to act according to tables and that they will destroy this utopia. Even if every action could be accounted for by reason, human beings would go insane just to escape their reason. The Underground Man agrees that human beings are looking for the utopia, but this is only because they love to create. He says, however, that human beings are equally fond of destruction because they do not want to inhabit the structures that they build. Life consists of creating striving, and searching. Once one reaches the end of this process and there is nothing left to do, this is no longer life but death. Thus, while human beings always search for something greater, they are afraid to actually find it. The Underground Man then questions the utopian claim that well – being is always to one’s best advantage, suggesting instead that suffering is the cause of consciousness and that human beings will never renounce it.

The narrator explains that he opposed the utopian crystal palace because it satisfies only material needs. That in itself, however, does not make it desirable. For now, he prefers to keep the underground, since there at least he can have

consciousness and make his own decisions. He is, however, not satisfied with the underground and is looking for a greater ideal. The crystal palace fails because it does not satisfy spiritual needs. It addresses only reason, which is a small part of human existence. Other needs must be satisfied and the Underground Man will not accept any ideal that does not succeed in satisfying them.

The Underground Man concludes Part I by explaining that he does not write his notes for anyone to read them. Someone writing an autobiography for an audience will always lie in it. He, on the other hand, wants to be completely sincere, so he will never let anyone read what he has written. He is not sure why he has the urge to write it all down, but it may be because what he has to say looks more dignified on paper. To lead in to Part II the Underground Man says that it has been snowing for a long time and this reminds him of an episode in his life that he now wants to write about.

Part II:

This part deals with events that took place fifteen years prior to the writing of Part I. Here the Underground Man describes his interactions with other people. The Underground Man recalls his youth when he was working in an office. He hated his coworkers and thought that they were repulsive. Though he felt superior to them, he also felt that he was unlike anyone else and that others hated him. He hated his face, though he wanted it to be intelligent. Sometimes he would think that his anti – social nature was artificial and would attempt to befriend his coworkers, but this always ended quickly. Here the Underground Man digresses to talk about the Russian romantics and attack them for having ideals that they never actually act on. He says that these romantics are the most idealistic people, but they are also the most practical.

The Underground Man, completely alone, found himself bored. He read a lot, but this got boring and he went out to taverns trying to get into trouble. One time went into a tavern hoping to get into a fight. Instantly, however, an officer moved him out of the way and passed by him without noticing him. The Underground Man was humiliated and decided to get revenge. He followed the officer around for two years. Noticing that the man always walked straight toward people expecting them to move aside for him, the Underground Man decided to walk into him instead of moving out of the way. He borrowed money to buy better clothes so that he would appear to be the officer's equal. He then made many attempts to walk into the officer and finally succeeded. He felt himself completely avenged.

The Underground Man spent a lot of time fantasizing and dreamed of embracing all of humanity. When his fantasies got too intense, he needed to go out and visit someone. His one lasting acquaintance only saw visitors on Tuesday, so the Underground Man decided to visit an old schoolmate, Simonov. When he arrived, Simonov and two other old schoolmates were planning a dinner party for another schoolmate, Zverkov. Though he did not like any of his former schoolmates and he did not like them, the Underground Man invited himself to the dinner party. The Underground Man then went home and recalled his years at school. He hated his peers and they hated him, so he earned good grades in order to dominate them. He only had one friend, whom he dominated and then despised.

The next day the Underground Man arrived to dinner ahead of the others because they had changed the time without telling him. Everyone was rude to him, and Zverkov treated him with contempt. Finally, the Underground Man insulted Zverkov and challenged one of the others to a duel. From that point on they all ignored him, but he stayed and, in order to annoy them, paced up and down the room for the next three hours. When the others stood up to go to a brothel The

Underground Man attempted to apologize to them and begged Simonov for some money to come with them. Getting the money, the Underground Man followed them. He fantasized that either they will all fall at his feet and beg for his friendship, or he will slap Zverkov in the face. Since he knew that the former will not happen, he arrives at the brothel Ready to slap Zverkov, challenge him to a duel, be arrested and sent away to prison.

None of these fantasies came through, however, because when the Underground Man arrived at the brothel, he found that the others had already dispersed. A girl named Liza was brought out for him, and he slept with her. When the Underground Man woke up, he found Liza's presence oppressive and decided to dominate her. He gave her a lengthy moralistic lecture on why she should leave the brothel and get married. Though Liza appeared skeptical, the Underground Man told her about the importance of freedom and of family, emphasizing the love between mother and child and between husband and wife. Eventually Liza broke down and began to cry. The Underground Man gave Liza his address and left, after she showed him a letter from a student who was in love with her.

The next day the Underground Man was troubled by the fear that Liza might come to see him. He wrote a letter to Simonov, apologizing for his conduct at dinner, blaming his behavior on alcohol and returning the money. He then began to quarrel with his servant, Apollon. As the Underground Man was about to assault Apollon, Liza walked in. The Underground Man was ashamed to have her see his poverty and he was angry with her by refusing to speak, and finally insulted her saying that he only wanted to hunt her and not to pity her. He told her that he was told her this and that she should leave instead, realizing his unhappiness, Liza ran up to him and embraced him. Tempted to respond to Liza's love, the Underground Man instead took advantage of her and then left her. As she was walking out of his apartment, he

handed her some money so as to humiliate her even further. When she had gone, he realized that she had thrown the money back. Realizing what he had done, the Underground Man rushed out after her to beg her forgiveness. In the street he stopped short, however, and decided that it would be better for both of them if he did not catch her, the Underground Man returned to his apartment and never saw Liza again.

The Underground Man wraps up his Notes by saying that this work is not a novel because it presents an anti – hero and not a hero. He also insists that what makes this work so distasteful is that his readers, like him, live in a fictional world of literature and fantasy, removed from reality.

Questions:

1. *Notes from Underground* is divided into ----- parts.
2. Comment on the setting of *Notes from Underground*.
3. How is the second part of the novella titled?
4. Who organizes a dinner party in the second part of the novella?
5. Why is the Underground man keeping aloof from his companions?
6. Why do you think the Underground Man is unnamed?
7. The Underground Man champions the concept of free will. Comment.
8. Who is Liza?
9. Name some of the friends of the Underground Man.
10. *Notes from Underground* is considered the first existentialist novel. Justify.

Siddhartha

Hermann Hesse

About the Author

Hermann Karl Hesse was a German born Swiss poet, novelist, and painter. His best known works include *Demian*, *Steppenwolf*, *Siddhartha*, and *The Glass Bead Game*, each of which explains an individual's search for authenticity, self knowledge and spirituality. In 1946, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Plot Overview

Siddhartha, the handsome and respected son of a Brahmin, lives with his father in ancient India. Everyone in the village expects Siddhartha to be a successful Brahmin like his father. Siddhartha enjoys a near – idyllic existence with his best friend, Govinda, but he is secretly dissatisfied. He performs all the rituals of religion, and he does what religion says should bring him happiness and peace. Nonetheless, he feels something is missing. His father and the other elders have still not achieved enlightenment, and he feels that staying with them will not settle the questions he has about the nature of his existence. Siddhartha believes his father has already passed on all the wisdom their community has to offer, but he longs for something more.

One day, a group of wandering ascetics called Samanas passed through town. They are starved and almost naked and have come to beg for food. They believe enlightenment can be reached through asceticism, a rejection of the body and physical desire. The path the Samanas preach is quite different from the one Siddhartha has been taught, and he believes it may provide some of the answers he is looking for. He decides to follow this new path. Siddhartha's father does not want him to join the Samanas, but he cannot dissuade Siddhartha. Govinda also wants to find a path to enlightenment, and he joins Siddhartha in this new life.

Siddhartha adjusts quickly to the ways of the Samanas because of the patience and discipline he learned in the Brahmin tradition. He learns how to free himself

from the traditional trappings of life, and so loses his desire for property, clothing, sexuality, and all sustenance his Self, and he successfully renounces the pleasures of the world.

Sunburned and half – starved, Siddhartha soon ceases to resemble the boy he used to be. Govenda is quick to praise the Samanas and notes the considerable moral and spiritual improvements they both have achieved since joining. Siddhartha, however, is still dissatisfied. The path of self – denial does not provide permanent solution for him. He points out that the oldest Samanas have lived the life for many years but have yet to attain true spiritual enlightenment. The Samanas have been as unsuccessful as the Brahmins Siddhartha and Govinda left behind. At this time, Siddhartha and the other Samanas begin to hear about a new holy man named Gotama the Buddha who has attained the total spiritual enlightenment called Nirvana. Govinda convinces Siddhartha they both should leave the Samanas and seek out Gotama. Siddhartha and Govinda inform the leader of the Samanas of their decision to leave. The leader is clearly displeased, but Siddhartha silences him with an almost magical, hypnotizing gaze.

Siddhartha and Govinda find Gotama's camp of followers and taken in. Siddhartha is initially pleased with Gotama, and he and Govinda are instructed in the Eightfold path, the four main points, and other aspects of Buddhism. However, while Govinda is convinced to join Gotama and his followers, Siddhartha still has doubts. He has noticed a contradiction in Gotama's teachings: Siddhartha questions how one can embrace the unity of all things, as the Buddha asks, if they are also being told to overcome the physical world. Siddhartha realizes Buddhism will not give him the answers he needs. Sadly, he leaves Govinda behind and begins a search for the meaning of life, the achievement of which he feels will not be dependent on religious instruction.

Siddhartha decides to embark on a life free from meditation and the spiritual quests he has been pursuing, and, instead, to learn from the pleasures of the body and the material world. In his new wanderings, Siddhartha meets a friendly ferryman, fully content with his simple life. Siddhartha crosses the ferryman's river and comes to a city. Here, a beautiful courtesan named Kamala welcomes him. He knows she would be the best one to teach him about the world of love, but Kamala will not have him unless he proves he can fit into the material world. She convinces him to take up the path of the merchant named Kamaswami and begins to learn the trade. While Siddhartha learns the wisdom of the business world and begins to learn the trade, he begins to master the skills Kamaswami teaches him. Kamala becomes his lover and teaches him what she knows about love.

Years pass, and Siddhartha's business acumen increases. Soon, he is a rich man and enjoys the benefits of an affluent life. He gambles, drinks, and dances, and anything that can be bought in the material world is his possession. Siddhartha is detached from this life, however, and he can never see it as more than a game. He doesn't care if he wins or loses this game because it doesn't touch his spirit in any lasting way. The more he obtains in the material world, the less it satisfies him, and he is soon caught in a cycle of unhappiness that he tries to escape by engaging in even more gambling, drinking, and sex. When he is at his most disillusioned, he dreams that Kamala's rare songbird is dead in its cage. He understands that the material world is slowly killing him without providing him with the enlightenment for which he has been searching. One night, he resolves to leave it all behind and departs without notifying either Kamala or Kamaswami.

Soaked at heart, Siddhartha wanders until he finds a river. He considers drowning himself, but he instead falls asleep on the riverbank. While he is sleeping, Govinda, who is now a Buddhist monk, passes by. Not recognizing Siddhartha, he

watches over the sleeping man to protect him from snakes. Siddhartha immediately recognizes Govinda when he wakes up, but Govinda notes that Siddhartha has changed significantly from his days with the Samanas and now appears to be a rich man. Siddhartha responds that he is currently neither a Samana nor a rich man. Siddhartha wishes to become someone new. Govinda soon leaves to continue on the journey, and Siddhartha sits by the river and considers where his life has taken him.

Siddhartha seeks out the same content ferryman he met years before. The ferryman, who introduces himself as Vasudeva, radiates an inner peace that Siddhartha wishes to attain. Vasudeva says he himself has attained this sense of peace through many year of studying the river. Siddhartha expresses a desire to likewise learn from the river, and Vasudeva agrees to let Siddhartha live and work beside him. Siddhartha studies the river and begins to take from it a spiritual enlightenment unlike any he has ever known. While sitting by the river, he contemplates the unity of all life, and in the river's voice he hears the word Om.

One day Kamala the courtesan approaches the ferry along with her son on a pilgrimage to visit Gotama, who is said to be dying. Before they can cross, a snake bites Kamala. Siddhartha and Vasudeva tend to Kamala, but the bite kills her. Before she dies, she tells Siddhartha that he is the father of her eleven – year – old son. Siddhartha does his best to console and provide for his son, but they boy is spoiled and cynical. Siddhartha's son dislikes life with the two ferrymen and wishes to return to his familiar city and wealth. Vasudeva believes Siddhartha's son should be allowed to leave if he wants to , but Siddhartha is not ready to let him go. One morning, Siddhartha awakens to find his son has run away and stolen all of his and Vasudeva's money. Siddhartha chases after the boy, but as he reaches the city he realized the chase is futile. Vasudeva follows Siddhartha and brings him back to

their home by the river, instructing him to soothe the pain of losing his son by listening to the river.

Siddhartha studies the river for many years, and Vasudeva teaches Siddhartha how to learn the many secrets the river has to tell. In contemplating the river, Siddhartha has a revelation: just as the water of the river flows into the ocean and is returned by rain, all forms of life are interconnected in a cycle without beginning or end. Birth and death are all part of a timeless unity. Life and death, joy and sorrow, good and evil are all parts of the whole and are necessary to understand the meaning of life. By the time Siddhartha has learned all the river's lessons, Vasudeva announces that he is through with his life at the river. He retires into the forest, leaving Siddhartha to be the ferryman.

The novel ends with Govinda returning to the river to seek enlightenment by meeting with a wise man who lives there. When Govinda arrives, he does not recognize that the wise man is Siddhartha himself. Govinda is still a follower of Gotama but has yet to attain the kind of enlightenment that Siddhartha now radiates, and he asks Siddhartha to teach him what he knows. Siddhartha explains that neither he nor anyone can teach the wisdom to Govinda, because verbal explanations are limited and can never communicate the entirety of enlightenment. Instead, he asks Govinda to kiss him on the forehead, and when Govinda does, the vision of unity that Siddhartha has experienced is communicated instantly to Govinda. Govinda and Siddhartha have both finally achieved the enlightenment they set out to find in the days of their youth.

Questions:

1. Who is Gotama?
2. According to Siddhartha, how will he find enlightenment?

3. What does Siddhartha learn from the Ferryman and the river?
4. Why doesn't Siddhartha "ascend the tree" with the woman?
5. What are the three things that Siddhartha can do?
6. Who is Kamaswami?
7. Comment on Siddhartha's relationship with Kamala.
8. How does Kamala die?
9. What does Siddhartha learn from his son's behavior?
10. Comment on the structure of the novel Siddhartha.

The Repentant Sinner

Leo Tolstoy

About the Author

Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, usually called Leo Tolstoy, was a Russian writer and philosopher who is regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time. His best known novels include *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *Hadji Murad*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* etc. After achieving wide-spread success with epic works including "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina", Tolstoy abandoned many of the trappings of his privileged youth; instead focusing on spiritual matters and espousing a moral philosophy, steeped in simple living and pacifism, which inspired thousands of followers, including Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are considered to be the epic novelists of Russian literary tradition.

THE REPENTANT SINNER

Leo Tolstoy

There was once a man who lived for seventy years in the world, and lived in sin all that time. He fell ill but even then did not repent. Only at the last moment, as he was dying, he wept and said:

‘Lord! forgive me, as Thou forgavest the thief upon the cross.’

And as he said these words, his soul left his body. And the soul of the sinner, feeling love towards God and faith in His mercy, went to the gates of heaven and knocked, praying to be let into the heavenly kingdom.

Then a voice spoke from within the gate:

‘What man is it that knocks at the gates of Paradise and what deeds did he do during his life?’

And the voice of the Accuser replied, recounting all the man’s evil deeds, and not a single good one.

And the voice from within the gates answered:

‘Sinners cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Go hence!’

Then the man said:

‘Lord, I hear thy voice, but cannot see thy face, nor do I know thy name.’

The voice answered:

‘I am Peter, the Apostle.’

And the sinner replied:

‘Have pity on me, Apostle Peter! Remember man’s weakness, and God’s mercy.

Wert not thou a disciple of Christ? Didst not thou hear his teaching from his own lips,

and hadst thou not his example before thee? Remember then how, when he sorrowed and was grieved in spirit, and three times asked thee to keep awake and pray, thou didst sleep, because thine eyes were heavy, and three times he found thee sleeping. So it was with me. Remember, also, how thou didst promise to be faithful unto death, and yet didst thrice deny him, when he was taken before Caiaphas. So it was with me. And remember, too, how when the cock crowed thou didst go out and didst weep bitterly. So it is with me. Thou canst not refuse to let me in.’

And the voice behind the gates was silent.

Then the sinner stood a little while, and again began to knock, and to ask to be let into the kingdom of heaven.

And he heard another voice behind the gates, which said:

‘Who is this man, and how did he live on earth?’

And the voice of the Accuser again repeated all the sinner’s evil deeds, and not a single good one.

And the voice from behind the gates replied:

‘Go hence! Such sinners cannot live with us in Paradise.’ Then the sinner said:

‘Lord, I hear thy voice, but I see thee not, nor do I know thy name.’

And the voice answered:

‘I am David; king and prophet.’

The sinner did not despair, nor did he leave the gates of Paradise, but said:

Have pity on me, King David! Remember man's weakness, and God's mercy. God loved thee and exalted thee among men. Thou hadst all: a kingdom, and honour, and riches, and wives, and children; but thou sawest from thy house-top the wife of a poor man, and sin entered into thee, and thou tookest the wife of Uriah, and didst slay him with the sword of the Ammonites. Thou, a rich man, didst take from the poor man his one ewe lamb, and didst kill him. I have done likewise. Remember, then, how thou didst repent, and how thou saidst, "I acknowledge my transgressions: my sin is ever before me?" I have done the same. Thou canst not refuse to let me in.' And the voice from within the gates was silent.

The sinner having stood a little while, began knocking again, and asking to be let into the kingdom of heaven. And a third voice was heard within the gates, saying:

'Who is this man, and how has he spent his life on earth?'

And the voice of the Accuser replied for the third time, recounting the sinner's evil deeds, and not mentioning one good deed.

And the voice within the gates said:

'Depart hence! Sinners cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

And the sinner said:

'Thy voice I hear, but thy face I see not, neither do I know thy name.'

Then the voice replied:

'I am John the Divine, the beloved disciple of Christ.'

And the sinner rejoiced and said:

‘Now surely I shall be allowed to enter. Peter and David must let me in, because they know man’s weakness and God’s mercy; and thou wilt let me in, because thou lovest much. Was it not thou, John the Divine who wrote that God is Love, and that he who loves not, knows not God? And in thine old age didst thou not say unto men:

“Brethren, love one another.” How, then, canst thou look on me with hatred, and drive me away? Either thou must renounce what thou hast said, or loving me, must let me enter the kingdom of heaven.’

And the gates of Paradise opened, and John embraced the repentant sinner and took him into the kingdom of heaven.

Plot Summary

The Repentant Sinner is a short story by Russian author Leo Tolstoy. It was first published in 1886. The story details the difficulties of a repentant sinner’s attempts to enter Heaven.

The story opens with the imminent death of a 70- year – old sinner. The man has never done a good deed in his life, and only with his last words did he address God and ask for forgiveness. When the man dies, his soul comes before the gates of Heaven, but they are locked. The man knocks at the gates, but to no avail. Finally, the Accuser decrees that such a sinner cannot enter Heaven, and all the man’s sins are recited. The sinner begs to be let in, but Peter the Apostle explains that such a sinner cannot be allowed in. The sinner points out that for all of Peter’s virtue, he still sinned by denying Christ. He is still not let in.

The sinner continues his knocking, and is again met by his list of sins by the Accuser. Now King David explains that such a sinner cannot be allowed in. The sinner points out that for all of David’s virtue, he still sinned by committing adultery. He is still not let in.

The sinner continues his knocking, and now is spoken to by John the apostle. The sinner pleads with John, saying that he of all people should understand repentance. The repentant sinner is finally allowed into Heaven.

Questions:

1. Who are considered to be the epic novelists of Russian literary tradition?
2. What is the theme of the story *The Repentant Sinner*?
3. What is the sin committed by Peter the Apostle?
4. What is the sin committed by King David?
5. Who does finally allow the sinner to enter the heaven?