

**GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE,
KOVILPATTI – 628503
PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
STUDY MATERIAL FOR II B.A ENGLISH
BRITISH POETRY
SEMESTER - III, ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21**

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UNIT - I PROSE

LYCIDAS-John Milton

SUMMARY

John Milton's famous English-language poem, *Lycidas*, is about the death of his friend, Edward King, whom the poet calls "Lycidas," following the pastoral tradition who drowned at sea.

Lycidas is an elegy that Milton created in 1637 to lament the death of his friend Edward King. King had been Milton's friend at Cambridge and got drowned due to sinking of his ship. The poem has been created in a reflective mood. The rhyme scheme of the poem shows no regularity. Milton follows the ancient Greek tradition of remembering a loved one through a pastoral poem by creating this poem.

The genre 'elegy', is characterized by expression of sadness and feeling of loss. Despite having lyrical elements, an elegy is not a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. The 'powerful' feelings are expressed in a calculated and controlled manner. *Lycidas* seems to be even more calculated than elegies generally are.

The first section that serves as a prologue to the poem runs through the first twenty four lines. These lines mention the reason for which Milton has created this poem despite that he had decided to write only after having his poetical powers fully developed. He states that the sad occasion of *Lycidas*' death has forced him to write the elegy.

The second part of the poem describes the time *Lycidas* spent at Cambridge along with Milton himself. In the manner of pastoral, Milton describes how they both would study throughout the day beginning very early in the morning and continuing till late at night. He also points towards some innocent recreation they used to enjoy. However, he mourns the fact that *Lycidas*' death had changed everything significantly. Addressing the Muse, he says that the Muse did not respond when *Lycidas* was dying but also states that her response too could not have made any difference. This section of the elegy also includes much philosophical discussion by Milton. He states that fame results from labour.

However, the precariousness and irony of human life deprives human beings of the reward of his labour in the form of fame since he dies before he could enjoy the reward. However, he also states that the true reward for a human being is divine judgment and not earthly success.

The third section, is even more concerned to pastoral style. He brings forth the imagery of a procession of mourners led by Triton expressing grief on *Lycidas*' death. Milton uses this occasion and extends this imagery to express his own views about the clergy and the Protestant Church. He mentions how St. Peter, the last one in the above mentioned procession, denounces the clergy and the church.

The fourth section runs through lines 132-164. Milton devotes this section to his feelings on *Lycidas*' death. He presents the flowerets cast on *Lycidas*' heart as a symbol of the latter's escape

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from 'intolerable reality' to a lovely world. In a way, the section expresses Milton's good wishes for Lycidas' journey after life.

The fifth section, presents Milton's belief in immortality. He states that Lycidas' death gives rise to the feeling of grief but actually he has reached heaven and there is no need to feel grief. He presents the imagery of saints entertaining Lycidas in 'sweet societies. This section refers to the Greek pastoral poets and expresses a determination to make greater poetic achievements while facing life hopefully.

ALEXANDER'S FEAST-Dryden SUMMARY

Alexander's Feast: Or, The Power of Music, an Ode in Honor of St. Cecilia's Day is Dryden's second ode honouring Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music. The poem's theme, the power of music to move human emotions, is identical with that of "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day," written a decade earlier. Both odes are occasional, having been composed at the invitation of the London Musical Society. In the second ode, Dryden introduces characters and places them within a dramatic setting. The Greeks are celebrating their victory over the Persian King Darius when the musician at the banquet, Timotheus, is called upon to perform.

With exalted strains, Timotheus creates within Alexander the Great a sense that he has become a deity. An alteration of tone changes his mood to a desire for pleasure, and following this a longing for love of his mistress Thaïs, who sits beside him. Somber strains evoke pity for the fallen Darius, but these are followed by strident tones calling for revenge on behalf of Greek soldiers who have perished. Alexander and his mistress and their company rush out, torches in hand, to burn the Persian city Persepolis. The poem concludes with a grand chorus, stressing the power of music to move emotions and contrasting the legend of Saint Cecilia with the power of Timotheus. Dryden recalls the story that after she had invented the organ, she played such beautiful music that an angel, mistaking the sounds for those of heaven, appeared as she played. Let old Timotheus yield the prize, or both divide the crown. He raised a mortal to the skies; she drew an angel down.

The intricate form resembles the Pindaric ode in its lengthy and complicated irregular stanzas, yet its linear organization follows the tradition of Horace. Dryden achieves a complex, forceful, and energetic movement, and his use of historical events and characters contributes to a lively, dramatic expression of his theme.

The first stanza introduces Alexander and his mistress sitting in state. In the second, Alexander's musician, Timotheus, with his lyre inspires Alexander to a sense of divine power, singing the story told by Alexander's mother, Olympia, that Alexander's actual father was Zeus who, in the form of a great dragon, had impregnated her. In stanza 3, Timotheus shifts to the pleasures of drink. In stanza 4, seeing the mood of mellow intoxication becoming drunken belligerence, he next shifts the mood to one of sorrow, singing of the fall of kings, boldly choosing as his example Darius, king of Persia, whose defeat is being celebrated. In stanza 5, having already aroused the softer emotions, Timotheus moves from sorrow to thoughts of love, and then in stanza 6 to anger and revenge, inspiring Alexander to burn Persia's capital, Persepolis.

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The motivations Plutarch gives Alexander, intoxication and a desire to please his mistress, however, are unrelated to the power of music. The opening lines of the sixth stanza make the desire for revenge a result of Timotheus's music, though no reason is given for the musician to desire such an outcome. The fact that this stanza follows the one about love, as well as the lines, "Thais led the way,/ To light him to his prey,/ And, like another Helen, fired another Troy," suggest that Thais is responsible. That, however, would seem to contradict the rest of the stanza, and to be irrelevant to the poem's theme, the power of music. The reader might suppose that Thais takes advantage of the mood Timotheus creates, though one may still wonder at the irresponsibility of raising anger and thoughts of revenge in the mind of someone already intoxicated. Such questions, however, go largely unnoticed, for readers are caught up in the mythic resonance of the burning of a great city and the analogy with Troy that concludes the narrative part of the poem.

The final stanza introduces the patron saint of music, stating that Cecilia goes beyond the nearly magical power of Timotheus's music, because she "Enlarged the former narrow bounds/ And added length to solemn sounds," and so either takes the prize, or at least must share it, for "He rais'd a mortal to the skies She drew an angel down." This final line echoes Dryden's earlier "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," which explicitly states that the beauty of Cecilia's music causes the angel to mistake earth for heaven. The angel visitor is a part of the saint's legend, but Dryden, for the purposes of his poem, has changed the cause of the visit from Cecilia's virtue to her music. Samuel Johnson complained of the impropriety of a shared prize when the exultation of Alexander to godhead is only metaphoric, while the angelic visitor is real. However, Cecilia's advantage in the comparison is great enough that Dryden can afford to leave the judgment to the reader. Further, a divided prize introduces the sense of balance. Each of the earlier stanzas represents an extreme of emotion, so that the neat balance and antithesis at the end gives the conclusion.

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UNIT - II POETRY

ODE TO SKYLARK - P.B.Shelly.

SUMMARY

Shelley being one of the greatest romantic poets of early nineteenth century was an uncompromising rebel. He continued his struggle for the cause of individual liberty, social justice and peace. He wished to bring social reforms by his inspiring and courageous works of literature. He dreamt of an ideal society in which there should be no slavery and no exploitation. In this poem 'To a Skylark' he has addressed a skylark (a little bird) that soars up at a great height and sings so sweetly that the world is enchanted and bewitched by its sweetness.

The Skylark symbolizes high imagination, eternal happiness and harbinger of peace and progress. It is a spirit. Though it is unseen, yet it pours forth profuse sweetness. It stands for idealism and newly built society – free from corruption, exploitation and economic slavery. The Skylark's sweet note and ideal message spread everywhere in the atmosphere. It is heard by the poet who is highly impressed. He boldly claims that the Skylark is a superior thing in the sky. The cloud, the stars, the moon, the sun – all are left behind and the Skylark dominates by its excellent tune and soothing voice.

The poet himself does not know what the Skylark actually is. The mystery of the Skylark is still unsolved to the poet. But he is sure of the fact that he can learn a message of welfare from it and can spread in the world for recreation of the society. The poet had drawn beautiful comparison. In such comparison, he has proved his imaginative quality and an extraordinary talent.

He has compared the beauty and sweetness of the Skylark to a highly born beautiful girl who lives in her tower like palatial building and sings sweet love songs. Similarly, its comparison with a golden glow-worm among the flowers and grass and with rose having soothing scent is excellent and befitting. The poet is so confident about the sweetness and joy of Skylark's song that he says that even the rainbow clouds do not spread as bright drops as the presence of the Skylark spreads a rain of melody. In short the music of the Skylark surpasses every pleasure of nature. The poet wishes to get instruction and messages from the Skylark. So he asks it to teach him its sweet thoughts. The poet is confident that the skylark is pouring out a flood of rapture which is divine.

This poem is one of the best lyrics of P. B. Shelley. It has a tragic feeling in it. The line, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" is very meaningful. It tells the philosophy of Shelley's life. Though the songs of Skylark are the sweetest yet they express saddest and most tragic thought.

The Skylark scorns the nasty habits of the earth and stands for bliss, joy and prosperity of the world. The poet is of cosmopolitan outlook. He is restless to preach his idealism in the world. Therefore he earnestly requests the Skylark to teach him the message.

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Some critics say that P.B Shelley was not a practical man. He was far away from realism. So his Skylark always flew higher and higher and did not come to the earth, like the Skylark of Wordsworth. On the whole, this poem is Shelley's one of the finest creations. The flow of art, the similes, the flight of imagination and lyrical quality make this poem unparalleled in romantic literature.

ODE TO NIGHTINGALE-John Keats SUMMARY

Keats's Ode to a Nightingale is considered one of the finest odes in English Literature. It reveals the highest imaginative powers of the poet. The poem was inspired by the song of a nightingale, which the poet heard in the gardens of his friend Charles Brown. The sweet music of the nightingale sent the poet in rapture and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table, put it on the grass-plot under the plum tree and composed the poem. After he had finished the poem he came back with scraps of paper in his hand. Brown rescued the papers and found them to be the poem on the nightingale.

Thus the poem is an expression of Keats's feelings rising in his heart at the hearing of the melodious song of the bird. The song of the nightingale moves from the poet to the depth of his heart and creates in him a heartache and numbness as is created by the drinking of hemlock. He thinks that the bird lives in a place of beauty. When he hears the nightingale's song, he is entrenched by its sweetness and his joy becomes so excessive that it changes into a kind of pleasant pain. He is filled with a desire to escape from the world of caring to the world of beautiful place of the bird.

The poem presents the picture of the tragedy of human life. It brings out an expression of Keats's pessimism and dejection. He composed this poem at the time when his heart was full of sorrow. His youngest brother Tom had died, the second one had gone abroad and the poet himself was under the suspense and agony by the passionate love for Fanny Brawne. All these happenings had induced in the poet a mood of sorrow. He could not suppress it. Thus the poet enjoys the pleasure in sadness/ pain and feasts upon the very sadness/ pain into joy. This complex emotion gives the poem a unique charm.

In the beginning, Keats seems to be an immature youth with a melancholic heart urging to find a means of oblivion and escape. On catching the sight of a nightingale and hearing its music, which he assumes to be an immortal voice of happiness, Keats feels that his body is getting benumbed. But, he also feels an acute pain because he is conscious of his mortality and suffering. He fantasizes of having drunk hemlock or 'some dull opiate': "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains, / my sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk." The initial situation of awareness and conflict is slowly to change and develop throughout the ode with a corresponding shift in tone. The tragic awareness of suffering inflicts on him a peculiar kind of ache because the opposing effect of dullness, which is the effect of desire, is increasing. The awareness is a burden that makes him 'sunk' gradually towards the world of oblivion.

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After describing his plight, Keats acknowledges, rather than envy the bird's 'happy lot' and participates in its permanent happiness. He identifies the bird with dryad, the Greek Goddess of the tree. He contrasts the mortality and suffering of human being with the immortality and perfect happiness of the nightingale. Of course, Keats immortalizes the bird by thinking of the race of it as the symbol of universal and undying musical voice, which is the voice of nature, and also of ideal romantic poetry, of the world of art and spirit. This universal and eternal voice has comforted human beings embittered by life and tragedies by opening the casement of the remote, magical, spiritual, eternal, and the ideal. The poet is longing for the imaginative experience of an imaginatively perfect world. At this stage in the poem, the poet is trying to escape from the reality, and experience the ideal rather than complement one with the other. This dualism is to resolve later. Keats begins by urging for poison and wine, and then desires for poetic and imaginative experience.

But, as the poem develops, one feels that the numbness and intoxication the poet deliberately and imaginatively imposes upon his senses of pain are meant to awaken a higher sense of experience. The vintage, dance and song, the waters of poetic inspiration are the warmth of the south together make a compound and sensuous appeal.

Keats develops a dialectic by partaking both the states—the fretful here of man and the happy there of the Nightingale—and serves as the mediator between the two. After activating the world of insight and inner experience by obliterating that of the sense, Keats is revived into a special awareness of the conflict. With this awareness, he moves into a higher thematic ground moving from the ache of the beginning through yearning for permanence and eventually exploring the tension so as to balance the transient with the permanent.

The process of experience, he has undergone has undoubtedly left him with a heightened awareness of both the modes of experience. When the imaginative life wakes, the pressures of ordinary experience is benumbed: and when ordinary experience becomes acute, the intensity of imaginative reality is reduced. And this makes life and experience more complete.

The song of the bird symbolizes the song of the poet. Keats is contrasting the immortality of poetry with the immortality of the poet. This is the climax of the poem and the point where the different themes harmonized—the beauty of the nightingale's song, the loveliness of the Spring night, the miseries of the world, the desire to escape from those miseries by death, by wine, or by poetry.

The Ode is not the expression of a single mood, but of a succession of moods. From being too happy in the happiness of the bird's song, Keats becomes aware of the contrast between the bird's apparent joy and the misery of the human condition, from the thought of which he can only momentarily escape by wine, by poetry, by the beauty of nature, or by the thought of death. In the seventh stanza the contrast is sharpened: the immortal bird, representing natural beauty as well as

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poetry, is set against the 'hungry generations' of mankind. Keats expresses with a maximum of intensity the desire to escape from reality, and yet he recognizes that no escape is possible.

The poem expresses the poet's love of romance, deep delight in nature and his interest in the Greek mythology. In the poem the reference to Flora, Dryad, and Bacchus is made which are all related to Greek mythology. It shows that Greek mythology had a deep hold on the mind of the poet. The poem contains concrete imagery, richness of coloring and the elements of charm and deep human interest. The mastery of poetic language is perfectly seen in the poem. The style of the poem is Shakespearean. The expressions are unsurpassed.

To sum up, Keats soars high with his 'wings of poesy' into the world of ideas and perfect happiness. But the next moment, consciousness makes him land on the grounds of reality and he bids farewell to the ideal bird. At this moment, Keats must also have been conscious that the very bird, which he had idealized and immortalized, existed in the real world, mortal and vulnerable to change and suffering like himself.

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UNIT – III SHORT STORIES

ULYSSES - Alfred Lord Tennyson

SUMMARY

Alfred Lord Tennyson is one of the well-loved Victorian poets. Much of his verses were based on classical mythological themes such as Ulysses. Ulysses is considered as one of Tennyson's finest works. In the first part of the poem Ulysses speaks to himself, lamenting his uselessness as a ruler. The second part of the poem differentiates Ulysses and his son Telemachus. The third part is addressed to his mariners. Their life is fulfilling only when they are adventuring on the sea.

Ulysses, the king of Ithaca, had returned to his kingdom after twenty years of the Trojan War. He has wandered different strange and unknown places and seen many countries, lands and woods. At last, he has returned to his house with full of experiences. Still speaking to himself, he proclaims that he 'cannot rest from travel' but feels compelled to live to the fullest and swallow every last drop of life. He has enjoyed all his experience as a sailor, who travels the seas and he considers himself a symbol for everyone who wanders and roams the earth. He declares that it is boring to stay in one place and that to remain stationary is to rust rather than to shine.

His son Telemachus is good enough for the task of governing the savage people of his land and making them civilized. He possesses patience and the will to civilize them. Ulysses is happy that his son would do his work blamelessly. He would follow his search for travel and knowledge.

Ulysses asks his companions to gather at the port, where the ship is ready to sail. His companions have faced both sunshine and thunder with a smile. They are united by their undying spirit of adventure. Though death would end everything, Ulysses urges his companions to join him and sail beyond sunset and seek a newer world, regardless of consequences. These brave hearts had once moved heaven and earth. They have now grown old and weak physically. But their spirit is young and energetic. So he insists us to seek adventure, true knowledge and strive to lead a meaningful lives.

MY LAST DUCHESS- Robert Browning

SUMMARY

Browning's My Last Duchess is an exemplary dramatic monologue for which Browning is best known. The drama that this poem represents is set in 'Ferrara', the capital of a province in Italy that was famous for its 'high' culture during the Renaissance. This setting also hints at the fact that the poem's story is historical: a real incident of this kind had happened.

A duke had murdered his seventeen-year-old wife after three years of marriage, and married another girl. The main character and speaker of the poem is Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara. The other person listening to him (his addressee) is the envoy (marriage agent) sent by the Count of another place called Tyrol.

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The duke is talking about the painting on the wall while preparing to go down to meet the Tyrol, the father of the proposed girl, and other people who have come to finalize the new marriage proposal. The poem looks like a piece of small-talk, but it is meant to reveal a story of oppression, jealousy, pride, corruption, murder and the greed for dowry. And the true story behind the episode of the duke's boasting, which the readers infer themselves is the theme of the poem. The theme of this poem is the wide gap between the so-called high culture and 'low' personal behavior in the upper and the ruling class of Renaissance Italy. The purpose of the poet is to expose the real character of the duke and satirize the culture that he represents, in general.

The duke is a shameless tyrant who cannot think of anything positive; most probably because he is evil minded himself. He says that "her looks went everywhere", that she would thank and appreciate anything or anyone, that she was too easily impressed, and that she used to smile at anyone who passed by her. We never find any hint that the duchess was morally guilty of the kinds of accusations he is making against her; if she was actually bad, this shameless man would have said it no unclear words. No one will be ever convinced that to smile, to thank, to be interested, to be shy, or to talk to people is such a crime, or immorality. No one will believe that a wife should look only at her husband, except in societies that believe that all women are naturally evil! In fact, in societies which do injustice to women, men are usually corrupted, evil and unjust. The duke is a symbol of tyranny and the demoniac male not only in Renaissance Italy, but in all societies of all times and place.

At the climax of the dramatic poem, the Duke reveals that he had killed his previous wife, the duchess painted on the wall. He says that he did not want to stoop (bend low) before her to say that she should not smile at other people, should not get impressed by ordinary people and things, should not blush, and should behave in the proper ways to 'demonstrate the great name of her husband! He adds that he didn't have the skill of speech and that she would not understand him; but even if he had it and she could understand him, he would not stop before just a wife to tell her what he didn't like. This also further reveals his true character. Then he says, even without caring what he is saying, that he "gave orders" to stop all her smiles together. That means he gave orders to kill her. The murder of his own wife and the way he carelessly takes, is shocking and disgusting. The duke is a perfect collection of all devilish qualities, the misuse of power and the extreme oppression and injustice.

There are also some dramatic actions in the poem, in the beginning, the duke tells the other man to sit down and look at the picture. Towards the end of the poem, he tells him to stand up: "Will it please you rise?" We also guess other things that the characters must be doing. As the duke is saying all the nasty things about his own wife, the other man seems to try to leave the place! But the duke tells him to wait: 'Nay, we'll go down together, sir". The next moment, we find that he is making the man wait just to give another piece of boasting! He points to a statue and tells his guest that it is his own statue in the form of god Neptune training the sea horse. This also symbolizes this demand for a wife like a 'trained' horse. The poem ends with the duke still talking about himself as a great man and a lover of art.

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UNIT – IV DRAMA

THE WINDHOVER - Gerard Manley Hopkins

SUMMARY

The Windhover by Gerard Manley Hopkins is a semi-romantic, religious poem dedicated to Christ. It is a usual Hopkinsian sonnet that begins with description of nature and ends in meditation about God and Christ and his beauty, greatness and grace. The poem also uses his usual “sprung rhythm”, Anglo-Saxon diction, alliteration, internal rhyming, new compound metaphors, elliptical grammar and complex threads of connotation.

Hopkins has mixed his romantic fascination with the nature with his religious favor of gratitude towards God for giving us a beautiful nature. The beauty of nature is here illustrated by a wonderful bird flying in the air. He describes a bird which he saw flying in the sky that morning. Like in a romantic poem, he remembers the experience to express his feelings. That morning, the speaker had been out at dawn. From the excited description in the poem, we can infer that the speaker was probably in the field. His attention was suddenly drawn by the scene of a bird flying in the sky.

The first stanza of the poem is a description of the different tricks of the bird’s flight. In the second the speaker remembers the beauty of Christ and says that he is a billion times loveliest. So, claiming that the nature’s beauty is no wonder, he concludes in the last stanza that everything he looks at reminds him the pain and suffering of Christ which has made human life so beautiful and given this opportunity to enjoy it. To this devotee of Christ, everything brings the image of Christ and his wounds and pain and sacrifice. This suggests that he always remembers and becomes thankful to Christ. As the subtitle suggests, the poem is a thanksgiving to Christ.

The Wind hover is a sonnet whose octave describes the flight of a kestrel hat he saw that morning. The sestet is divided in two parts: the first three lines are about the bird and the comparison of the bird with Christ who is ‘a billion times lovelier’, and the last three lines express his memories and appreciation of Christ. But the poem is rather difficult because the poet has used odd old English words, only implications, and Christian symbols to suggest the pain (gall), wound (gash), blood (vermillion), sacrifice, and so the greatness of Christ. The bottom-line of the difficult ideas in this poem is that ‘it is because of the sacrifice of Christ that we have such a life, and we can enjoy the majestic beauty of the nature: so we should thank him.

The speaker compares the bird with Christ, “my chevalier”, who is a billion times lovelier, more brute (wild) and dangerous (consuming) in his beauty. The fire or brilliance of Christ is dazzling this bird is no wonder. “No wonder”, says the poet about the bird because the real wonder of the world is another supreme gift of God, his son, the Christ. His steps on the soil make a

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semblance (shape) of a wound (gash) when the blood-red (vermillion) and golden light of the sun is cast on it. The flight of the bird reminds the speaker of his Christ's crucifixion; his blood falls on us for redemption: his suffering (gall) is also another thing to remember.

The last stanza associatively brings together unrelated words, each telling something about Christ and his suffering and sacrifice for human beings. The description of the first stanza and the comparison of the second stanza are all forgotten when the poet deeply meditates and exalts in the sacrifice and greatness of Christ in the last three-line stanza. The red ember-like the light of the morning sun on the horizon of the blue-bleak sky and he is lost in contemplation.

The poem is almost impossible to understand without good background knowledge about Hopkins's ideas and his odd words. There are many words of the Anglo-Saxon origin like *rung* (past tense of 'ring' meaning go round), *minion*, *dauphin*, *chevalier* (prince), etc. There are also unusual combinations like "dapple-dawn-drawn", which is an image of the bird. The last stanza is particularly complex because of the associatively linked words related to Christ and his sacrifice. Finally, the grammar is also odd; actually the poem does not follow any traditional grammar and structure. In short, the poem can be discussed as a sonnet because it has some of the features of the typical sonnet, but it must be called a modified sonnet adapted to a different kind of subject, word-game and music.

By implication, the poem is therefore a poem of thanksgiving to Christ. It is a hymn that is romantic in form but religious in theme. When the poet sees the beautiful bird, he is reminded of Christ and becomes thankful and appreciative of him. The poem's theme is therefore related to the poet's praise of Christ rather than being about the bird.

SUMMARY

A Prayer for My Daughter by William Butler Yeats opens with an image of the newborn child sleeping in a cradle. A storm is raging with great fury outside his residence. A great gloom is on Yeats' mind and is consumed with anxiety as to how to protect his child from the tide of hard times ahead. The poet keeps walking and praying for the young child and as he does so he is in a state of reverie. He feels a kind of gloom and worry about the future of his daughter.

He says "As I walk and pray for my younger daughter, I imagine in a state of excitement and reverie" that the future years (years of violence and bloodshed and frenzy) have already come and that they seem to come dancing to the accompaniment of a drum which is beating frantically. These future years are seen by Yeats' imagination as emerging out of the murderous (treacherous) innocence of the sea. In other words, the sea seems to be innocent but is capable of giving birth to those howling storms which are capable of leveling everything.

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Yeats wants his daughter to possess some qualities so that she can face the future years independently and with confidence. Yeats says: Let her be given beauty, but a more important thing is that her beauty should not be of a kind which may either make her proud of her beauty or distract a stranger's mind and eyes. Those whose beauty is capable of making them proud consider beauty an end in itself. The result is that pride leads to their losing natural kindness in some cases of that heart, revealing intimacy which helps them to make the right choice in life. Being able to make the right choices in life is a very important thing, but those who have excessive beauty are unable to do so and never find a good friend in the true sense of the world. The great thing about the poem is that it has a specific as well as general applicability. At the same time the poem makes an indirect reference to Maud Gonne also whom Yeats loved so much and yet could not win her hand.

The poet looks within himself and finds that there is hatred inside. He thinks that hatred kills innocence and wishes that his daughter should not harbor hatred. It was because of this unwholesome bent of the mind that Maud Gonne married a fool. The poet wished that her daughter should not cultivate a frantic intellect; he thinks that her daughter can remain innocent if she is free from hatred and intellectual fanaticism. The innocence is self-delighting, self-appeasing and self-affrighting. The poet's last wish is that his daughter should marry a person of aristocratic family who may take her to a home where tradition and ceremony fill the atmosphere.

In the end, the poem is a prayer for order and grace in a battered civilization. Behind the prayer, of course, are Yeats' bitter memories of Maud Gonne who had come to stand for the tragedy of how beauty and grace can be distorted by politics, intellectual hatred and arrogance.

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UNIT – V FICTION

STRANGE MEETING -Wilfred Owen SUMMARY

Strange Meeting is a poem themed on war where, although the end of the war had seemed no more in sight than the capabilities of flight, it is widely assumed by scholars that neither side had any enmity between them – at least on the level of the common soldier. Both British and German soldiers lived in terrible conditions, suffered from similar, if not exacting, diseases, and were, on occasion, treated at the same hospitals. At the start of the war, there was even a period of time when German soldiers and British soldiers laid down their arms and had a friendly football match.

Even the start of *Strange Meeting* the poem references war; for Owen, the natural habitat, the natural instincts, of a soldier is war. The start is relatively benign; there is nothing strange about escaping battle down a tunnel (in the First World War, there was a British plot to try and tunnel into German territory, hence the recurring imagery of holes and tunnels).

The dead, ever prevalent in Owen's work, crop up in the second stanza of *Strange Meeting*. The words 'encumbered sleepers' implies a relatively peaceful passing, however as soon as the soldier passes by them, he awakens one of the sleepers. The use of 'sleepers' is also heavily ironic on Owen's part, given that it is something peaceful, yet however, the peacefulness of the image implied by 'sleepers' is undercut in the third stanza.

It is worth noting that this is perhaps one of the most bloodless poems that Owen wrote. He eschews the in-depth look towards brutalities that most Owen poems usually claim – omitting the description of the injuries, instead, for what was lost. Although the first two lines lend an idea – though there is no gore, the person speaking is terrified – the presence of war is still felt. It is also worth noting that *Strange Meeting* is one of the most silent that Wilfred Owen wrote; his onomatopoeic style eschewed in lieu of speech, and nothing else. There is no humming guns, no whistling bombs; only the silence of the dead.

However, just because there is no evidence of blood and gore does not mean that this is not a war poem. The soldier's loss reverberates through the third stanza, and is felt far more acutely knowing the background behind his death: there is no glory in dying, only 'the pity of war', and pity is the emotion that is most acutely felt in this stanza.

In the last part, the speaker admits to the listener – we can assume that this is Owen himself – that he is 'the enemy you killed, my friend', and that he recognizes him. Despite the fact that they were on different sides, there is no animosity on the part of the man who died – it seems as though the war has spent all his anger and his violence, if there ever was some. *Strange Meeting*

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ends on a melancholy note, almost Keatsian, where the speaker invites the listener to sleep with him, and it is assumed that they both have died. If anything is at all obvious it's that war solves no problems. By the end of *Strange Meeting*, nothing has been resolved; war still carries on, and the men are still dead.

WORK AND PLAY -Ted Hughes SUMMARY

This poem is about a comparison between a swallow and human beings that are on a day trip. The swallow is at work in the poem and is feeling content. The humans, however, are supposed to be relaxing and having fun, but they feel miserable instead.

The poem talks about the tourists arriving and then leaving unhappily. The writer is also describing the swallow's day, what it does to entertain itself and returning to its home at night. And the poem is split into four, unequal stanzas. The first three stanzas, start off with a description of the swallow and then humans. The last stanza, however, starts off with a description of the humans and then the swallow. This makes us stop, think and more eager to finish the poem, as it's a change of pattern. The writer, perhaps wants to leave the reader with a positive and happy image rather than a negative and discomfoting image.

Here, in the first stanza, we can see an introduction to our first character - the swallow of summer. This swallow is used as a refrain almost at the beginning of every stanza. Every stanza is broken up into two parts - nature and man. These two parts differ drastically in diction, sentence structure as well as imagery.

In the first part of stanza one, we can see the speaker describe the swallow as this glorious and elegant creature who works all the time. We can also see the speaker talk about mankind going to the beach to be lazy. He uses the word "serpent" here which has evil connotations.

In the second stanza, we can again see the contrast between the swallow and man. The swallow is described to be this accurate and efficient through the use of a "barbed harpoon" (barbed harpoons are very efficient at doing their jobs). The swallow is described to be perfect.

Mankind, however, is again described to be lazy, frustrated and unhappy. This is done through the use of the word "disgorges" which has violent imagery attached to it as well as the use of tomatoes. The tomatoes here represent the sunburn and discomfort of the people. The word "cringe" also helps to describe this very unpleasant atmosphere.

The swallow, in stanza 3, is said to be the seamstress of summer. The use of alliteration in this line helps to mimic the gracefulness of the swallow's movement, which the speaker is trying to portray in this line. The swallow's wings as compared to scissors as she cuts the "blue".

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Once again, man is said to be people that are hurting, uncomfortable and frustrated through the use of the words "wounded" (in a simile), "roasting and basting" as well as the comparison of people to "transistors" (metaphor). The word "transistors" is particularly relevant as a transistor resists the natural flow of electricity and, in this process, lets off heat - this is very similar to the portrayal of the people in the poem.

In the last stanza, a change of structure is seen in the poem. The speaker starts off with the people this time and ends off with the swallow. This is because the speaker is using a question-and-reply format here. Stanza 3 finished off on a question of "What can they do?" The first part of stanza 4 is the reply and answer to this. The speaker tells the holidaymakers to go home and end their misery. The swallow is ending her day very pleasantly in a much more natural and relaxed scene.

This final stanza as well as the other stanzas, challenges the reader's perception as to what "work" and "play" are. Work here is depicted as being enjoyable by the use of a swallow whilst play is depicted as being unpleasant, with the use of man.