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INTRODUCTION

This course provides a brief overview of 19th Century British Literature. This Study Material has been divided into three sections of which the first Section deals with poetry beginning with Blake and ending with D.G. Rossetti. The next Section deals with one of the major plays of Victorian period. The final section deals with three novels and two prominent prose works. As post graduate students of English literature, we recommend you to use this study material as a mere outline which has to be supplemented with extra reading. We hope you learn and imbibe as well as enjoy literature in the course of your study.

BRITISH LITERATURE: 19th CENTURY

The nineteenth century was an era of change for the inhabitants of Britain. The beginning of the 19th century in British Literature was a continuation of the Romantic era of the previous century. By the middle of the 19th Century there was a shift from the Romantic Age into the Victorian Era. Hence a brief introduction of both these Eras’s have been provided below:

ROMANTIC ERA (1735-1832)

The Romantic Era is the age of Revolution in both the history of politics as well as literature. In both politics and literature, there was a craving for freedom and throwing away of long accepted rules. However the principles of the French
Revolution were discredited despite the great effort which France made to begin a new and better order of things. This resulted in a general loss of faith and hope which is also visible in literature. While the older writers of this period like Wordsworth and Coleridge hailed the new era of revolution with joy initially this soon turned into disillusionment and dejection which can be noted in the later works of Wordsworth himself. Although the younger writers of the Romantic Era like Shelley, Keats and Hunts tried to adhere to the Revolutionary doctrine. German literature had a profound influence on English literature during this Era and German was considered as the dominating foreign language up until the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the most dominant features of Romanticism was probably in the treatment of nature. Nature was amplified and glorified and the feeling for nature in this Age rises to a passionate adoration. All of nature was scrutinized and painted in a new light. Some of the prominent poets of this age are Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron and Coleridge. Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen were the prominent novelists of this time while Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Thomas de Quincey were considered as the important prose writers of the Romantic Age.

**VICTORIAN ERA (1837-1901)**

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and although her life ended only in 1901, the Victorian Age officially comes to a close in the year of her jubilee- 1887. The first decade of Queen Victoria’s reign was one of political unrest and widespread misery. But by the middle of the
century this sort of unrest had almost completely died down. With the introduction of the Reform Bills came a shift in government from the oligarchic England of William IV to the ‘crown’d republic’. And with the change in government comes a corresponding change in literature as well. Everything becomes more democratic in nature, both the government as well as art and literature. This era sees a lot of growth and stability on one hand, but at the same time there was a lot of injustice and poverty looming over the industrial worker.

This particular age also witnesses a crisis in faith that is parallel with the scientific advancement that was brought in with the publication of Charles Lyell’s “Principles of Geology” in 1830 and Charles Darwin’s “The Origin of Species” in 1859. These two publications shook the very roots of Christianity. The Victorian Age was thus marked with a spirit of inquiry and criticism, by scepticism and religious uncertainties, by spiritual struggle and unrest, and these are the features that are reflected in the literature of this Age as well. Although scientific advancement did cause people to question religion, there were a lot of advantages due to this unparalleled increase in knowledge. There came an advancement in modes of transportation and communication which resulted in breaking barriers between nations. This in turn caused a progress in democracy as well. The Education Acts that were employed made education compulsory to a certain measure and this resulted in a large reading public. And so in the midst of these religious crises and injustices, people still read books voraciously and were considered eager readers. With the
development in technology of printing came cheaper methods of printing which increased demand for books and thus multiplied production as well. Hence the novel was considered a source of major public entertainment. Novels came out in monthly serials and novels became a serious business.

Another feature of the Victorian Age is its emphasis on strict moral codes of conduct. It was considered indecent for men to smoke in public or for women to ride bicycles. There were strict rules on how men or women should behave in public. There is a general anxiety among the public to be ‘moral’. While some writers tried to propagate these concepts of morality, others mocked and wrote satires on it. Some of the great poets of the Victorian Era are Tennyson, Browning and Arnold. Charles Dickens, the Bronte sisters, Thackeray and George Eliot were some of the prominent novelists of the time.
SECTION - A (POETRY)

THE TYGER AND THE LAMB

“Without contraries there is no progression”

William Blake

WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born in 1757 in London. Blake left school at the age of ten and joined a drawing academy for the next 5 years of his life. He began writing poetry at the young of 12. He started his career as an engraver by working as an apprentice to James Basire. Blake belonged to the transitional period. He had the ability to blend divine with the ordinary.

William Blake trusted his imagination more than logic and reason. Blake’s God was like any other human, but possessing the highest of human gifts. Blake was also the inventor of a new art form where a sequence of engraved plates mixes design and text in different combinations, so that the design and text illuminate each other. The Tyger and The Lamb were written on copper plates (illuminated printing). The last six years of Blake’s life were spent at Fountain Court surrounded by a group of admiring young artists. In 1842, he health declined and he died in London on August 12, 1827.

“THE TYGER”

The Tyger was published in 1794 under the collection “Songs of Experience”. “Songs of Experience”(1794) was
published as a follow up to “Songs of Innocence”(1789). The two books were then combined together and published as *Songs of Innocence and Of Experience, showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul:* the author and the printer, W.Blake. *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* claims *The Tyger* to be the most anthologized poem in English. *The Tyger* is the sister poem to *The Lamb*, which Blake uses to portray his concept of contraries. The illustration that accompanies the poem “The Tyger” shows a picture or drawing of a shabby, toy shop kind of stuffed tiger with a confused and rather worried smile on his face. The tiger could also be described as a rather overgrown house cat. The same hand that created the innocent lamb has also created the fierce Tiger. Both the poems convey the idea that God created binary oppositions. There is a potentially “dark” God along with the “innocent” God. Together, *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* represent the duality of human nature as well.

**EXPLANATION & ANALYSIS**

*The Tyger* is a series of 14 rhetorical questions. The poem contains six four line stanzas, with two pairs of rhyming couplets in each of the stanzas. Blake uses both rhyme and rhythm to lay emphasis on the main theme of the poem that God created a world with a balance of both good and evil, two opposing sides. Blake begins the poem which is a cycle of questions by asking who the creator is. And by using the word “immortal”, he ensures that we think of a supernatural, nonhuman power. The creator here uses equipments or tools to create the tiger. “Anvil” is a device used to shape metals. Tiger
is a symbol of brutality, fierceness and inner violence. In the lines “What the hammer.......terrors clasp”, paints a picture of the process of forging something. The words “hammer”, “chain” and “furnace” give us the picture of a Blacksmith God at work. The line “On what wings dare he aspire” may be a reference to Icarus in Greek mythology who perished by flying too near the Sun with his waxen wings. Similarly the line “What the hand dare seize the fire” refers to Prometheus from Greek mythology who was punished for stealing fire for mankind. The line, “When the stars threw down their spears” may be an indirect reference to Lucifer. The word “sinews” means muscles. The phrase, “the forest of the night” symbolizes ignorance. Towards the end of the poem, the readers know that the answer for who the creator of the tiger is obviously God. The poem emphasizes the need for balance in the world. The tiger here is not to be mistaken for evil. The image of the tiger only emphasizes the need for human beings to possess tiger-like qualities in today's world in order to resist the oppression and exploitation of the modern world. This poem gains significance when read in conjunction with Blake’s “The Lamb”.

“THE LAMB”

The Lamb is a poem from the “Songs of Innocence”. Some of the other poems in this collection are The Shepherd, The Divine Image and Holy Thursday of which the last one is very similar to The Lamb. Holy Thursday is present in both Songs of Innocence and Experience. The illustration accompanying Blake’s “The Lamb” is of a naked child holding
out his hands to a lamb, with other lambs in the background. While the tyger symbolizes God’s wrath, the lamb symbolizes God’s love. The lamb symbolizes an image of unity between God and nature, Love and joy, childhood and innocence. The poem The Lamb also represents the purity of heart in childhood which was a feature of the Romantic period. “Songs of Innocence” also contains “time meter” which is characteristic of any nursery rhymes.

EXPLANATION & ANALYSIS

“The Lamb” is the companion poem of “The Tyger” by William Blake himself. “The Lamb” has two stanzas, each consisting of five rhymed couplets. The speaker in this poem is clearly in awe of God’s creation. The speaker seems to be a child who asks about the lambs origins, how it came into existence, how it feeds etc. The child seems drawn to the lamb, maybe because it senses a kind of similarity with himself in its innocence and vulnerability. The lamb is described in its natural environment, frisking beside streams and running through fields. The lamb’s gentle noises are described as capable of making the surrounding valleys happy. The child's questions are both wise and innocent at the same time. The lamb here symbolizes Jesus. The lamb could also represent God’s divine creation. The lamb is portrayed as being tender, gentle and vulnerable at the same time. The poet equates the child and lamb with the creator or Jesus. The child answers his own questions, and these answers show his confidence and absolute faith in God. The speaker then asks God to bless the lamb twice. “The Lamb”, taken from the “Innocence” section
of Blake’s Songs of *Innocence and Experience*, is a kind of hymn dedicated to God’s creation.

**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

William Wordsworth was an English Romantic poet, hailing from the Lake district, England. It was John Wordsworth, William Wordsworth's father who introduced him to great poets like Milton and Shakespeare. As a child, he loved and enjoyed the beauty of nature. In 1790, he happened to travel to France where the revolution was taking place and he was greatly impressed by the revolutionary spirit there. He returned to England inorder to finish his graduation. After graduating, he received a legacy from Raisley Calvert to pursue a career in literature. That was the year when he also met S.T. Coleridge and became really close friends with him. Together, they published *Lyrical Ballads*(1798)and Wordsworth's greatest work, *The Prelude* was also dedicated to Coleridge. This period was important for English poetry as Wordsworth along with Coleridge, Keats and Shelley created a much more spontaneous, descriptive, emotional, close to nature kind of poetry, which came to be termed as Romantic Poetry. The language used in the poems by these Romantic poets were close to or same as the spoken language used by common people. Wordsworth's style is hence quite easy to understand even today. The Romantic poets emphasized feeling, instinct and pleasure.
“LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY” - EXPLANATION

The full title of this poem is “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798.”. This poem opens with the speaker's pronouncement that it has been five years since he last visited this place, encountered its peaceful, rustic scenery, and heard the murmuring waters of the river. He narrates all that he had seen before, and also describes their effect upon him. The speaker then goes on to describe how his memory of the beautiful scenery there had worked upon him during his absence from there. It was these memories that provided the speaker with peaceful thoughts or “tranquil restoration” to the mind while he was alone or in crowded cities and towns. The burden of the world is lightened merely by the memory of this scene and the speaker still turns back to this memory when his mind is in a “fretful stir”.

The speaker also positively hopes that his present experience will provide him many happy memories for the future. The speaker differentiates between the way he enjoyed nature as a child and how he enjoys it now. There was a time when he was a boy and the mountains, waterfalls, and woods shaped his appetites, passion and even his love. As an adult, however, the very same mountains, waterfalls and pastures lend him joy and they anchor his purest thoughts and also protects his heart and soul. He has learned to perceive nature in a broader perspective and is thus able to sense a deeper, wider meaning in the beauty of nature. He trusts nature and calls it a
dear friend and even sister, he believes no matter what nature would never betray him. Wordsworth’s sister is now there with him in this present tour of Tintern Abbey and he feels she still looks at nature as a kid. He imagines her going through all the transformations and developments that he did and that one day she would be able to look at nature and understand nature the way he does now. He imagines her coming back to the same spot after his death and remembers about the time that she was there with her brother.

**S.T. COLERIDGE**

S.T. Coleridge was born on October 21st, 1772 in Devonshire, England. He was a lyrical poet, critic, and philosopher of the Romantic Age. He was in fact one of the founders of the Romantic Movement. Some of his best known poems are “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan”. Another important work of Coleridge’s was “Biographia Litereria” which is still considered an important piece in English literary criticism. In 1795, Coleridge married Sara Fricker, who was the sister of Robert Southey’s fiance. Southey and Coleridges friendship didn't last long, and his marriage with Sara Fricker was also believed to have been a failure even though she bore him four children. Coleridge’s career was immensely influenced by his meeting with William Wordsworth and his wife Dorothy. The “Lyrical Ballads” was a result of the lasting friendship that Wordsworth and Coleridge shared. In 1802, Coleridge separated with his wife and this is also the year he published “Dejection : An Ode”. “Osorio” was the only dramatic work Coleridge had penned
and it was performed in 1813 under the title “Remorse”.

S.T. Coleridge died

KUBLA KHAN

Kubla Khan was first published in a collection called Christabel, Kubla Khan. According to Coleridge, he slept off while reading a 17th C travel book by Samuel Purchas and claims that he slept for around three hours and during this sleep he composed several hundreds of lines. On waking up, he claims to have remembered the entire poem and was about to copy it all down on paper, but unfortunately he was interrupted for an hour “by a person on business from Porlock”. On returning to write the poem however, Coleridge could recall only “some eight or ten scattered lines and images.” Thus Kubla Khan remains an incomplete poem of 54 lines, which is subtitled as “Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment”. This poem however stands out for its musical qualities. The rhythm, the length of the lines and use of onomatopoeic words are varied to produce a sort of musical harmony. The pleasure house of Kubla Khan is described as a romantic and aesthetically pleasing place.

The poem describes Xanadu, the palace of Kubla Khan, a Mongol emperor. The setting of the Emperor’s palace is described as a “pleasure dome”. The palace and its planned gardens are set in contrast to its surroundings which is wild, untamed and mysterious. The speaker goes on to tell us about a river (Alph) that runs through the land and flows into some underground caves and then leads into the sea. The land that
surrounds the place is described as a fertile land and the surrounding area is sketched out as covered in streams, sweet-smelling trees as well as beautiful forests.

The sense of calmness in the first few lines slowly turns to a sense of fear when the poet brings in pagan and supernatural elements. The river is portrayed as a haunted place where you may find “a woman wailing for her demon lover”. The river leaps and smashes through a canyon, and then it explodes into a noisy fountain and finally sinks down to the underground caves. Sexual undertones lie in the description of the origin of the river Alph. The description of Kubla Khan himself is next. Kubla Khan is listening to the noisy river and thinking about war. The speaker then shifts the subject of the poem from third person to first person and narrates another vision he had had, where a beautiful Abysinnian maid is seen playing an instrument and singing. He recollects about this song and imagines himself singing his own song using it to create a picture of Xanadu. The poem ends by turning more personal as well as mysterious and ultimately ends with an image of a terrifying figure with flashing eyes from an almost Godlike man.

Some critics believe “Kubla Khan” to be an allegory about the creation of art. Kubla Khan decides to have his pleasure-dome constructed just as artists decide to create their work of art. Just like Kubla Khan’s pleasure dome, a work of art is also a “miracle of rare device”. Like Kubla Khan, the narrator needs to thrust order upon a tumultuous world. And just like Xanadu, art offers an escape from the chaos of the
world. Just as poets are inspired by a Muse, the narrator here is inspired by the Abysinnian maid and yearns to recreate her song. Similar to an artist, this would enable the narrator to stand apart from the society which fears those who create or those who have “drunk the milk of Paradise”.

**P.B. SHELLEY**

P.B. Shelley was born at Field Place, Sussex in the year 1792. He went to Syon House Academy near London. He acquired an interest in science, astronomy and chemistry from here. He was also subjected to bullying at Syon and thus he grew up determined to reel against all forms of tyranny. He started his literary career at Eton College. He published a gothic novel, Zastrozzi, in the year 1810 and in the same year he also started his career at Oxford University. However, a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism* led to his expulsion from the University thereby ending his short career at Oxford University. After expulsion from Oxford, he eloped with Harriet Westbrook and they lived life on whatever money that could be borrowed until Shelley's father settled an allowance on him. In 1813, Shelley’s first poem *Queen Mab* was published. The very next year he elopes with Mary Godwin, daughter of philosopher William Godwin, and author of *Political Justice*. Two years later he meets Byron in Switzerland and they develop a lasting friendship. This happy period in Shelley's life however came to an end when Harriet suicides and dies. He tries to gain custody of his children in vain. His later poems are marked by melancholy. Shelley died in 1822 when his boat was caught in a storm and he drowned.
“OZYMANDIAS” - EXPLANATION

Ozymandias is an irregular sonnet and is probably Shelley's most famous poem. The poem is a recollection of the speaker having met a traveller who hails from an “antique land”. This traveller tells the speaker a story about the ruins of a statue (of an Egyptian pharaoh) in the desert which he belongs to. Two huge legs of stone stand without a body, and near it lies an enormous, crumbling stone head. The stone head is half sunken in the sand. The traveller tells the speaker that the frown and sneer on the statue's face shows that the sculptor may have understood the emotions of the statue’s subject quite well. Both the sculptor and his subject are now dead, yet the memory of those emotions stay stamped on the statue. Near the fallen face lies the pedestal of the statue where the traveller reads an inscription- “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: /Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”. But then other than this inscription there is no other evidence of his greatness in the vicinity of the giant, broken statue. Lots of sand is all that lies around as far as one can see.

The poem’s story is one of tyranny and how once powerful kings and heroes lose their significance or power as time passes. It is almost a mockery of the boastfulness of such powerful tyrannic people. The poem thus serves as a moral lesson to its readers. A contrast is drawn between the surroundings of the statue and the inscription engraved on it. Not just the poet, but even the sculptor seems to have mocked the tyrannical figure by giving the statues face a “frown / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,”. Thus, time seems
to be mocking the ruler by reducing his vain boast to complete insignificance. The statue itself which was supposed to be an enormous figure has reduced itself to a disfigured and broken face, two legs and a pedestal alone. The works that were supposed to be the despair of others have vanished with time.

JOHN KEATS

Born on 31st October, 1795, John Keats is the first child of Frances Jennings and Thomas Keats. His father died in an accident in 1804. His mother passed away in 1810 from a lung disease. In 1811, Keats joined as an apprentice in an apothecary in London. It was during this time that he first tried his hand at writing. Keats wrote short poems entitled "Imitation of Spenser" from here which was inspired by Edmund Spenser’s Faerie Queene. His first volume of poems was published in March 1817. Endymion: A Poetic Romance was Keats’ next work to be published in May 1818. The first of his great odes, namely, Ode to Psyche, Ode to a Grecian Urn and Ode to a Nightingale were published in 1819. In the latter half of the same year, Keats produced his only drama, Otho the Great. His third and last volume, Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and Other Poems were published in July 1820. Keats left for Italy on an invitation from the poet P.B.Shibley. Keats passed away in Rome in 1821 at the age of twenty five.

“ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE” - EXPLANATION

An ode is a traditional Greek form of poetry that usually celebrates a person, thing or an event to which it is dedicated. In this poem, Keats celebrates and hails the
nightingale and its magical voice. The poem begins with the speaker describing the song of the nightingale as almost intoxicating. It is almost as if a paralysis has taken over him and the song has filled his heart with so much ecstasy that it hurts. The effect of the song on the poet is thus both physical as well as mental. The physical effect can be made out in the phrase “My Heart aches” and the oxymoron “numbness pains”. The speaker longs for some special wine that is distilled directly from earth. He would like to drink such a wine and just fade away into the forest along with the nightingale. The phrase “blushful Hippocrene” refers to a fountain associated with muses, hence an indirect reference to poetic inspiration. The poet wants to forget the stark reality of this world into the imaginary world of the nightingale. It must be noted that there is a fall in intensity from poison to narcotic and then to wine which implies a return to ordinariness. The speaker wants to escape from all worldly “frets” and just fade away in the beauty of the nightingale's song. The speaker also points out the temporary nature of life in this world as compared to the eternal nature of the nightingale's song. Here, the poet may also be drawing a contrast between poetry and the nightingales song where the former is man made (art) and the latter is nature’s gift.

The next stanza is probably the only stanza in the entire poem that is completely dis-enchanted and written in an almost prosaic, matter of fact manner as compared to the rest of the poem. Here “spectre-thin” is a keyword which along with “gray” suggests thin unreality of the dis- intoxicated,
deglamorized moments that an addict fears or dreads. The line “Where youth grows....” may be a reference to the death of Keats’ brother and “leaden-eyed despairs” may be a reference to his failed affair with Fanny Brown. Basically, the poet tries to convey that this world holds only sorrows, worries and unhappiness and even natural beauty on the real world dies a natural death.

He then vows to reach the nightingales world not through alcohol, but through poetry or poetic imagination. After all poetry has the power to take one away into an imaginary world. On the other hand, logical thinking only makes a person confused and retards progress. So he sets aside logic and hops on the flight of imagination to enter the nightingales' beautiful world. He then goes on to say he has reached the nightingales world and is himself surprised at the ease and speed with which he reached there using the powers of poetic imagination. And he states that although it is too dark to see anything, the speaker can still smell the flowers and plants around him. The speaker is so engulfed in the beauty of the nightingale's song, he claims that he wouldn’t mind dying at night in the forest while listening to the nightingales song. Death is personified here and he wants to go to death before it calls upon him. Here, he has reached the height of living experience and this state of ecstasy seems like the perfect time to die. However, he then goes on to shed light on the difference between the immortality of the song(and the nightingale) and his own mortality. The poet feels that the nightingale is immortal, beyond all possibilities of death as its
voice has always been heard since time immemorial. So many different kinds of generations of people must have heard its song throughout history, including clowns (representing lower class) and emperors (representing higher class) to Biblical characters to people in stories.

The speaker's vision is however interrupted when the bird flies away, leaving the speaker alone. All of a sudden, the word “forlorn” brings the poet back to the real world. He regains consciousness and bids goodbye to the enchanting world of the nightingale. After all, imagination cannot always dupe a person. Fancy or imagination is personified here. The speaker feels a sense of abandonment and disappointment that his imagination lacks the strength to create its own reality. He is finally left confused on whether the song actually brought joy or sorrow or both, and unable to make out the difference between reality and dreams. The poet wonders which world is more real, the bird's world or the mundane realities of this world as very often poets may feel their poetic imagination as more real than this world we live in. The poem ends posing questions on whether poetry or imagination is a heightening or escape from the state of reality or life experiences.

**LORD BYRON**

Lord Byron is a Romantic poet who is famously described as “bad, mad and dangerous to know”, authored a series of poems. His best known poems are *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimmage* which is believed to be based on his own life. “She walks in beauty” is one of his shorter
poems. It is widely thought to be an ode to his half-sister Augusta with whom he is alleged to have had an affair. However, scholars believe the subject in the poem to be Byron's cousin, Mrs. John Wilmont. Lord Byron died in 1824 from a fever in Greece. His body was then brought back to England for burial.

“SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY”

EXPLANATION

Written in 1814 and first published in 1815, this poem praises and seems to sketch out the beauty of a particular woman. The speaker compares this almost divine like woman to a lovely night with a clear starry sky. Given that Byron met Mrs. Wilmont while she was in mourning, this darkness could also point to her emotional state of being at the moment. Her beauty is described as a harmonious meeting between darkness and light. Towards the end of the poem, the speaker points out that the physical beauty of this lady is also representative of her inner beauty and innocence.

For Byron, beauty is both physical and spiritual. Throughout the poem there is a contrast between light and dark, day and night. There was a tradition among the cavalier poets to give verse compliments to women. Byron receives the concept of beauty as a whole that consists of both the dark as well as bright aspects of light. One of the major themes of the poem is the beauty and harmony of both mind and body.
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

Tennyson, son of the Rector of Somersby, was born in Lincolnshire. He won the Poet Laureate in 1850. He is considered as the central poet of the 19th Century. He was popular all around the world. It was in 1827 that Tennyson had his first poetry published in *Poems by Two Brothers* (although it is popularly believed that three Tennyson brothers contributed to this volume). In 1829, he won the Chancellor’s Gold Medal for the poem “Timbuctoo”. His first solo collection titled “Poems, Chiefly Lyrical” was published in 1830. Tennyson then went on to have a long and productive literary career. He wrote a series of historical verse plays as well like “Queen Mary”, “Beckett” etc. His final years were crowned with many honours like the award of peerage in 1883. His death in 1892 was mourned as the voice of England.

“TITHONUS”

EXPLANATION

Tithonus is a figure from Greek Mythology (like Ulysses). The poem describes the fate of Tithonus who is gifted to remain immortal, which becomes a curse for him. It is written in the form of a dramatic monologue and first written in the title ‘Tithon’ in 1833. The poem begins with the speaker's description of the naturally aging woods and how sad it makes him. Unlike all other elements of nature, he is destined to stay immortal or never die. He sees himself no longer as a man, but a mere shadow who is forced to see the never aging face of his lover every morning. He narrates the
story of him asking Aurora for immortality which she granted without a second thought like rich men who give charity without caring how much they give. She did not consider his youth and he will never meet death as other men do. He now realizes the mistake he made. Now when the sun rises every morning he observes Aurora's chariot take her back into the sky where he once adored her. Every single day, he pleads with her to take back what she had given, but in vain. He feels that she is unable to retract what she had once bestowed upon him. He then remembers an old lover he used to have, the life that he now yearns for. They could make love without pretense or the pull of immortality. The poem concludes with the speaker asking Aurora to free him from the East where he has been imprisoned. He wants to die now so that Aurora can see his grave when she rises, and he forgets how he feels when he sees her return on “silver wheels” every morning.

ROBERT BROWNING

Robert Browning is one of the most famous and widely read poets of the Victorian Era alongside Tennyson. Born in London in 1812, he wrote his first poem at the age of 14. He dropped out of the University of London after a year of study. He tried his hand at drama, but was unsuccessful. Some of his early works include Sordello (1840) and Pippa Passes (1841) which is a verse drama. It was in 1844, that he comes across a volume of poems by an invalid, Elizabeth Barrett, which impresses him and he consequently sends her a fan letter. Both of them fell into a courtship that was the most celebrated in the Victorian era. Since Elizabeth Barrett’s father didn’t approve
of their marriage, they both eloped and secretly married two years later. The next 15 years, they both spent living in Italy. Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in 1861, after which Robert Browning gained a reputation as a poet. Some of his most celebrated dramatic monologues include *My Last Duchess*, *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Porphyria’s Lover*. Browning died in 1889, a time in which he was considered as one of the great poets of England, next to Wordsworth. He had a natural talent for depicting action in character, rather than character in action, as he himself puts it. So intense and intimate are Browning’s involvement in the lines and feelings of his characters that some critics claim them to be no more than projections of his own personality and pre-occupations. Few of the major subjects that dominate Browning’s poetry are the worlds of love and art and the problems of religious faith and doubt.

**“FRA LIPPO LIPPI”**

This poem is believed to have been inspired by Robert Browning’s visit to Florence where he saw one of Fra Lippo Lippi’s paintings called “The Coronation of the Virgin”, a picture which, in the poem Fra Lippo pledges to paint in six months. Fra Lippo Lippi (1412-69), the painter was placed at a monastery when he was just eight years old. He grew up to be a painter and stayed at the monastery until 1432. In 1452, he was appointed as chaplain to the convent of St.Giovannino in Florence and five years later he was made rector. Despite receiving a large income from his rectorship he fell into poverty again and again. This poem by Browning is based upon this painter's life and rumours revolving around him.
Fra Lippo Lippi is a dramatic monologue by Robert Browning which runs the length of 376 lines. It was published in 1855 in a collection titled *Men and Women*. Fra (or Brother)

Let’s first take a look at what a dramatic monologue is. It is a poetic form and not a dramatic art form. It is part drama and part poetry as B. Prasad notes. It is a speech in the form of poetry addressed to a silent listener. It is a study in character, however it lacks the action and exchange of speech as in drama. Now the person who delivers the speech is made to reveal his character and motives through the monologue at the same time also giving the readers glimmers of the nature of the listener and the kind of responses he is giving. Robert Browning is considered to be one of the chief exponents of this form of poetry though Tennyson also used it with masterly skill, as in *Ulysses*. It is similar to soliloquy, and yet different from it. It is similar because in both these devices, a speaker expresses his thoughts uninterrupted by others. However, the difference lies in the fact that while dramatic monologue presupposes the presence of a passive listener, soliloquy is devoid of any such presumption. In a dramatic monologues, sometimes the character of the passive listener is also indirectly hinted at or revealed. In a typical dramatic monologue, Browning captures the salient features of a person's character at a crucial moment when he is most likely to speak about himself and his past. Though an early attempt, “My Last Duchess” is one of Browning's finest monologues. In a nutshell, a monologue is poetry, drama and philosophy all rolled into one single piece of art form.
Coming back to “Fra Lippo Lippi”, Lippo Lippi is a monk cum painter who lived in the 15th Century. The poem begins when the monk is caught at night by the guards of his patron, Cosimo de Medici. He then begins justifying himself for being there at night, partying or visiting brothels. He tells them how hard life as a monk is, how his parents died while he was very young, leaving him an orphan roaming and begging in the streets until he was taken to the monastery by his aunt, where he could eat his fill for the first time in life. They tried teaching him Latin, but it was in vain. Then they found out he had a talent in painting and decided that is what he should probably focus on. Fra Lippo Lippi thus takes to painting and paints everything as he sees it. His paintings of saints look like the Prior's mistress, and all the men look almost life-like. The Prior is obviously not happy with this and says there's too much body, instead there should be more soul than body inorder to serve the purpose of religion through paintings and art. Lippo rambles on until he starts feeling a bit guilty and then begins to vow that he falls into the good books of the monastery and church once again by painting an enormous painting which includes God and Madonna and the child along with a self portrait. Bidding goodbye to the guards, he slips into the Medici palace where he stays and asks them to turn off the torch as he doesn't need light to find his way in.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Elizabeth Barrett Browning is a London poet whose reputation rests largely upon her love poems. She was the eldest child of Edwrad Barrett Moulton and until the age of 15
she lived a normal, happy life. In 1819, her father published her classic, *The Battle of Marathon*. At the age of 15, she fell severely ill and her health was affected forever. Her mother's health was also unstable and she became fatally ill while Elizabeth was in her twenties. In 1833, Barrett published *Prometheus Bound: Translated from the Greek of Aeschylus, and Miscellaneous Poems*. In 1838, Barrett's illness got even worse than before and she relocated to a sea resort to revive her health. Two years later, her brother Edward, who stayed with her at the sea resort, drowned. This shock worsened her already poor health. In 1844, Barrett published *Poems* and this was the beginning of her relationship with Robert Browning. In 1846, the couple secretly married and settled in Italy. Victorian readers enjoyed Barrett’s *Aurora Leigh* more than her revised edition of *Poems*. She passed away on June 29th, 1861.

“A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT”

**EXPLANATION**

The poem describes the crafting of God Pan’s famous flute. The poem begins with the speaker's description of how God Pan was seen searching beside the river for something. He is seen destroying lillies and scaring off the dragonflies there. There is a destructiveness in his actions and he shows a selfish disregard for nature here. This poem is based on the story of a God seeking out a reed who was once the woman he attempted to seduce. In the poem, he is seen tearing out the reed until the last leaf and crafting it into a flute that produces mesmerizing
music. The speaker ends the poem by showing her disapproval of God Pan’s violence. Here, Browning is probably referring to the patriarchal nature of the society then where women are considered as a possession. The reed, which symbolizes a woman, is moulded into a musical instrument which others play and derive pleasure from. Everyone enjoys and revives themselves with the music derived from this instrument, while it suffers. Thus, stereotypical notions of female as sufferer and victim at the hands of men are alluded to here. The poet also points out the existence of the idea of destruction inherent within a creation. There is a sharp contrast between the artistic form of the poem and its content. The usage of the term “true gods” in the last stanza also draws attention to the fact that Pan is only a demi-God. The “true gods” here lament Pan’s action, thus closing the poem on a different note. The poem also shed light on the concept of duality in beauty and cruelty, in the fact that Pan is both a beast as well as a God, creation and destruction etc.

**DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI**

D.G. Rossetti was born in London to Italian parents. While he was young, he aspired to become a painter and even studied as an apprentice to the painter Ford Madox Brown. He is a co-founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, along with other painters, in 1848. In the 1850s, he used Elizabeth Siddal as a model in most of his paintings. She was the idea of feminine beauty for the Brotherhood for a while until Rossetti made her his exclusive model in 1852 and married her in 1860. However, she committed suicide two years later and Rossetti
buried a manuscript of his poems along with her coffin, a gesture which he regretted later on in life. Poetry was more of a mode of relaxation for him from his career as a painter. However, his poetry improved with the decreasing interest in painting. In 1869, he recovered the manuscript that was buried along with his wife, Elizabeth. *The Blessed Damozel* is one of Rossetti’s early poems which therefore show strong Pre-Raphaelite influences. D.G. Rossetti died on the 9th of April, 1882 in England.

**“THE BLESSED DAMOZEL”**

“The Blessed Damozel” by DG Rossetti is a traditional ballad. This ballad narrates the story of the love between a woman trapped in heaven and a man stuck on Earth. The speaker here describes a woman who is leaning out from heaven with flowers in her hands. Although she is described as extremely beautiful, she looks melancholy as well. There seems to be a lover on Earth who is heartbroken by her departure back to heaven. They both yearn to be together with each other. Although it seems to have been just one day since she got to Heaven, it has actually been ten years. There are other lovers around her who have reunited with those they had lost once. This only further deepens and reminds her about her loss. When the damsel speaks aloud for everyone to hear, her words are unclear and seem like the stars singing. She is hopeful of their reunion as they both have prayed to God for it. She hopes to teach him the songs of heaven. Her lover doubts whether they would ever reunite as he has done nothing worthy enough to find a place in Heaven. She wishes to show
him everything in heaven when he reaches there. She hopes to introduce her lover to Christ and the Virgin Mary who will hopefully bless their love. Unfortunately all these hopes remain mere hopes and not reality. Once the damsel returns back to reality, she breaks down and weeps for their separation is unbearable.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was a British poet as well as a critic belonging to the Victorian Age. He was born in a village in the valley to the Thames, thus he spent most of his childhood near a river and this acted as a great source of influence later on in his life. He was educated at Rugby School and then went to study in Oxford. In 1851, he landed a job as an Inspector of Schools and he continued this job for the next 35 years of his life. It was during the 1860s that he gained a reputation as a critic. Some of his major works during this period were Culture and Anarchy, Literature and Dogma etc. On Translating Homer(1861), Essays in Criticism(1865) etc are some of his other prose works. Arnold retired from school inspecting in 1886 and passed away in 1888. He is remembered as both a poet and critic alike. One of the recurring themes in Arnold's poetry is man’s lonely state and search for inner self in this modern world. Some of the most popular of Arnold’s poems are Sohrab and Rustum, The Scholar Gipsy and Dover Beach.
“DOVER BEACH”

EXPLANATION

It was in 1867 that *Dover Beach* was published in the collection *New Poems*. It was written only a few weeks after his marriage and is believed to be addressed to his wife. The setting of the poem is the shore of the English ferry port of Dover in Kent, hence the title “Dover Beach”. This also happens to be the place where Arnold visited for his honeymoon in 1851. Dover Beach is a poem that sheds light on the crisis of faith during Arnold’s times. The Victorian Age is often referred to as the “Age of Doubt”.

The main concern of the poem is about the speakers' struggle with life, love and faith in religion. The poem starts with a calm beach at night. “Waves” is used as an allusion to represent the joy and pain of relationships which may lead to either unhappiness or bliss as well. The waves could also refer to the unstable relationship between spouses. Human suffering and misery is associated with the sea. Like the sea, things can appear normal and perfect from the outside but be flawed on the inside. The speaker obviously has a companion with him because in the sixth line, he invites his companion to come to the window and enjoy the sweet night air.

In the third stanza, he goes back to the distant past and a distant land. The great Greek dramatist Sophocles too must have been reminded of the uncertainty and sorrow of human life. When standing by the Aegean Sea, the speaker sees the ebb and flow of the tide and this might be an allusion to
Sophocles’ *Antigone* in which he compares heaven’s curse to the ebb and flow of the sea.

In the next stanza, Arnold speaks about the nature of the crisis facing the Victorian period using the imagery of the sea. He laments that faith in religion was once “at the full, and round the earth’s shore”. The image of the world being naked also implies that we as a society have lost our faith in religion as we know it, and this leaves us in spiritual darkness. This beautifully expresses both the state of the society as well as Arnold’s own mind which stood helpless and defenceless, plagued by doubts and conflicts.

In the last part of the poem, Arnold introduces two new elements with the thought structure of the poem. One is the identity of the poet’s companion and the other is the image of the world as a battlefield. He establishes love as a value that will help them, save them in a world that looks deceptively beautiful but has really no beauty, no joy, no love, no light, no certainty, no peace, no relief for pain. The need for human love is stressed in such situations. The speaker is also referring to the industrial revolution and the way it has robbed people of their beliefs, pushing the world into a religious crisis. The last lines convey chaos and aggression. We, humans, are the “ignorant armies” that “clash by night”, or are constantly disputing due to the steady loss of faith. This battle is perhaps a reference to the last battle of the Peloponnesian war as described by Thucydides in his “History of the Peloponnesian War- Book VII”. The battle was fought at night and it was between the Athenians and the Spartans. Though the Spartans
were valiant warriors, they lost the war. The poem, thus, ends on a note totally different with which it began. It started with a tranquil, moon drenched sea and land and ends with the image of a battle by night where the armies do not even know why they fight and with whom they fight.

The poem refers to the change that has come over with the advancement of science and knowledge, how this advancement has resulted in religion being questioned or retreating back. It is a dramatic monologue that also follows the format of a sonnet (please refer to notes of *Fra Lippo Lippi* to know more about what a dramatic monologue is). Both ‘land’ and ‘beach’ are used as symbols here. ‘Land’ stands for a symbol of continuity while ‘sea’ is a symbol of change. ‘Darkling plain’ in the poem probably refers to the state of human condition when faith has taken a back seat. ‘Love’ is also a major theme in *Dover Beach*, where readers feel almost as if Arnold is clinging on to the power of love while faith erodes from beneath his feet. Here, love is treated as a desperate refuge or the only means of consolation. In a constant state of change and turmoil, love seems to be the only anchor, the only true constant to hold on to. Love transcends the loss of faith and is the only means of salvation in the modern world for Arnold. While humanity stands on the verge of chaos, Arnold asks his beloved to be true to each other in order to survive in the modern land. Here, the tide leaving the shore symbolizes the loss of faith. Throughout the poem there seems to be clash between opposing forces like light and dark, harmony and chaos. Both W.B.Yeats and Anthony Hecht have
replied to Arnold’s pessimism in *Dover Beach* through their poems, namely, “The Nineteenth Century and After” (Yeats) and “The Dover Bitch” (Hecht). There is an allusion to the poem in Joseph Heller’s “Catch 22” (1961) in the chapter titled “Havermyer”.
SECTION - B (DRAMA)

OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin on the 16th of October, 1854. His father was a wealthy surgeon while his mother wrote for the paper “Young Ireland”. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford. Wilde was an introvert who wrote many poems in school itself. Wilde became involved in the aesthetic movement while he was at Oxford. After graduation, he shifted and settled in London to pursue his literary career. His first volume of poetry was published in 1881. He also wrote fairy stories around this time and published his famous novel, *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* (1891). He went on to write some very popular comedies including *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of being Earnest* in 1895. Although Wilde married and had two sons, he had an affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. Being a homosexual, he faced trials, arrests and was sentenced to two years of hard labour. While in prison, he wrote a long letter to Douglas which was published posthumously under the title *De Profundis*. Wilde was released from prison with his reputation and health ruined irrevocably. He died in Paris on 30th November, 1900.

**“THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST”**

**SUMMARY**

The full title of the play is *The Importance of Being Earnest (A Trivial Comedy for Serious People)*. It is a typical example of “comedy of manners” as it mocks Victorian
aristocratic behaviour of hypocrisy, superiority and materialism. The language used is thus satirical and witty. The norms and values of Victorian aristocratic society are ridiculed through the play. The play begins with Algernon (Algy) waiting for his aunt Lady Bracknell and her daughter Gwendolen to visit him in his flat in London. However, before their arrival Jack Worthing (also known as Earnest in London) arrived to propose to Gwendolen. Algy raises suspicions about Jack’s real name and whereabouts and Jack confesses that his real name is Jack Worthing and he is guardian to a young lady named Cecily. Upon hearing this confession, Algy also confesses that he sometimes pretends to visit his imaginary friend, Bunbury, in the country whenever he needs a break from town life. Upon Lady Bracknells and her daughters arrival, Algy distracts her in another room to make it more convenient for Earnest (or Jack) to propose to Gwendolen. Gwendolen accepts the proposal as she always wanted to marry someone with the name Earnest as it sounded very aristocratic to her. Lady Bracknell is not very happy with this engagement however as Jack doesn't seem to have proper social status and while leaving she rejects the engagement and asks him to find some acceptable parents. Gwendolen asks for Jack's country address and while he dictates it Algy secretly notes it down on his shirt cuff meaning to go “bunburying” in the country to visit Cecily whom he’s curious about now.

In the country, Cecily is taught by Miss Prism who is all praise for Jack who she sees as a responsible guardian and brother. In the end, however, we find that both Jack and Algy
are rechristened as Earnest by Canon, the local vicar as even Cecily wished to marry someone with the name Earnest. And to Lady Bracknell's surprise, meeting Miss Prism reveals that Jack Worthing is Lady Bracknell’s own nephew whom she had lost 28 years back. Lady Bracknell reveals that Jack is actually the son of Ernest John Mocrieff and Jack is truly earnest now.

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY**

Through this play, Wilde pokes fun at the institution of marriage which he personally believed to be surrounded by hypocrisy and absurdity. The play represents Wilde’s late-Victorian view of aristocracy, marriage as well as social life. It also provides a deep insight into London society during that time. For example, hypocrisy and deception of Victorian society is portrayed through the concept of bunburying, aggression through Cecily’s and Gwendolen’s behaviour at tea, self-deception through Cecily’s diary, tyranny through Lady Bracknell, deteriorating morality through Algernon, faithfulness of servants through cucumber sandwiches incident. Lady Bracknell symbolizes institutionalized vices and tyrannic forces of the society.

“Earnestness” (which means ‘sincere and intense conviction’) was considered as a key ideal in Victorian society. The Victorians had strict codes on social visits, how cards were left, how tea was served and consumed. The play is Wilde’s satirical take on English aristocracy of Victorian times. An epigram is a saying or remark that expresses an idea in a clever and amusing way. In the Importance of Being
Earnest, many established epigrams are subverted. This is one of the specialities of the play. Throughout the play very serious matters are treated trivially and very trivial matters are treated very seriously thus inverting traditional values of ‘the serious’ and ‘the trivial’.

Wilde himself was also a “bunburyist” who led dual lives, one as a respected, married man and the other as an active homosexual. Thus possible allusions to homosexuality can be found throughout the play. Wilde criticizes society using wit. Both the muffin scene and the tea-cake scene show how absurd the idle rich can be. The play is a medley of satire, farce, humour, sentimental comedy, absurdity and improbability.
CHARLES LAMB

Charles Lamb was born in London in 1775 and educated at Christ’s Hospital where he met Coleridge. He worked in the East India Company after leaving a job as a clerk at the South Sea House. It was only late in life that he started writing. “Tales from Shakespeare” was the first book that brought Lamb the recognition and fame he yearned for. *Essays of Elia* is a collection of essays that he had written to London magazines, most of them being autobiographical in nature, *Dream Children* is part of this collection. His family, his descent, his school days, his early surroundings etc. are the subject matter of the essays in Essays of Elia.

*DREAM CHILDREN - A REVERIE*

Now remember that Elia is the pen name of Charles Lamb and so James Elia stands for Lamb himself. So one evening, Lamb’s imaginary children, Alice and John ask him about their great grandmother Mrs. Field and this is how Lamb narrates the story of Mrs. Field and her great house. He sways back and forth between the present and past while he narrates childhood experiences along with recording the children's present reactions to it. He describes the charm of the old and big house that their great grandmother lived in. The house did not actually belong to her, she was the caretaker of this house and the owner had built a newer and more fashionable house somewhere else, leaving this house under the care of Mrs.
Field. In between there is a reference to the Ballad of the Children in the Wood. This Ballad is a story about two little orphans, a boy and a girl and how they had a very cruel uncle who took them to a forest nearby and abandoned the children there. The poor orphans died of hunger and cold in that forest. Even the birds (Robin Redbreasts) felt such pity for these two children that they tried to cover their dead bodies with leaves. This is the story of the ballad and there was a rumour that the ghosts of these two children haunted the area and especially this particular house in which Mrs. Field lived in. Now the narrator says that this whole story was carved in wood and kept for show as the chimney piece of this great mansion. But the real owner of the house who is described here as the ‘foolish rich person’ pulled down this carved piece and put a marble piece of modern invention in its place. Now this new piece had no story in it and changed the look of the entire place. Now when Elia narrated this detail, Alice put a disapproving, yet soft look on her face which looked just like one of her mother’s looks. Lamb paints a noble picture of Mrs. Field (Mary Field) as well. She was well respected and she looked after the house with great care even though it wasn’t her own. And after her death, the house was untended and left to decay. Many of the good old decorations of this mansion were then ripped away and put up in the owners fashionable, new house which according to Elia made it look really awkward and out of place. John smiled when Elia narrated this.
Elia then narrates how grandmother Field’s funeral was. Since she was a very religious and charitable person, there was a huge crowd attending her funeral. When Elia goes on to describe Mrs. Field as a tall and graceful person who danced well, little Alice’s feet played an involuntary movement (pretending to dance a small step). He says that even though cancer bent their great grandmother’s body in pain, her attitude and spirit were untouched and remained strong. She was also quite a brave lady who slept alone in that huge mansion which was believed to be haunted. Mrs. Field once told Lamb how she had seen the ghosts of those two orphans (from the story of the Ballad narrated earlier) playing along the staircase, but she wasn't afraid of them as she believed they were innocent souls who could do no harm. On the other hand, Elia himself was quite scared to sleep alone in that house and always insisted his maid slept in the same room for he wasn’t half as religious as his grandmother and so believed the ghosts may harm him. But he never saw those ghosts. Now here John actually feels scared listening to all this talk about ghosts, but he tries to put on a brave look. Now Elia goes on to tell the children how generous and good their grandmother was to her grandchildren as she allowed them to come and stay over and play at this great mansion during the holidays. Here Lamb’s childhood experiences are portrayed in the essays describing the great gardens and how Lamb spent his idle time there. He used to stare so much at the marble statues of the Twelve Caesars that he would feel either himself becoming a statue or the statues coming alive. The narrator used to love roaming about the great house and the great
gardens. The description he gives of the gardens is so tempting as Lamb engages all the five senses of his readers in this piece of description. Elia declares that he took a lot of pleasure in roaming around the garden unlike other children who would have preferred to enjoy the sweet flavours of the different fruits found in the garden. On hearing this, John immediately keeps back the bunch of grapes that he had taken from a plate with the intention to eat and also share it with his sister, Alice.

The narrator then shifts his focus to a description of the kids' uncle, John L, who seemed to be the favourite of Mrs. Field. Elia says he was quite handsome and lively. He was so strong that he rode horses at a very young age and also joined the hunters. Now James Elia is described as being lame-footed (although Lamb was never lame-footed)and so John L, Elia’s brother, would carry him on his back for miles. But later on in life, John L also became lame and the narrator regrets to admit that he (Elia) wasn’t as considerate as John L used to be. And when John L died, Elia initially thought he wasn’t so affected by his brother's death, but then it gradually began to haunt him and he started to miss everything about John L. The narrator then started sincerely wishing John L was alive again even if it was to quarrel with him. Elia felt as uncomfortable as he imagined John L would have felt when his limb was taken off by the doctor. At this point, the kids plead him to stop and instead tell them something about their pretty mother, Alice. Lamb thus narrates how he courted the beautiful Alice (probably referring to Ann Simmons) for seven long years and while at it he notices the children growing fainter and fainter.
until he could see nothing but two sad features that reminds him that they are not his or Alice's children, or children at all for that matter. Lamb then ends the essay by waking up in his bachelor chair where he had fallen asleep and was having a daydream.

**AN ANALYSIS**

The essays Lamb wrote under the pseudonym “Elia” under the title “Essays of Elia” are mostly intimate revelations of his own personal life, experiences, emotions and thoughts. In Dream Children, Lamb uses ‘stream of consciousness’ technique to write the essay. Stream of consciousness refers to a style of writing in which the writer narrates his thoughts and ideas in the same flow as they come into his mind. Lamb has used a conversational and informal tone throughout the essay. There seems to be two settings in the essay, one Lamb’s real world (where he is seated in his arm-chair) and second, the place in Lamb’s dream where he is narrating the story to his children. Beneath the wit and humour of Lamb’s “Dream Children” lies a strong note of nostalgia, regret and melancholy. It almost feels like Lamb is trying to hide or go past these emotions of disappointments and frustrations by laughing rather than weeping.

There is a mingling of both joy and sorrow throughout the essay. Even in his description of the good old days at his grandmother’s house, death and such harsh realities are still portrayed in it like in his stating of the fact that his grandmother died of cancer despite being a highly respected
and religious woman. Lamb also hints at the unfortunately early death of his elder brother John Lamb in the essay. “Faithful Bridget” in the essay refers to Lamb’s elder sister, Mary Lamb, who never married due to her mental health conditions. She is called “faithful” as she is the sole companion in Lamb’s life and when the daydream ends, he finds her sitting beside him not Ann or the children he and Ann might have had together. The narrator’s bachelor armchair symbolizes his loneliness and lack of a wife and children.

Lamb uses the essay as a medium to express his long unfulfilled desires and longings, like his desire to marry Ann Simmons. He tried escaping into the world of fantasy and memories by narrating his childhood days but then crashlands back to reality in the realization that the children are imaginary after all. By the end of the essay he returns back from the imaginary world to the realization that he never got to marry Ann as Ann married someone called Bartrum. Lamb is therefore just a bachelor who is having a reverie. Although the essay begins on a misleadingly realistic note, the subtitle “A Reverie” (which literally means a daydream) prepares the reader for a return to reality.

The humoristic attitude of the essay gradually washes off revealing a melancholy picture. The readers are in for a painful awakening at the end of the essay when they realize that the narrator is a bachelor after all and the children were merely products of his imagination. His description of the children's reactions and their expressions seemed so realistic that one finds it hard to believe he never was a father after all.
It also reveals the author’s keen observation and knowledge about child psychology. And thus we come to the significance of the title “Dream Children” as Lamb dreams or longs to have children of his own.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

William Hazlitt is an English literary critic. He first tried his hand at art in Paris, but then later turned to literature and journalism. In 1798, he was introduced to writers of the Romantic Era like S.T. Coleridge, Charles Lamb, Hunt and William Wordsworth. Some of his most effective writings were published in “The Spirit of the Age” in 1825. “Conversations of James Northcote” (1830) was his last published book.

ON READING OLD BOOKS

SUMMARY

In this essay, the author conveys his love for reading and re-reading old books. He draws a comparison between the experiences of reading new and old books.

In the first stanza, the narrator notes that ladies think that books are like fashion and are therefore best in their newest trend. The author, on the other hand, has more confidence in “the dead than the living” authors and books. He divides contemporary authors into two categories, i.e., friends and foes. Now, when reading books of friends, you are forced to think “too well” about their works. And when reading books of foes, one tends to think “too ill” about their books. Hence,
when you are acquainted with contemporary authors, one finds it difficult to judge or even read their books unbiassedly. The author believes that you keep finding some small, petty detail that interrupts the calmness you are supposed to enjoy while reading. The author goes on to describe modern literature as “dust and smoke” as opposed to the “pure, silent air of immortality” of older literature.

In the second stanza, the author states that the more you read a book, the better the experience of reading. This is because you know what to expect and still derive satisfaction just as your appetite only increases when you know the deliciousness of a familiar, often consumed dish. On the other hand, sitting to read a new book is like sitting down to eat a strange, unfamiliar dish where you lack confidence or the secure feeling that one has when consuming a familiar dish. New books are like “made-up” dishes or in other words, they are merely adaptations of older books. The author states that there is absolutely no guarantee that such a meal (reading new books) will not be a waste of time or that the author’s palate will not be nauseated with the flavorless, unpleasant garbage that it might turn out to be. However, when you're reading an old book, it feels like a meeting with an old, valued and trusted friend. Hence, you feel like chatting on for hours and hours (or reading the book for hours). Old books, according to the author, are like ideal guests with whom you form lasting friendships. When re-reading a book, one derives pleasure from memories of one’s feelings and associations of reading the book in the past. Such books (i.e., old books) act like
landmarks or guides that lead our lives. The author believes that old books are records of the happiest times in our lives and they have the power to transport us into the world of fancy.

In the third paragraph the author narrates how he could read any chapter or passage from books like “Tom Jones” and “Peregrine Pickle” and still find it as delightful as he found it when he first read it. The mere sight of old, familiar books in a book stall or library ignites ideas in one’s mind and brings joy. One forgets one's age and becomes a child again. A sage philosopher once remarked that he would like to be young again if he could take his experience along with him. The author says that this philosopher is not such a wise man as the author believes that one of the best things about being young and innocent is not having the weight of experience on one’s shoulders. Hazlitt considers experience as a burden, a hump that he wishes would roll off his back so he could return to his ignorant, young self again where he felt joy and amazement in every little thing. Hazlitt says that re-reading an old book not just brings back the content of the book, but along with it comes all the old associations of people, the place where one sat to read it, the day they received the book, even the feeling of the air etc. would return once again. And this is the experience that Hazlitt enjoys more than the fresh, new pages of a new book just out of the press. The author equated the experience of reading an old book with returning back to one’s childhood. He still remembers the excitement and eagerness with which he anticipated series novels published in Cooke’s pocket edition.
Hazlitt goes on to enumerate a number of works which he used to personally enjoy. He notes that while he devoured French Romances, he never truly imbibed poetry. He then goes on to tell us that books don't interest him now as much as it used to when he was much younger. For example, when he read Keats “Eve of St.Agnes” he was aware that it would have been felt more deeply and beautifully had he read it when he was much younger. The sharp flavour and fine aroma he had for literature is lost and all that’s left is the dry “husk” of literature. What he reads now are merely words, no feeling, no essence, hardly any enjoyment at all.

The author tells that he first dwelled into poetry reading beginning with authors like Wordsworth and Coleridge (the authors of Lyrical Ballads). He also praises Shakespeare’s works and writes that Shakespeare had the skill to turn even nonsense into something characteristic. Hazlitt states that he revelled in reading periodicals like “The Spectator” and “Tatler”, but never really found “The Rambler”, “The Adventurer” etc. worth reading. He also tells his readers that he thoroughly enjoyed reading Richardson’s “Pamela” and wouldn't mind re-reading it again and again. He also expresses his interest in poets like Spenser, Chaucer and the Italian poet Boccaccio.

In the next paragraph, William Hazlitt recollects the time he returned home from a neighbouring town with a “double prize”,i.e., a copy each of Milton’s “Paradise Lost” and Burke’s “Reflections on the FRench Revolution”. Even now just by seeing the covers of these books he is able to
gather memories of the joy with which he read them at that
time. He then goes on to praise both the works. He considered
Burke’s skill in writing prose as unsurpassable. He ends this
paragraph by stating that he is happy to have lived by forming
intimate relationships with such works and to have read books
by great authors because it makes him feel like his life was
worth living.

Hazlitt ends the essay by telling us that there are
however other authors whom he never forgot to read even
though he wanted to. Some of them are Lord Clarendons
“History of the Great Rebellion”, Beaumont and Fletcher,
Theodoret etc. He also expresses his interest to read the last
novel of Sir Walter Scott (author of Waverley) who is infact
one of Hazlitt’s contemporaries.

SHORT ANALYSIS

In this essay, William Hazlitt stresses the importance of
old writers and highlights the joy of reading an old, already
read book as opposed to new and unfamiliar books by
contemporary authors. Through the essay, Hazlitt focuses on
certain aspects of the Reader- response theory. Upon reading
the essay, one can make out that a person’s familiarity with an
old book is taken to another level by the history shared by the
book and the author. This history includes not just the reader’s
thoughts and ideas but also the physical process of acquiring
the book in one’s hand. In a way, the essay describes the
influence reading can have in shaping one’s life and character.
The essay prompts readers to create their own personal literary canon according to their own reading experience and interests.

CHARLES DICKENS

Born in Portsmouth as the son of a naval clerk, Dickens novels and short stories are popular universally. Dickens was forced to leave school and join work instead, as his father was sent to prison for debt. Despite all odds, Dickens edited weekly journals, wrote novels, short stories and even nonfiction articles. A Tale of Two Cities (1859) is one of his best historical fiction. He died of a stroke in 1870 and was buried in Poet’s Corner at Westminster Abbey.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

SUMMARY

The story of the tale of two cities begins in Paris where a French doctor, Dr. Manette, who was imprisoned in Bastille prison 18 years ago without trial or even a warning was finally released. He stays with his old servant, Ernst Defarge upon return from jail. His daughter Lucie joins him in Paris and finds out that the years in prison have altered her father's mental health who is currently obsessed with making shoes, a hobby that he had learnt in prison. With time and love, Lucie gradually gets her father back as a sane person. Five years later, Dr. Manette and Lucie are called in as witnesses in a treason case in which Darney is the accused. Darnay is taken off the hook with the help of Lucie's statement as well as some help from Darnay’s doppelganger, Carton. Carton falls for Lucie, but Lucie goes on to marry Darnay. On their wedding
day, Darnay reveals his actual identity and this shocks Dr. Manette, but he recovers soon. Meanwhile, the situation in Paris was worsening and a revolution breaks out against the aristocrats. The Marquis is murdered and the steward writes to Darnay for help. Darnay leaves for Paris without informing his father in law or his wife and gets imprisoned there. A year later, however, Dr. Manette relieves him from prison with his influence but Darnay gets imprisoned once again because of the vengeance chalked out by Madame Defarge. She also plans to execute Lucie and her daughter, but that fails as a row that takes place between Miss Pross and M. Defarge ends up with Madame Defarge shooting herself by mistake. Darnay is saved from the noose by Carton who impersonates him and gets hanged instead of Darnay himself.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

CHARLES DARNAY (OR ST. EVREMONDE)

Darnay is the main protagonist of the novel. He is a noble, French aristocrat and the nephew of the wicked Marquis St. Evremonde. Being a compassionate person by nature, he migrates to England and gives up both his name and inheritance. Here, he marries Lucie Mannette and is blessed with a daughter named little Lucie. During the French Revolution, Darnay is forced to return to France where he faces imprisonment twice. The second time he was saved from hanging by Sydney Carton. The same Sydney Carton whom Darnay looked down upon as a useless drunkard saves him twice throughout the story. But towards the end, he realizes
how wrong he was in judging Carton and names his son Sydney after the man who saved his life twice. Darnay doesn’t change much through the course of the novel. His character shows honesty along with courage while being naive at the same time.

SYDNEY CARTON

Although Sydney Carton resembles Charles Darnay physically, he is completely the opposite in emotional and spiritual character. He loves Lucie sincerely, and it is this love for her that transforms him into a better person. Though she rejects him, he accepts the rejection and admits to being a profligate. However he promises he would do anything for her and he keeps up with this promise when he takes Darnay’s place at the guillotine. He finds peace and redemption at the guillotine and with death he finds a purpose in his life.

DR. MANETTE

DR. Manette is a French Doctor who was imprisoned without any reason for eighteen years. The entire novel revolves around the imprisonment and release of Dr. Manette. Dr. Manette’s imprisonment makes him temporarily insane and even after release, he calls himself by his cell number and busies himself with making shoes. He is resurrected back to a sane life with the help of his daughter's love and care. Even though he comes to know about Darnay's real lineage, he forgives for the sake of his daughter. Unlike Charles Darnay, he changes throughout the story from an isolated, insane man
to being kind and loving, all the while harbouring an urge for revenge against the Evremondes.

**LUCIE MANETTE**

Lucie is a young, beautiful and frail French woman who was raised as a ward of Tellson’s Bank because her parents were thought to be dead. She is often referred to as the “golden thread” in the novel as she brings together her family and revives her father's mental stability. She is also the reason behind Sydney Carton’s moral and spiritual change. She in fact brings out the hero in Sydney Carton. She shows extreme courage when she refuses to shed a tear while Darnay is brought to the guillotine so as not to further disturb Carton.

**OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS** : Monsieur Defarge, Madame Defarge, Jarvis Lorry, Jerry Cruncher, Miss Pross, Marquis Evremonde, Mr. Stryver, John Barsad, Roger Cly and Gabelle.

**EMILY BRONTE**

The sister of Charlotte Bronte and Ann Bronte, is best remembered for her only published novel, namely, *Wuthering Heights*. Emily Bronte wrote Wuthering Heights under the name Ellis Bell. inorder to earn a living, Bronte worked as a teacher for a brief period and then went on to travel to Brussels along with Charlotte Bronte to study. However, with the death of their aunt, they were forced to return home again. It was in 1847 that Emily Bronte published Wuthering Heights, which went on to gain literary popularity and reputation only after her death.
WUTHERING HEIGHTS (1847)

SUMMARY:

In the winter of 1801, Lockwood, the narrator of our novel finds himself forced to spend a night at Heathcliff manor, Wuthering Heights due to a snowstorm. His sleep is disturbed by nightmares of a ghost named Catherine trying to enter his room through the window. Lockwood soon settles into his new house neighbouring wuthering heights and is curious to know the story behind Wuthering Heights and its owner. His housekeeper, Nelly, is all too ready to pour the story out and thus we readers find ourselves riding down the lanes of the past. Nelly recounts life at the Earnshaws and how things change when Mr. Earnshaw returns home one fine day with an orphan child named Heathcliff. Mr. Earnshaw's daughter Catherine and Heathcliff find themselves inseparable. On the other hand, Mr. Earnshaw's son, Hindley develops a strong dislike and hatred towards the crude, ill mannered orphan his father had adopted. This hatred deepens and turns abusive when Mr. Earnshaw dies and Hindley returns home with his new wife to claim Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff is then treated like a servant in the mansion and his only consolation is Catherine. However, Catherine decides to marry the more polished and well mannered Edgar whose attention she catches while recuperating from a dog bite at his house, the Thrushcross Grange. The story then turns into revenge after revenge where Heathcliff finally gets ownership of both the Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff finally dies in the oak panelled bed where he and
Catherine used to spend time during their childhood. Hindley's, son Hareton and Edgar's daughter Catherine inherit the two houses after this death. Thus ends a story of love and revenge.

**MAJOR CHARACTERS**

**HEATHCLIFF:** The central character of the novel, Heathcliff is an orphan who faces a lot of rejection, abuse and social rejection. He is described as dark-skinned and gypsy like. This physical appearance of Heathcliff itself emphasizes his abnormality and association with darkness and the supernatural. This in turn moulds him into a man who is revengeful, abusive and cruel. He is genuinely brutal, cruel and fierce. He doesn't even for a moment pretend to be a gentleman or good person. He is a character who not only acts and suffers but also makes other characters in the story act and suffer. By fate, he was sinned against but he commits more sins than others. Heathcliff’s need for revenge seems to be an insatiable one. His silent sufferings and endurements turns into tragic determination by Catherine’s decision to marry Linton. But his intense and sincere love for Catherine is sure to leave a mark upon the reader's mind. Heathcliff has a huge strength of character and is great in his own way, he is capable of loving as fiercely as hating, both in extremes. He is thus both the Hero and the Villain of the story.

**CATHERINE EARNSHAW:** Wild, impulsive, arrogant and passionate, Catherine is the love of Heathcliff's life. By character, she is definitely a worthy counterpart to Heathcliff being capable of deep emotional attachments. She is als
egotistical, proud and vain, also unreasonable when in fits of passion. Her intense love for him makes her feel almost as if they both are the same person. Even though she is Heathcliff's childhood companion and lover, she ends up choosing to marry Edgar only for social advancement. Catherine is often confused between her intense love for Heathcliff and her social ambitions. She turns Heathcliff's life into misery by choosing Edgar over him. And so Catherine is not only Heathcliff's heaven but also his hell. Edgar also suffers due to this.

Hindley Earnshaw: Catherine’s brother, and Earnshaw’s son. He is the one who hated Heathcliff being brought into the family the most. It is due to his treatment of Heathcliff after his father's death that probably led Heathcliff to abuse others. He, like Heathcliff and Catherine, is also capable of extreme love and hatred but not as strong willed as them.

Edgar Linton: Linton is a more refined, polished and well bred gentleman when compared to Heathcliff. He fails to portray even half of the courage that Heathcliff shows. He is stifled by Heathcliff's power and ultimately loses control over his wife, daughter and even house to Heathcliff.

Nelly Dean: Nelly serves as the domestic help of the Earnshaws initially and now for Mr. Lockwood. She serves as the chief narrator of the novel. She is a healthy, bustling, intelligent yet practical woman with average sensibility. She is also nosy and prying and is ready to make a few small deceits in order to avoid big troubles. Some critics even accuse her as
being the real villain of the novel as certain actions of hers are due to her faulty judgment. She also acts almost like a chorus in a play with the difference that she offers a biased point of view, rather than an unbiased one like the chorus. But on the surface level, Nelly appears to be a harmless, warm, grandmother kind of figure, narrating a story while knitting by the fireside.

LOCKWOOD: The present resident of Thrushcross Grange. His curiosity about Heathcliff leads to the unfolding of the story of Wuthering Heights by Nelly.

LINTON HEATHCLIFF: Isabella Linton’s and Heathcliff’s son. Weak, constantly ill and demanding, he is ill treated by Heathcliff and forced to marry the young Catherine.

YOUNG CATHERINE: The daughter of Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton. Marries Linton Heathcliff initially who dies shortly after marriage and then goes on to get married to Hareton Earnshaw.

HARETON EARNSHAW: The son of Hindley and Frances Earnshaw, he is ill treated by Heathcliff and grows up uneducated and wild. He however has a good heart and ends up marrying the young Catherine.

MR. EARNshaw: The father of Catherine and Hindley Earnshaw. He also adopts the orphan Heathcliff whom he brings along with him upon his return from a trip.

MRS. EARNshaw: The mother of Catherine and Hindley Earnshaw. She never takes a liking towards the orphan
Heathcliff and is always suspicious about him. She, however, dies shortly after Heathcliff is brought into the house.

**OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS:** Joseph, Frances Earnshaw, Zillah, Mr. Linton, Mrs. Linton, Mr. Green.

**SHORT ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL**

The title of this novel is believed to have been inspired by Emily Bronte’s visit to a ruined farmhouse called “Top Withens”, in the countryside of Yorkshire. This novel is a narrative within a narrative and Chapters 1 to 3 contains Lockwood’s introduction. Lockwood plays the primary narrator while Nelly is the secondary narrator.

Gothic Romance is a genre inaugurated by Horace Walpole’s work “The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story”. Some of the basic features of a gothic romance or novel are :- (i) setting is in the medieval period, (ii) presence of ghosts, supernatural elements etc, (iii) usually the story of an innocent heroine suffering due to a cruel villain. The principle aim of such novels was to evoke terror and fear in the minds of the readers. From the features listed above, we can make out that “Wuthering heights” qualifies as a gothic romance.

“Wuthering Heights” is consciously organized like a five-act tragedy, with breaks indicated at the appropriate points always. The passion shared by Catherine and Heathcliff is a sort of spiritual eroticism, pure and irresistible, never turning vulgar or disgusting. Their love can be taken as a spiritual, true love while the love between Cathy and Hareton can be taken as ordinary love. The union between Cathy and Hareton can also
be taken as a symbol of the union between Heathcliff and Catherine. Emily Bronte’s diction is simple and direct. She chooses apt words to create a physical atmosphere for certain scenes. The emotional appeal of the novel is partly due to the excellent choice of words (for example, the line: “Nelly, I am Heathcliff”). Human conditions, facial expressions etc. are treated like landscapes. Imagery of wind/cloud, water and fire exist throughout the novel. Both man and animals in the novel are wild, except for a few. Another point to be noted is that mothers seem to be absent or invisible in the story. Windows are used as a symbol in “Wuthering Heights”, mostly as a symbol of time, reaching out into the past and future at times.

The theme of infanticide is emphasized symbolically throughout the novel in the killing of helpless and delicate animals. There is a possibility that Heathcliff could have been Catherine’s half brother. In this case, incest or child sexuality in the fact that they slept together in the same bed until Catherine was over 12 years. Emily has also attempted a deviation from conventional standards of who a hero or villain is. Stereotypical notions of moral characters have been violated because we find that there’s no good or bad person or hero or villain specifically. The emphasis in “Wuthering Heights” rather seems to be in the supreme importance of the natural impulse to love and be loved.

TESS OF THE D’UBERVILLES

THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy, born in 1840, was the son of a stones
man and builder. Like his mother, he loved reading and was influenced by the works of Charles Swinburne, Browning and Darwin. His first published novel was Desperate Remedies in 1871. An architect by profession, Hardy left the field in 1872, to devote himself completely to his literary career. Hardy is famous for his fictional place, namely, Wessex, which he introduced in his novel “Far from the Madding Crowd” which also is the setting for “Tess of the d’Ubervilles”. Following a lot of criticisms over his last two novels, namely, Tess of the d’Ubervilles (1891) and Jude the Obscure(1895), Hardy moves over to poetry.

**SUMMARY:**

Tess of the D’Ubervilles was also subtitled “A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented”. The story begins when an impoverished peddler, John Durbeyfield is shocked when he discovers that he is the descendant of a noble family, namely, the d’Uberville family. He, along with his wife, decide to send their daughter, Tess, to the d’Uberville mansion where they hope she will find some financial help from Mrs.d’Ubervilles. The naive Tess is thus offered a job of tending to fowls at the d’ubervilles estate. Here, Tess finds herself resisting attempts of seduction by the young Alec d’uberville. However, Alec finally takes advantage of her one evening when Tess was found alone in the woods returning after a fair. Knowing that she will never love Alec, she returns home to deliver her baby and names him Sorrow. Sorrow passes away soon after birth and Tess then spends a gloomy year at home before she resolves to find a new job. She then joins as a dairymaid at
Talbothays from where she falls in love with Angel Clare. They get married and on their wedding night, Angel opens up about a past affair and Tess too reveals her past with Alec. However, Angel finds it impossible to forgive her for her sexual past with Alec and thus leaves her some money and deserts her. Tess is thus forced to return back home where she unexpectedly meets Alec again. Alec has now converted to christianity and he tries begging Tess to marry him. Angel, on the other hand, finally brings himself to forgive Tess and returns to find her. But he soon finds out that he was too late and Tess had already given herself over to Alec again. But this time, Tess finds the courage to murder Alec and flees off with Angel. But both of them are soon found out by a search party and Tess is arrested. Tess is then sent to jail and is hanged. Thus ends the tragic story of Thomas Hardy’s Tess d’Ubervilles.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

TESS DURBEYFIELD

Tess is the central character of this novel. She is portrayed as a very beautiful young girl who is innocent, uneducated, responsible and at the same time very vulnerable. She is pushed down from one misfortune to another throughout the novel and the readers sympathise with her throughout the story.

ALEC D’UBERVILLE

Alec can be described as the villain of the novel who is the heir to the d’Uberville fortune and is portrayed as an
amoral, manipulative young playboy like character. He ruins Tess’s life forever and is finally murdered by Tess herself. He thus pays for all the fraud deceptions he played with Tess with his life.

**ANGEL CLARE**

Angel is an educated, intelligent young man who becomes a farmer only in order to escape the pressures of city life. Both his father and brothers are respected clergymen. Angel himself would have joined the ministry if not for his doubts upon religion. He falls in love with Tess while she works as a milkmaid at the same Dairy he works in, namely, Talbothays Dairy. He forgives Tess a bit too late in life and thus loses Tess forever as she is hanged for murdering Alec.

**OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS**: Mr. John Durbeyfield, Mrs.D’Ubberville, Marian, IzzHeutt, RettyPriddle, Reverend Clare, Mrs. Clare.

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