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**B.A.-1<sup>st</sup> SEM (ENGLISH MAJOR)**

**COURSE CODE – 24ENGM401DS01**

**BRITISH POETRY (CHAUCER TO DONNE)**

## **INDEX**

<b>UNIT 1</b>	<b>Types of Poetry &amp; Related Literary Terms</b>	<b>(3-17)</b>
<b>UNIT 2</b>	<b>Chaucer Introduction to Prologue</b>	<b>(18-20)</b>
<b>UNIT 3</b>	<b>Spenser</b>	
	<b>Shakespeare</b>	<b>(21-34)</b>
<b>UNIT 4</b>	<b>John Donne</b>	<b>(35-43)</b>

# UNIT 1

Types of poetry and related Literary Terms:

Lyric, Sonnet, Blank verse, Ballad, Epic, Ode, Dramatic, Monologue, Figure of speech, Tone, Sound, Language, Diction, Myth, Symbol, Imagery.

## Topic 1 Lyric

**Q.1 Write a short note on Lyric. OR Write definition of Lyric.**

Ans. Lyric is a literary device that refers to a type of poetry that expresses the writer's feelings, emotions, or personal thoughts.

The word lyric comes from the lyre, an ancient Greek Portable harp frequently used by performers. Lyrical poetry was originally meant to be set to music and poetry. Here are some key aspects of lyric as a literary device:

### CHARACTERISTICS:

1. Emotional Intensity : Lyrics Convey strong emotions, feelings or personal thoughts.
2. Subjectivity: Lyrics are written from the writer's perspective often using first person narration.
3. Musicality: Lyrics often employ rhythm, meter, rhyme and other sound devices to create a musical quality.
4. Imagery: Vivid and evocative language helps to convey emotions and ideas.
5. Conciseness: Lyrics are typically brief and to the point.

### Types of Lyric Devices

- i) Lyric poem- A short poem expressing personal emotions or thoughts.
- ii) Lyric prose- Prose passages that employ lyrical language & techniques.
- iii) Streams-of-Consciousness- A narrative technique mimicking the natural flow of thoughts and feeling.

Examples: Poetry – Emily Dickinson's poem, Walt Whitman's "Song of myself".

Prose: James Joyce's "Ulysses", Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway"

## Importance of Lyric in Literature

- **Emotional Depth:** Lyric poetry gives voice to the **inner life of humans**, allowing poets and readers to connect deeply with universal feelings.
- **Cultural Insight:** It reflects the **social and cultural emotions** of the time in which it is written.
- **Artistic Expression:** The form showcases the **aesthetic beauty of language**, rhythm, and metaphor.

## Conclusion

The lyric is one of the most enduring and essential forms of poetry in literature. Its power lies in its **emotional immediacy**, **musicality**, and ability to **capture fleeting human experiences** in a few poignant lines. Whether in classical sonnets or modern free verse, lyric poetry continues to resonate with readers through its deep emotional connection and expressive beauty.

## TOPIC: 2 SONNET

**Ques. Write the characteristics of Sonnet.**

Ans. A Sonnet is a 14- line poem with a specific rhyme scheme and structure traditionally dealing with themes of love, beauty and mortality.

Types of Sonnet .

1. English Sonnet or Shakespearean Sonnet: It's divided into three quatrain followed by one couplet. The rhyming scheme of this sonnet is AB AB, CD CD, EF EF, GG
2. Italian Sonnet : It is divided into two parts octave and sestet. Octave has eight lines and sestet has six lines rhyming scheme of this sonnet is ABBA, ABBA, CDE CDE

FAMOUS SONNETS:

“Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day”.  
( William Shakespeare ), “On his Blindness” ( John Milton ) “Death Be Not Proud”( John Donne )

### Importance in Literature

- **Artistic Discipline:** The strict form challenges poets to express deep ideas within a limited space.
- **Cultural Influence:** The sonnet became a central form in European and English poetry, especially during the Renaissance.
- **Timeless Themes:** It captures universal human experiences like love, death, and the passage of time in a compact and elegant form.

### Conclusion

The **sonnet** is a powerful and enduring literary form that blends **formality with emotion, structure with creativity**. Whether Italian or English, it continues to inspire poets across centuries with its concise elegance and deep expressive potential.

### TOPIC 3 Blank Verse

Ques. Define Blank Verse. Write the characteristics of blank verse.

Ans. Poetry or prose that does not rhyme but has a consistent meter usually iambic pentameter. Blank verse is the name given to poetry that lacks rhyme but follows a specific meter. It was particularly popular in English poetry written between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the play of Shakespeare.

Characteristics :

Unrhymed- No end rhyme or internal rhymes

Iambic Pentameter- Five feet ( Syllables) per line, with an unstressed, stressed pattern..

Natural Speech Rhythm- Mimics natural speech patterns.

Flexible syntax- Allows for varied sentence structure.

Examples:

John Milton's "Paradise Lost" Christopher Marlow's play "Dr Faustus" William Shakespeare's play "Hamlet", "Macbeth" etc.

## Functions and Importance

- **Dramatic Power:**  
Blank verse adds gravity and formality to dialogue, making it ideal for tragedy and epic.
- **Expressive Range:**  
Allows poets and playwrights to move between casual and lofty tones, adapting the rhythm to the emotion.
- **Natural Flow:**  
Because it mimics spoken English, it feels organic while still poetic.

## Conclusion

**Blank verse** is a foundational poetic form in English literature. Its **lack of rhyme**, combined with **regular metrical rhythm**, gives it both **freedom and structure**. It has been the **preferred verse form for serious poetry and drama**, especially during the Renaissance and the Neoclassical period. Through the works of writers like Shakespeare and Milton, blank verse has achieved lasting importance and continues to influence poetic and dramatic writing today.

### TOPIC 4 Ballad

Ques. Write the definition and characteristics of Ballad.

Ans. A short definition of the popular ballad is that it is a song, transmitted orally, which tells a story. Ballads are thus the narrative species of folk songs, which originate, and are communicated orally, among illiterate or only partly literate people. So it is a narrative poem or song that tells a story, often with folkloric or legendary themes.

Characteristics:

1. Narrative Structure - It tells a story, usually with a beginning, middle and end.
  2. Quatrains- (4- line stanzas): Typically with an ABCB Or ABAB rhyme scheme.
  3. Simple language - It is Accessible, concise and direct.
  4. Folkloric Themes- It often features supernatural.
- In England, some of the best literary ballads were composed in the Romantic Period :  
Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" & Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Mercy".

### TOPIC 5 EPIC

The term epic or heroic poem is applied to a work that meets at least the following criteria: it is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style. It is centered on a heroic or quasi – divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race.

**Characteristics :**

1. Heroic Protagonist : The central character embodies noble qualities.
2. Elevated language : The language is formal, ornate and expressive.
3. Supernatural elements : Gods and Goddesses, or magical beings.
4. Lengthy: It has often book – length or longer.
5. Quest or Journey : In epic the Hero faces challenges and obstacles.

**Types of Epics :**

1. Ancient Epics : Homer’s “ Iliad and Odyssey”

2. Classical Epics : Virgil's: "Aeneid"

3. Romantic Epics : Milton's "Paradise Lost"

4. Modern Epics : "Joyce's Ulysses"

## TOPIC 6 Allegory

**Ques. Write the characteristics of allegory.**

Ans. As a literary device or artistic form an allegory is a narrative or visual representation in which a character place or event can be interpreted to represent a meaning with moral or political significance . Authors have used allegory throughout history in all forms of art to illustrate or convey complex ideas and concept in ways. That are comprehensible or striking to its viewer, readers or listeners.

Writer & speakers typically use allegories to convey hidden or complex meaning through symbolic figures, actions, imagery, or events which together create the moral, spiritual or political meaning the author wishes to convey. Many allegories use personification of abstract concepts .

The word "allegory" comes from the Latin "allegoria" meaning speaking to imply something else. There are several different type of allegory, each serving a different purpose. They are:

1. Biblical allegory
2. Classical allegory
3. Modern allegory

George Orwell's "Animal Farm" is a great example of allegory.

## TOPIC 7 Elegy

**Ques. Define Elegy and write its characteristics.**

Ans. In Greek and Roman times “elegy” denoted any poem written in elegiac meter. It is a literary term that refers to a poem or literary work that mourns the loss of someone or something, typically with a reflective and melancholic tone.

**Characteristics:**

- 1 Mourning or lamentation
- 2 Reflecting and melancholic tone.
- 3 Formal expressive language
- 4 Often addresses the deceased or lost entity.
- 5 Explores themes of mortality, grief and memory.

**Types of Elegies:**

1. Classical Elegy: Ancient Greek and Roman poetry ( e.g. Ovid’s “Elegie”
2. Pastoral Elegy: Laments the loss of a rural or idyllic life.
3. Funeral Elegy: Mourns the death of a specific person.
4. Meditative Elegy: Reflects on mortality and the human condition.

**Examples :** Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”

Walt Whitman’s “ When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d

Emily Dickinson’s “ Because I could Not Stop for Death”

Sylvia Plath’s “ Ariel” ( elegy to her father)

Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “In Memoriam” elegy on the death of his friend Mr. Arthur Henry Hallam.

Mathew Arnold’s “ Scholar Gypsy,” “Thyrsis” & “ Dover Beach”

## Topic 8 HYMN

**Ques. Define Hymn as a literary term.**

Ans. A “Hymn” is a literary term that refers to a song or poem that expresses praise worship or adoration typically addressed to a deity or higher power. This term derives from the Greek “hymnos”, which originally signified songs of praise that were for the most part addressed to the gods, but in some instances to human heroes or to abstract concepts.

Hymns are usually sung by groups of singers, such as members of a congregation or a choir. Hymns are traced to many ancient cultures. One of the oldest hymns is “the Aton” Hymn found in the tomb of the Pharaoh.

Edmund Spenser’s “Fowre Hymns”(1596) are distinguished examples of such literary hymns. Other examples are : John Keats, “Hymn to Apollo” & Shelley’s “Hymn of Apollo & Hymn of Pan”

## TOPIC 9 Parody

Q.1 What is Parody? Write the types of Parody?

Ans. A Parody imitates the serious manner and characteristics feature of a particular literary work. It is a literary device that involves imitating another work of art, writing style, or real life person for comic effect or ridicule. It can be found in many forms of art and culture, including literature, music, theatre, television, film, animation and gaming.

### **Its characteristics:**

- 1.Imitation : A parody imitates the style of another work, often in a humourous way.
- 2 .Criticism : A parody can serve as a criticism or commentary on the original work or something connected to it.
- 3.Mimicry : A good parody mimics the language, style and tone of the subject.

### **Types of Parody**

- 1.Literary parody : It imitates novels, poetry or plays.
- 2.Musical parody : It imitates songs, genres or artists.
- 3.Film parody : It imitates movies, genres or directors.

### **Purpose of Parody**

\*It criticizes or comments on original work or its context.

\*It makes societal norms, values or institutions.

\*It amuses audience with clever imitation.

### **Examples of Parody**

“ Don Quixote” by Cervantes” Pride & prejudice” by Jane Austen.

## **TOPIC 10 Satire**

Q.1 What is satire? Write the definition of satire?

ANS. Satire is the use of humour, irony, sarcasm or ridicule to criticise something or someone. Public figure such as politicians are often the subject of satire, but satirists can take aim at other targets as well from societal conventions to government policies . Satire is an entertaining form of social commentary, and it occurs in many forms: there are satirical novels, poems and essays as well as satirical films, shows and cartoons.

Satire is a bit unusual as a literary term because it can be used to describe both a literary device and the specific genre of literature that makes use of the device.

Though most satires seek to draw laughter there are many. Unfunny or even dark examples of satire such as George Orwell’s Animal Farm”

There are many novels, plays and other works of literature that fall into the genre of satire .These works are all characterized by their consistent and sustained satirical attacks on their various targets. For instance. Mark Twain’s Adventure of Huckleberry Finn satirizes the hypocrisy of Pre- Civil War Society in the American south, especially its tradition of racism and slavery. George Orwell’s “Animal farm” is one of the more famous satires ever written.

### **Types of Satire :**

1.Horation satire

2.Juvenalian satire

3.Menippean satire

## Topic 11 Ode

Q.1 What is Ode? Write the definition of Ode. **OR**

What are the different types of ode and what is the structure of an ode ?

ANS. An ode is a type of poem generally written to address and praise a subject. It utilizes rhyme and a complex or irregular metrical form. The word ode first appeared in English in the 1580s . It comes from the middle French “ode” means lyric song which was derived from the ancient Greek “aeidein” which means to sing or chant.

### **HISTORY OF ODE :**

Ode originated as Greek choral songs performed at religious festivals. They recounted stories concerning heroes, gods and victories in battle. The original odes were set to music and followed a specific, complex three – part structure utilizing a strophe (the first section), and an epode (the final section).

### **Types of Ode :**

There are three types of Ode :

- 1.Pindaric ode
- 2.Horation ode
- 3.Irregular ode

1. The Pindaric Ode : This style was named after ancient Greek poet Pindar, who is often credited as the creator of Ode. Pindaric ode follow a three- part structure that consists of a strophe, an antistrophe and a concluding epode.

2. The Horation Ode : This type of ode was named after Latin poet Horace. This type of ode is more intimate, contemplative and informal in tone and subject matter.

3. The Irregular Ode : As the term indicates these are odes that do not follow the conventions of the Pindaric or Horation forms.

**Structure Of Ode :** The ode form often contains the three elements; the strophe, the antistrophe and the epode.

**Famous Odes :** John Keats “Ode to a Nightingale”, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind”

## TOPIC 12 Dramatic Monologue

Q.1 Write the definition of Dramatic Monologue.

ANS. A monologue is a lengthy speech by a single person. In a play, when a character utters a monologue that expresses his or her private thoughts, it is called soliloquy. Dramatic Monologue, however, does not designate a component in a play, but type of lyric poem that was perfected by Robert Browning. In its fullest form, as represented in Browning's "My Last Duchess", "The Bishop Orders His Tomb" and many other poems. The dramatic monologue has the following features:

1. A single person, who is patently not the poet, utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem, in a specific situation at a critical moment.
2. This person addresses and interacts with one or more other people but we know of the auditor's presence and what they say and do, only from clues in the discourse of the single speaker.

The main principle controlling the poet's choice and formulation of what the lyric speaker says that is to reveal to the reader, in a way that enhances its interest, the speaker's temperament and character.

EXAMPLE : Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" T.S .Eliot's. "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock", Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Ulysses".

## TOPIC 13 Figure of speech

Q.1 Define figure of speech as a literary term.

**Ans.** A figure of speech, according to the oxford learner's Dictionary is defined as a "word or phrase used in a different way from its usual meaning in order to create a particular mental picture or effect". The Cambridge Dictionary defines a figure of speeches "an expression that uses words to mean something different from their ordinary meaning." Figure of speech makes our language look and sound a lot more poetical, interesting and flamboyant. However the challenges is not about learning the different figures of speech but knowing when, where and how to use them. We can not

use it anywhere we like. Only if it is used right and where they are appropriate and necessary, will it make our language better.

### **Example of figure of speech**

Simile

Metaphor

Personification

Apostrophe

Alliteration

Assonance

Hyperbole

Oxymoron

Epigram

Irony

Pun

Metonymy

Synecdoche

Transferred Epithet

## **TOPIC 14 TONE**

Q.1 What is tone? Define it as a literary term.

ANS. Tone is a literary device that conveys the author's attitude towards the subject, speaker or audience and a piece of writing. It can be established through the author's word choice, sentence structure and the details they include or omit.

Tone can be formal or informal, aggressive or defensive sentimental or critical. It can help readers to understand and relate to the speaker's attitude. It is important for understanding a story's central theme or message.

An author can change the tone throughout a narrative to add interest and context. For Example a story might start and end with a happy tone but the author can use suspense in the middle to build tension.

### **TYPES OF TONE :**

1. Formal : It is objective, professional and polished.
2. Informal : It is casual, conversational and relaxed.
3. Serious : It is somber, solemn and earnest.
4. Humorous : It is playful, witty & ironic.
5. Sarcastic : It is mocking, ironic and critical.
6. Nostalgic : This type of tone is analytical, evaluative and judgemental.

Example :

1. Edgar Allan Poe's " The Raven (somber , mysterious tone).
2. Mark Twain's " The Adventure of Tom sawyer" (humorous, playful tone).
3. John Austen's "Pride & Prejudice" (witty & satirical tone).
4. Jonathan Swift's "A Modest proposal" (Sarcastic, ironic tone).

## **TOPIC 15TH SOUND**

**Ques. Define Sound as a literary term.**

Ans. Sound is a literary device that writers use to create a melodic rhythm and sound effects to enhance the reader's experience. Sound devices are techniques which is used by the writer to make a prominent piece of writing. It creates difference between prose and poetry. Through examples of anaphora, alliteration, assonance, consonance and onomatopoeia, the writers use the sound as an important piece of writing.

Rhyme is one of the most important ways that writers emphasize sound in poetry. Sound devices are sometimes referred to as musical devices and are concerned with examples of euphony, cacophony, dissonance and assonance. When a writer wants to create sound in a piece of writing, they use a wide variety of techniques. Repetition is one of the most important. They can repeat syllables, words, individual letter sounds and more. Sound is one of the reader's sense of hearing and should help the piece of writing feel more real and more interesting.

It is employed in verse plays, poetry and prose to emphasize various sounds. Sound devices allow writers to amplify cert

## TOPIC 16 LANGUAGE

**Ques. Write the definition of language as a mode of expression.**

Ans. Language is a literary term. It is considered a fundamental unit of literature. It can convey meaning beyond its literal definition, such as through symbolism and metaphors for example Shakespeare's metaphor "All the world is a stage". It is a literary device that conveys meaning beyond its literal definition.

### **Language as a Mode of Expression :**

Language is a way to express thoughts through sounds and words. Literature is a collection of thoughts expressed in a particular language. Language is a crucial part of literature. It helps readers understand and interpret a work.

### **Literary Language :**

Literary language is the style of language used in literary writing. It can also be known as formal language. It is used when writing or speaking in a formal academic or polite tone.

### **Types of Language :**

1. Literal: It is direct & straightforward
2. Figurative: Language that uses metaphors, similes etc.
3. Poetic: Language that emphasizes aesthetic qualities.
4. Prose : Ordinary language that is used in novels & essays etc.
5. Dialogue : Spoken language between characters

### **Language Techniques :**

1. Syntax : (Sentence Structure)
2. Diction : (Word choice)
3. Tone : (Author's Attitude)
4. Point of View: (Narrative Perspective)
5. Idiom : (Regional Expressions)

## TOPIC 17 DICTION

**Ques.** What is diction? Write the characteristics of diction.

**Ans.** Diction is defined as the style of either spoken or written word as determined by word choice in literature. Diction affects by the tone of the writing and the audience's perception of the work. It refers to the quality of a group of words to express ideas, words that are formatted appropriately for the context in which they are used.

Proper diction helps author to get their ideas across to their audience. Poor word choices can distract readers or alienate readers which can result in a misinterpretation of the messages or even a total rejection of the message.

**The Purpose of Diction :** Diction helps to convey the author's attitude towards their writing by establishing tone. This helps readers to pick up on mood and atmosphere so that the reading can impact them in the way the writer meant to accomplish.

Diction is used to help establish genres as well. For example in poetry diction will often be drastically different from prose diction.

In fact, it is not words being organized into stanzas that necessarily makes a poem. It is the skillful use of diction to manipulate words and phrase to have poetic qualities.

In prose diction helps to reveal the unique personalities of a story's characters. For example, an uneducated character would not speak like the author probably speaks. The author will have to study speech and communication patterns of uneducated people who are similar to his/her character.

## TOPIC 18 MYTH

**Ques.** What is myth ? Write the characteristics of myth.

**Ans.. Definition :** In classical Greek 'mythos' signified any story or plot, whether true or invented. Myth is one story in mythology a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true. In literature, the word myth is used to describe a traditional story that typically aims to explain a natural or social phenomenon. In literary myths, the use of supernatural beings is common.

### **Importance of Myth :**

The importance of myth is immeasurable – in literature, philosophy, history and many other parts of human life. They have been a huge part of oral, written and visual story

telling for literally thousands of years. In fact they have been a part of mankind's entire history.

Every culture in the world has mythology because people have been telling each other stories for as long as there has been human connection. You can actually tell quite a lot about a culture from the values presented in its myths.

## TOPIC 19 SYMBOLS

**Ques. What is Symbol? Define it.**

**Ans. Definition :** Symbol is a literary device in which a writer uses one thing – usually physical object or phenomenon – to represent something more abstract. A strong symbol usually shares a set of key characteristics with whatever it is meant to symbolize or is related to it in some other way. Characters and events can also be symbolic.

- Symbolism can be very subtle, so it is not always easy to identify or understand .
- It can sometimes be difficult to say whether an author intended for something to be symbolic or not.
- Symbolism allows writers to convey things to their readers poetically or indirectly rather than having to say them outright which can make texts seem more nuanced and complex.

## TOPIC 20 IMAGERY

**Ques. Write the definition and characteristics of Imagery.**

**Ans. Definition of Imagery :** “Imagery” is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature. Descriptive or figurative language that attempts to evoke mental images by appealing to the reader's sense of sight, sound, smell, texture or taste. Imagery is a literary device that allows writers to paint pictures in reader's minds so they can more easily imagine a story's situation, characters, emotions and settings.

The word imagery originates from the old French imagery, meaning “figure”. Imagery first appeared in English in the middle of the 14th century.

**Types of Imagery :**

1. Visual Imagery (sense of sight )
2. Auditory Imagery (sense of sound)
3. Gustatory Imagery (sense of taste)
4. Tactile Imagery (sense of touch)
5. Olfactory Imagery (sense of smell)

## UNIT 2 Chaucer Introduction to Prologue

### Q.1 Write character sketch of knight.

ANS. The Knight rides at the front of the procession described in the general prologue and his story is the first in the sequence. The host clearly admires the knight as does the narrator. The narrator, seems to remember four main qualities of the knight. The first is the knight's love of ideals – 'Chivalrie' "trouthe", "honour," "freedom" and curteisie.

The Knight is an ethical character, representing the virtues of chivalry and valour. He is polite, courteous and brave. He was a great warrior who had participated in many military campaigns and had travelled far and wide in order to fight. Many times he had sat at the head of the table as the most distinguished person among those of various nations. He had participated in a number of battles. Several times he had fought in single combat, and had killed his adversary every time.

Besides chivalry he loved generosity and modesty. He had never uttered any foul word in all his life. He was truly a perfect knight. As for as his equipment is concerned, he had fine horses. He wore a doublet of coarse cloth which at that time was all soiled.

Chaucer presents the knight as a real representative were required to be wise, provident, just and pure. They were expected to serve Christianity against the infidels and the barbarians. They were not only to be the champions of the church, but also protectors of the weak and examples of moral virtue. There is no doubt that Chaucer's knight fulfills all these condition. We may also say that Chaucer gives us an idealized portrait in the case of the knight. He presents this character without humour, without irony or satire.

### A Contrast to Other Pilgrims

While some of Chaucer's characters are **satirical and ironic**, the Knight stands apart as a **sincere and honorable figure**. In contrast to corrupt clergy like the **Friar** or the **Pardoner**, the Knight's portrayal is **positive and straightforward**.

- He is a **true knight** in both action and spirit, not just by title.
- His character serves as a **moral counterbalance** to the more flawed or humorous figures in the group.

### Conclusion

The **Knight** in Chaucer's *General Prologue* is a **model of medieval chivalry, honour, and humility**. Through him, Chaucer presents a **respectful tribute** to the ideals of knighthood and

religious devotion. He is brave yet modest, powerful yet polite, and entirely sincere in his conduct. Among the varied and colourful group of pilgrims, the Knight shines as a beacon of **nobility and virtue**, embodying the highest moral and social values of his time.

**According to Manly:** “Of all the studies, tending to show that in painting the portrait of the Canterbury pilgrims Chaucer worked from living models, the earliest was perhaps the study of knight.....”

**Q.2 Write the character sketch of The Squire.**

ANS. Squire was a young man who was a knight's son and attendant until he himself became a knight. Generally a knight's son served as a page in an aristocratic family. After he had served as a page in a noble family from his seventh to fourteenth year, he received his sword and girdle from the priest's hand at the altar. Various duties were then assigned to him in the household. A squire to a knight had several duties to perform. He had, for instance, to hold the knight's stirrup when he mounted, to carry his helmet for him and to lead his war horse when he rode on a palfrey. He had also to arm the knight for battle, and to attend him in the fight. In his lord's house a squire had to help entertain the guests, to attend on these of high rank and to carve meat.

The squire attending on the knight was knight's own son. He was a young man of about twenty, with curly hair and an average height. He was a young man of great ability and great strength. He had given a good account of himself in battle and this he did to win his lady's favour as if he loved that lady. He was indeed, a great lover. He loved so hotly that he could hardly sleep at night. His garments were embroidered like a meadow, full of fresh flowers, white and red. In his leisure time he would sing or play on a flute. He was a highly accomplished and lovable young man. He could not only sing songs but compose them also. He could dance, draw & write well. He was courteous, modest and useful. He served his father at the time of meals. He cut meat to serve for his father.

**Q.3 Describe Chaucer as a pilgrim.**

OR

Write character sketch of the Narrator who is the poet himself.

ANS. Chaucer, in talking about himself in the role of a pilgrim assumes the pose of a simple man. He was devoid of literary pretensions, who will simply entertain his reader. Chaucer is both a pilgrim and the man who is to record the events, including the tales told by the various members of the group, that occur in the course of the journey. Explaining his method of narration, Chaucer hopes for "courtesy" from his readers. He hopes that the readers will not disapprove too much of his candour and his fidelity in reproducing the tales as he heard them. No matter how crude the language might be. Not only the language but situations in some of the tales might be crude. Chaucer gives us a graceful warning to that effect.

Chaucer is able to cite both Christ and Plato in support of his method, thus subtly suggesting that he does, after all, know what he is doing. Christ spoke broadly enough in the holy writing & Christ was not immoral.

**Plato said that " words should be cousin to the deed."**

**Q.4 Write theme of "Introduction to prologue. OR**

What are the features of Prologue? **OR**

Write the characteristics of Prologue. **OR**

Write critical appreciation of Prologue.

**ANS. “Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote**

**The droghte of March hath perced to the roote”**

The General Prologue is the first part of The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. It introduces the frame story, in which a group of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas Beckett in Canterbury agree to take part in a story telling competition, and describes the pilgrims themselves. The prologue is arguable the most familiar section of The Canterbury Tales, depicting traffic between places, language and cultures, as well as introducing and describing the pilgrims who will narrate the tales.

The narrator opens the general prologue with a description of the return of spring. He describes the April rains, the burgeoning flowers & leaves, and the chirping birds. Around this time of year, the narrator says, people begin to feel the desire to go on a pilgrims. Many devout English pilgrims set off to visit shrines in distant holy lands, but even more choose to travel to Canterbury to visit the relics of Saint Thomas Beckett in Canterbury Cathedral, where they thank the martyr for having helped them when they were in need.

The narrator tells us that as he prepared to go on such a pilgrimage, staying at a Tavern in Southwark called the Tabard Inn, a great company of twenty nine travelers entered. The travelers were a diverse group who, like the narrator, were on their way to Canterbury. They happily agreed to let him join them. That night the group slept at the Tabard. They woke up early the next morning to set off on their journey. Before continuing the tale, the narrator declares his intent to list and describe each of the members of the group.

The narrator ends the introductory portion of his prologue by noting that he has “tyme & space” to tell his narrative. His comments underscore the fact that he is writing some time after the events of his story. His intention to describe each pilgrim as he or she seemed to him is also important. It emphasizes that descriptions are not only subject to his memory but are also shaped by his individual perceptions and opinions regarding each of his characters. He positions himself as a mediator between two groups: the group of pilgrims, of which he was a member. Other is the audience whom the narrator explicitly addresses as “you” in lines 34 and 38.

## **Satire and Irony in Prologue**

The tone of the Prologue is often **satirical**, using **irony and humor** to expose the flaws of individuals and institutions. Chaucer presents many of the pilgrims with **ironic praise**, letting the reader see the gap between what is said and what is meant.

- For instance, the **Wife of Bath** is introduced as an expert on love and marriage—but her experience (five husbands) is both comic and telling.
- The **Friar** is described as the best beggar in town, but the compliment hides a sharp critique of his dishonesty.

This use of **satire** allows Chaucer to **criticize societal flaws while entertaining readers**.

## 6. The Journey as a Symbol

The pilgrimage to Canterbury is more than just a religious journey—it becomes a **symbol of life’s journey** and the **variety of human experiences**. Each pilgrim brings a unique story, reflecting their personality, values, and worldview.

- The journey creates a **shared space** where different voices, classes, and perspectives come together.
- It serves as a **literary device** for exploring not just tales, but the very **idea of storytelling and human experience**.

## Conclusion

The *General Prologue* of *The Canterbury Tales* presents a **rich thematic tapestry** that explores **social satire, human nature, religious hypocrisy, and the complexity of medieval life**. Chaucer blends humor, irony, and realism to craft a vivid picture of his society, using each pilgrim as a symbol of broader truths. The *Prologue* is not just an introduction—it is a **thematic foundation** that shapes the entire work, reflecting Chaucer’s deep understanding of the world around him.

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## Unit III

### SPENSER: AMORETTI

#### Poem 1 “New Yeare Forth Looking Out of Janus Gate” (IV)

**Ques.** Write critical appreciation of the poem “New Yeare Forth Looking Out of Janus Gate”.

**Ans.** *Amoretti* is a sonnet cycle written by Edmund Spenser in the 16th century. The cycle describes his courtship and eventual marriage to Elizabeth Boyle.

*Amoretti* was first published in 1595 in London by William Ponsonby. It was printed as part of a volume entitled *Amoretti and Epithalamion*.

Spenser ends all his sonnets with a tight couplet. These are always memorable, sometimes quotable, and the perfect way to conclude a complicated set of rhymes. That final couplet is especially necessary in Spenser’s sonnets, because the preceding 12 lines are a bit tangled. A lot of the most famous sonnet writers use an ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme, kind of like three separate 4-line poems followed by a couplet. But Spenser made things more complicated: ABAB is a good start, but then he picks up the B again and does BCBC, followed by more C in CDCD and then the couplet standing alone. Technically you get two little couplets in the intersections (the BB and CC lines), but they’re strung between the quatrains and their energy is dispersed away from each other. The result is a complex interweaving of rhymes, as one quatrain hands off its final rhyme to the next in a big hurry, not always giving the reader time to finish a thought. People at the time thought of it as very Italian, and people of all times think of it as very cool.

The final couplet is especially important in *Amoretti* 4 because the rest of the poem is somewhat scattered. The basic idea is simple, even a cliché by Spenser’s time: Spring is like love in bloom. But the way Spenser develops it is oblique: The new year looks out from sad old winter and wakes up Cupid, who starts shooting arrows everywhere. That lets Earth know she better put her pretty green flowery dress on. It’s a little more complicated than that, Cupid is never named, and I’m not sure I got all the personified characters right.

But after wandering around for 12 lines enjoying the standard stuff of love poems, Spenser concludes with a bang, switching suddenly to second person direct address and a strong couplet:

**Then you faire flowre, in whom fresh youth doth raine,  
prepare your selfe new loue to entertaine.”**

The moral of the story: You're the earth and I'm Springtime, baby, get ready for love. If the lady was halfway clever enough to keep up with Edmund Spenser, she probably saw that conclusion coming way back when "fresh love" got out of his "cheerlesse bower," but there's nothing like a clear statement to make sure woo-er and woo-ee are reading off the same script.

Biographically speaking, Spenser was quite a bit older than the Elizabeth who he was (successfully!) pitching woo at, so he's playing with some "January-May" romance imagery, and those images take some time to deploy. Poetically speaking, he hasn't been just dilly-dallying, but setting before his one reader ("seek her to please alone ... I care for other none," as he said in [Amoretti 1](#)) a carefully chosen set of images which will make his argument for him, indirectly.

Ilona Bell, in her book [Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship](#), examines this sonnet's final lines and unpacks the meaning of the word "Entertain" thus: "to receive as a guest; to keep in mind with favor, to keep oneself in the frame of mind for; the primary meaning is to hold mutually, to hold intertwined." Spenser is always alive to multiple meanings in his words.

In Amoretti 4, Spenser invites Elizabeth to prepare herself for his offer of love, but his poem has already been preparing her for three quatrains before the couplet.

## SPENSER

### Poem 2 “Fayre Eyes, The Myrroure of My Mazed Hart”

**Ques.** Write the theme of “Fayre Eyes, The Myrroure of My Mazed Hart”.

**Ans.** The sonnets of *Amoretti* draw heavily on authors of the Petrarchan tradition, most obviously Torquato Tasso and Petrarch himself. "In *Amoretti*, Spenser often uses the established topoi, for his sequence imitates in its own way the traditions of Petrarchan courtship and its associated Neoplatonic conceits". Apart from the general Neoplatonic conceit of spiritual love in opposition to physical love, he borrows specific images and metaphors, including those that portray the beloved or love itself as cruel tormenter. Many critics, in light of what they see as his overworking of old themes, view Spenser as being a less original and important sonneteer than contemporaries such as Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney.

The sonnet explores the power of a woman's gaze, juxtaposing its life-giving and death-dealing aspects. The eyes are a "myrroure," reflecting the poet's own feelings and desires. When they are bright and cheerful, they inspire life and love in him; when they are dark or averted, he feels he is dying.

The poem's structure reinforces this idea of the eyes' dual nature. The first eight lines describe the eyes' life-giving power, while the last six describe their death-dealing power. The turn comes in the ninth line, where the poet realizes that life is preferable to death. He then implores the woman to always look lovingly at him, so that her eyes' brightness can kindle a living fire within his breast.

This sonnet is similar to other sonnets by Edmund Spenser in its exploration of love and beauty. However, it is unique in its focus on the power of the woman's gaze. The poem also reflects the conventions of the Elizabethan sonnet, with its iambic pentameter and ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme.

## **SPENSER**

### **Poem 3 “The Merry Cuckow, Messenger of Spring”**

**Ques.** Write critical estimate of the poem “The Merry Cuckwo, Messenger Of Spring”.

#### **Ans. Introduction**

Sonnet XIX, written by the English poet Edmund Spenser, is one of the most celebrated and widely-anthologized sonnets in English literature. The poem, which is part of Spenser’s much larger sequence of sonnets known as Amoretti, explores the theme of time and its effects on human life and beauty. It is a powerful meditation on the fleeting nature of youth and the inevitability of aging and death.

In this literary criticism and interpretation, I will examine Spenser’s Sonnet XIX in detail, exploring its language, imagery, structure, and themes. I will argue that Sonnet XIX is a beautifully-crafted poem that explores the human condition in a way that is both timeless and universal.

#### **Form and Structure**

Sonnet XIX follows the traditional form of the English sonnet, which consists of fourteen lines divided into three quatrains and a final couplet. The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABAB BCBC CDCD EE, and each line is written in iambic pentameter, with five metrical feet of unstressed and stressed syllables.

The sonnet is structured around a central metaphor of time as a destructive force that erodes beauty and youth. In each of the three quatrains, Spenser uses a different image to convey the idea of time’s destructive power. In the first quatrain, he compares time to a “giant” that destroys everything in its path. In the second quatrain, he portrays time as a “thief” that steals youth and beauty. In the third quatrain, he describes time as a “razor” that cuts away at life and vitality. The couplet at the end of the poem offers a solution to the problem of time, suggesting that the love between the speaker and his beloved can transcend the ravages of time and death.

#### **Language and Imagery**

Spenser’s language in Sonnet XIX is richly evocative and full of vivid imagery. He uses metaphors, similes, and personification to create a series of powerful images that convey his ideas about time and its effects on human life.

In the first quatrain, Spenser compares time to a “giant” that “throwes downe / All things vnder his mighty conquering arme.” This image of a powerful, destructive force is reinforced by the use of words like “throwes” and “mighty conquering arme.”

In the second quatrain, Spenser portrays time as a “thief” that steals youth and beauty. He describes how time “treads on the meate it feedes on,” suggesting that time devours everything in its path. The image of a thief is particularly effective, as it conveys a sense of stealth and treachery.

In the third quatrain, Spenser uses the metaphor of a “razor” to describe time’s destructive power. He writes that time “cuts fayre beauty off from liuing cheare,” creating a powerful image of something sharp and deadly that slices away at life and vitality.

Throughout the sonnet, Spenser uses language that is both beautiful and precise, creating a vivid and compelling portrait of the destructive power of time.

### **Themes**

The central theme of Sonnet XIX is the passage of time and its effects on human life and beauty. Spenser explores this theme through a series of powerful images that convey the idea of time as a destructive force that erodes everything in its path. The poem is a meditation on the transience of human life and the inevitability of aging and death.

The poem also explores the idea of love as a counterpoint to time. The final couplet suggests that the love between the speaker and his beloved can transcend the ravages of time and death. This idea of love as a transformative force is a recurring theme in Spenser’s poetry, and it is particularly powerful in this sonnet.

### **Interpretation**

Sonnet XIX is a beautifully-crafted poem that explores the human condition in a way that is both timeless and universal. Spenser’s language and imagery are powerful and evocative, creating a vivid portrait of the destructive power of time. The central metaphor of time as a giant, a thief, and a razor is particularly effective, conveying a sense of the overwhelming and unstoppable nature of time.

The final couplet is particularly powerful, suggesting that the love between the speaker and his beloved can transcend the ravages of time and death. This idea of love as a transformative force is a recurring theme in Spenser’s poetry, and it is particularly powerful

in this sonnet. The idea that love can conquer time and death is a powerful one, and it speaks to the enduring power of love in the human experience.

In conclusion, Sonnet XIX is a beautiful and powerful poem that explores the human condition in a way that is both timeless and universal. Spenser's language and imagery are richly evocative, and his central metaphor of time as a destructive force is particularly effective. The final couplet offers a powerful message of hope and redemption, suggesting that love can conquer even the most unstoppable forces of nature.

## UNIT III

### SHAKESPEARE

#### Poem 1 “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?”

**Ques** Theme of love, beauty and mortality is described by the poet in this poem.

OR

Write critical appreciation/analysis of this poem.

**Ans** The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer’s day: he is “more lovely and more temperate.” Summer’s days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by “rough winds”; in them, the sun (“the eye of heaven”) often shines “too hot,” or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as “every fair from fair sometime declines.” The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever (“Thy eternal summer shall not fade...”) and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved’s beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live “as long as men can breathe or eyes can see.”

#### Analysis

This sonnet is certainly the most famous in the sequence of Shakespeare’s sonnets; it may be the most famous lyric poem in English. Among Shakespeare’s works, only lines such as “To be or not to be” and “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?” are better-known. This is not to say that it is at all the best or most interesting or most beautiful of the sonnets; but the simplicity and loveliness of its praise of the beloved has guaranteed its place.

On the surface, the poem is simply a statement of praise about the beauty of the beloved; summer tends to unpleasant extremes of windiness and heat, but the beloved is always mild and temperate. Summer is incidentally personified as the “eye of heaven” with its “gold complexion”; the imagery throughout is simple and unaffected, with the “darling buds of May” giving way to the “eternal summer”, which the speaker promises the beloved. The language, too, is comparatively unadorned for the sonnets; it is not heavy with alliteration or assonance, and nearly every line is its own self-contained clause—almost every line ends with some punctuation, which effects a pause.

Sonnet 18 is the first poem in the sonnets not to explicitly encourage the young man to have children. The “procreation” sequence of the first 17 sonnets ended with the speaker’s realization that the young man might *not* need children to preserve his beauty; he could also live, the speaker writes at the end of Sonnet 17, “in my rhyme.” Sonnet 18, then, is the first “rhyme”—the speaker’s first attempt to preserve the young man’s beauty for all time. An important theme of the sonnet (as it is an important theme throughout much of the sequence) is the power of the speaker’s poem to defy time and last forever, carrying the beauty of the beloved down to future generations. The beloved’s “eternal summer” shall not fade precisely because it is embodied in the sonnet: “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,” the speaker writes in the couplet, “So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

"Sonnet 18" is a Shakespearean sonnet, meaning it has 14 lines written in iambic pentameter and that follow a regular rhyme scheme. This rhyme scheme can be divided into three quatrains followed by a couplet. Lines 1 through 12 follow an ABAB rhyme scheme—the first and third line of each four-line unit rhyme with each other, as do the second and fourth lines. In the final two lines, the rhyme scheme shifts: the two lines rhyme with each other.

## SHAKESPEARE

### Poem 2 “Let Me Not to the Marriage Of True Minds”(Sonnet 116)

**Ques** Write a note on the theme of love and marriage in the poem “Let Me Not to the Marriage Of True Minds”.

OR Write critical appreciation of this poem.

#### Ans INTRODUCTION

Over the course of Sonnet 116, the speaker makes a number of passionate claims about what love is—and what it isn't. For the speaker (traditionally assumed to be Shakespeare himself, and thus a man), true love doesn't change over time: instead, it goes on with the same intensity forever. The speaker establishes this argument from the poem's opening lines, boldly declaring that love isn't really love at all if it bends or sways in response to roadblocks. Instead, he argues that love weathers all storms. It's like a star that sailors use to navigate, providing an unmoving reference point they can use to plot their course across the globe. Love, then, is something that perseveres through "impediments," obstacles, and difficulties without losing any of its passion or commitment.

As the poem progresses, the speaker considers more kinds of change and extends his initial argument. In lines 9-10, he adds that true love doesn't falter even as beauty fades—represented in the poem by the image of youthful, rosy cheeks losing their vitality. Because love isn't primarily concerned with the body, it's not affected by aging. In lines 11-12, the speaker generalizes his argument even further by claiming that love doesn't change under *any* circumstances. It goes on, he claims, “to the edge of doom.” In other words, only when a lover dies does love finally change or end.

The speaker is so confident in his argument that he's willing to issue a bet: if he's wrong, then love itself is impossible, and “no man [has] ever loved.” In making this bet, he puts up his own behavior as evidence. Here, the speaker acknowledges that he isn't simply an observer of love, but himself a lover. His own relationships might be measured against the standard he's advanced here—and he offers confident assurance that his love *does* live up

to this standard. This means that, beneath the sonnet's generalizations about what love is and isn't, the poem is *itself* a declaration of love.

At this point it's important to note that this sonnet is part of a sequence of love poems, traditionally believed to be addressed to a young man. Their relationship, as depicted in the *Sonnets* as a whole, is tumultuous, full of infidelity and gusts of passion. There is considerable disagreement among scholars as to whether this context should affect the interpretation of Sonnet 116. If it doesn't, the poem is a powerful statement about love, addressed to all readers in all times. But if it does, the poem comes across instead as an attempt to repair a damaged relationship, a personal plea directed to a particular person; the speaker is trying to prove to the young man that he *does* love him in spite of everything, and that his love won't change.

For a generous reader, this will be a romantic statement of affection. For a more skeptical reader, it raises some questions. The speaker hasn't just described love as something unchanging; the poem paints a picture of love as a sort of eternal ideal far from the messy reality of real people's lives. It's a star—unattainable and inhuman. In a way, this image of love ceases to be something that humans can actually build and instead becomes something they can only admire from a distance.

The speaker has engaged in **hyperbole** to defend his position, invoking all lovers in all times in line 14. This, along with the poem's idealism, might make the speaker feel a bit unreliable; some readers may wonder how realistic the speaker's account of love really is, and find it grandiose instead of intimate. The poem's claims about love can't necessarily be taken on face value, then: they should be evaluated for their sincerity and plausibility—and in these respects, they may be found wanting.

### **SONNET PATTERN OF THIS POEM**

"Sonnet 116" follows the form of a typical Shakespearean **sonnet**. Though Shakespeare was not the first person to write sonnets in this particular style, he popularized the form—so much so that it was eventually named after him. The Shakespearean sonnet is divided in

two sections, formally: the first twelve lines of the poem—which can be broken down further into three quatrains—and the final two, which make up a rhyming **couplet**.

## SHAKESPEARE

### Poem 3 “My Mistress’ Eyes Are Nothing Like The Sun”(Sonnet 130)

**Ques** Write a note on the theme of love and beauty in this poem.

**Ans** The speaker describes the eyes of the woman he loves, noting that they are not like the sun. He then compares the color of her lips to that of coral, a reddish-pink, concluding that her lips are much less red. Next he compares her breasts to the whiteness of snow. His lover's skin, in contrast, is a dull gray. He suggests that his lover's hair is like black wires. Then he notes that he has seen roses that blend together pink and white hues like a lush embroidered fabric, but that his lover's cheeks lack such colors: they are not rosy pink. He then notes that some perfumes smell better than the breath his wife exhales. He loves to listen to her talk, but he understands that music sounds better. Though the speaker admits that he has never seen a goddess move, he is still sure that his lover moves like an ordinary person, simply walking on the ground. But, the speaker swears, the woman he loves is as unique, as special, and as beautiful, as any woman whose beauty has been inflated through false comparisons by other poets.

#### Theme of Beauty and Love

In “Sonnet 130,” the speaker unfavorably compares his lover's body to a series of beautiful things (implying that she is less beautiful than the sun, snow, roses, a goddess, etc.). Ultimately, the speaker concludes that, even if his mistress cannot be credibly compared to the typical imagery of love poems, his love is still real and valuable, and his mistress is still beautiful. In this way, Shakespeare suggests that love and beauty should not be understood through abstract comparisons, but rather should be valued for being real and flawed.

The poem begins with the speaker comparing parts of his lover's body to beautiful objects, finding, in each case, that her body is less beautiful than the thing to which it's being compared. For example, he writes that her eyes aren't as bright as the sun, and her breath isn't at all like perfume—in fact, it “reeks.” These comparisons at first seem to paint a portrait of a woman who is not very appealing. She is lackluster in comparison to the beauty

of roses, snow, or music, which implies that the speaker might be able to find more beauty and pleasure in the everyday things that surround him than in the woman he loves. The comparisons, in other words, seem to degrade her value.

However, since the comparisons are rarely overtly negative, it's possible that they are not meant to debase the speaker's mistress. For example, the first line notes that the speaker's mistress' eyes are "nothing like the sun," but it does not say what they are like. This leaves open the possibility that her eyes are better than the sun, or are at least beautiful in a different way. Similarly, the speaker notes that "if snow be white" then his mistress' "breasts are dun," which seems more like a statement of reality (even the whitest skin is actually tan, or dun) than a criticism. The only truly insulting thing that the speaker says is that her breath "reeks" and, because of this, he finds "more delight" in "some perfumes." But even this is a reasonably mild statement; he's not even saying that all perfumes are more delightful than her reeking breath, so clearly he doesn't mind it all that much.

The poem's final two lines cement the interpretation that the comparisons are not meant to be degrading to the speaker's mistress or to the love that they share. When the speaker claims that he finds "his love" as beautiful as any other woman "belied with false compare," he's making the point that no one's eyes are as beautiful as the sun and everyone's breath smells kind of bad, and that, therefore, such comparisons are not actually a useful way to think about beauty or love.

#### Love, Personality, and the Superficial

In Lines 9 and 10, of Sonnet 130, the speaker notes that even though music has a "far more pleasing sound" than his mistress's voice, that he nonetheless "love[s] to hear her speak." This comment about his mistress's voice is the only explicitly positive comment about the speaker's mistress before the poem's final two lines, and it is possible to argue that it points to another broader point about love within the poem: that one should love personality more than looks. After all, if the speaker loves to hear his mistress speak not because the sound of her voice is as beautiful as music (it's not), then it is reasonable to assume that part of the reason that he loves to hear her speak is because of the content of what she says. In other words, the speaker cares about what she is saying, not about the more superficial question of whether her voice is musical enough.

And yet, overall, even as the poem rejects superficiality and asks the reader to think of love and beauty as inherently imperfect but still rare and valuable, the poem can only be said to be partially successful in this critique. After all, the majority of the poem is still comprised of superficial comparisons, and even if they're included for the humorous and satirical effect

of mocking traditional love poetry and its impossible comparisons, readers of Sonnet 130 still don't learn anything about the speaker's mistress that isn't superficial.

#### Form

"Sonnet 130" is a Shakespearean sonnet, a form that was popularized (but not actually invented) by Shakespeare. A Shakespearean sonnet has fourteen lines. Its meter is iambic pentameter and it follows a regular rhyme scheme. For the first twelve lines, the poem rhymes in four line units, organized in a criss-cross pattern such that the first and third lines rhyme, as do the second and fourth lines. The poem then ends with a two-line, rhyming couplet.

## UNIT IV

### John Donne

#### Poem1 The Good Morrow

**Ques** Write the theme of love and use of conceit in the poem “The Good Morrow”.

**Ans. Love as an Awakening**

“The Good Morrow” is a celebration of love, which it presents as an intense and unparalleled pleasure. All the joys that the two lovers experienced before they found each other pale in comparison to the joy they experience together. Indeed, love is so powerful that the speaker describes it as an *awakening* of the soul: it is almost a religious experience. And like a religious experience, it reshapes the lovers’ attitude to the world at large. Like monks or nuns who dedicate themselves to religious practice, the two lovers dedicate themselves to love above adventure and career success. “The Good Morrow” thus translates romantic—and erotic—love into a religious, even holy, experience. Love itself, the speaker suggests, is capable of producing the same insights as religion.

“The Good Morrow” separates the lives of the lovers into two parts: before they found each other, and after. The speaker describes the first part of their lives with disdain: the pleasures they enjoyed were “childish.” Indeed, they were not even “weaned”: they were like babies. Like children, they had a limited understanding of life. They were aware of only some of its “country” (or lowly) pleasures, going through the motions of life without knowing there could be something more.

But once they find each other, it feels as though their eyes have been opened. The speaker realizes that any “beauty” experienced before this love was really nothing more than a “dream”—a pale imitation—of the joy and pleasure the speaker has now. “Good-morrow to our waking souls,” the speaker announces at the start of stanza 2, as though the lovers had been asleep and are just now glimpsing the light of day for the first time.

Since the sun is often associated with Jesus Christ in Christian religious traditions and light is often associated with enlightenment, the speaker's description of this experience is implicitly cast in religious terms. That is, the speaker makes waking up alongside a lover sound like a religious epiphany or a conversion experience. The consequences of this epiphany are also implicitly religious. Having tasted the intense pleasures of love, the lovers give up on adventure and exploration: instead they treat their "one little room" as "an everywhere." In this way, they become like monks or nuns: people who separate themselves from the world to dedicate themselves to their faith.

Further, the lovers' devotion to each other wins them immortality: "none can die," the speaker announces in the poem's final line. Immortality is more commonly taken to be the reward for dedicated religious faith, not earthly pleasures like romantic love. In describing this relationship in religious terms, the speaker breaks down the traditional distinctions between love and religion. Where many religious traditions treat erotic love as something potentially harmful to religious devotion, the speaker of "The Good Morrow" suggests that erotic love leads to the same devotion, insight, and immortality that religion promises.

However, the speaker doesn't specify the nature of the love in question. If the lovers are married, for instance, the reader doesn't hear anything about it. Instead, the speaker focuses on the perfection of their love, noting the way the two lovers complement each other. Unlike other poems that argue for the holiness of married love specifically (like Anne Bradstreet's "To My Dear and Loving Husband"), "The Good Morrow" holds out an even more subversive possibility: that *all* love is capable of producing religious epiphany, whether or not it takes a form that the Church sanctions, like marriage.

### **Exploration and Adventure**

"The Good Morrow" was written during the Age of Discovery, the period of intense European sea exploration lasting roughly from the 15th to 17th centuries. This context informs the poem's second and third stanzas, with their focus on "sea-discoverers," "new worlds," "maps," and "hemispheres." The poem compares the desire to chart new lands

with the pleasures of love itself, and finds the latter to be more powerful and exciting. Indeed, the speaker finds love so pleasurable that he or she proposes to withdraw from the world in order to dedicate him or herself entirely to that love. Instead of seeking adventure, the speaker proposes that the lovers “make one little room an everywhere.” For the speaker, then, love creates its own world to explore.

Note how, in the poem’s second stanza, the speaker proposes that the lovers renounce their worldly ambitions. The speaker says that instead of crossing the oceans or mapping foreign countries, they should stay in bed and gaze into each other’s eyes. Indeed, the speaker argues in stanza 3, they will not find better “hemispheres” out in the world than each others’ eyes. This means that, for the speaker, giving up the outside world is not a sacrifice. Indeed, the speaker finds a *better* world in bed with this lover.

Importantly, however, this “lovers’ world” is not totally separate from the wider world. Instead, it *recreates* it in miniature, essentially resulting in a **microcosm** that reproduces the entire world itself *within* the lovers’ relationship. The poem thus argues that true love can be a way of experiencing the entirety of existence. Essentially, there’s no need to, say, seek adventure on the high seas, because *everything* is already contained within the experience of love itself.

### **Structure of the poem**

“The Good-Morrow” is a good example of Donne’s unique approach to form. The poem has three stanzas, each with seven lines. This is very unusual: most English stanzas have an even number of lines. This helps poets keep their rhyme schemes orderly and symmetrical, since it’s awkward to fit an extra line into the rhyme scheme. And Donne’s poem does have a strange rhyme scheme.

Each seven-line stanza is rhymed ABABCCC, and each can be divided into two units: a quatrain and a tercet. The initial quatrains are rhymed ABAB, while the final tercets are

rhymed CCC. To make matters even stranger, the poem's meter is irregular. The first six lines of each stanza are in iambic pentameter; the final line is in iambic hexameter.

The poem's odd form thus cries out for interpretation, but it is not entirely clear what it means. The break between the two parts of the stanza acts as a kind of volta, or a turn in the poem's thinking. But these breaks are not particularly strong. In Petrarchan sonnets, for instance, the volta is usually an occasion for the speaker to reconsider and to change his or her mind. The speaker here generally does not do so; that is, the stanzas feel like single conceptual units that each express one idea, despite their voltas.

Another possible interpretation is that breaking each stanza into two distinct parts is meant to symbolize the two distinct parts of the lovers' lives: they used to be asleep, and now they are "waking." Or one might see the first four lines of each stanza as imitating the structure of a Shakespearean sonnet, which has the same rhyme scheme and meter as the quatrains here do, before splitting into something different in the tercet. The poem's form is unusual and thus invites interpretation, but with so many different possibilities, readers will have to decide for themselves exactly *how* to interpret it.

## John Donne

### Poem 2 The Sun Rising

**Ques** Write the theme and summary of the poem "The Sun Rising".

OR Write critical appreciation of this poem.

**Ans** "The Sun Rising" Themes

#### The Authority of Love

In "The Sun Rising," the speaker wants to bend the rules of the universe. Rather than allowing the sun's "motions" across the sky to govern the way the speaker spends his time, the speaker challenges the sun's authority and claims that love gives him (the speaker) the power to stay in bed all day with his lover. In this way, the poem elevates the importance and power of love above work, duty, and even the natural rhythms of the day itself. From the start the speaker talks down to the sun, robbing it of the authority it presumes to have when it shines "through windows, and through curtains" upon lovers in the morning. In the first line, the sun appears as a "busy old fool" and "unruly." This language suggests that not only is the sun foolish, but also that it ought to be "ruled" by some greater authority that it's failing to heed.

Although the speaker concedes that the sun is free to rule over "late school boys" (as well as several other parties for whom the speaker seems to have little respect), he claims that all *he* would have to do to "eclipse and cloud" the sun would be to close his eyes. The ease of this action demonstrates that the sun is indeed "foolish" to think that its beams are "reverend and strong" in the face of a lover. By the third **stanza**, the speaker is not only giving the sun orders to annoy others instead of him and his lover, but he's also ordering the sun to actually *serve* the lovers by warming them in their bed. The lovers thus become the greater authority that the sun itself ought to obey.

By asserting *himself* as the ruler of the sun, the speaker claims the authority to indefinitely extend the dawn so that he can stay with his lover. The speaker asks the sun early on,

"Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?" This **rhetorical question** suggests that the speaker wants lovers' "seasons" to be exempt from the daily rhythms dictated by the rising of the sun. The speaker goes on to distinguish love as unfamiliar with "the rags of time," suggesting that love is everlasting and therefore not subject to the starts and stops of "hours, days, months," and other temporal units that govern the lives of "school boys," "horsemen," and "country ants." Time, including the rising and setting sun, works differently for lovers than for anyone else.

By the end of the poem, the speaker has "contracted" the entire world to the bed, so that the sun's job is to "warm" there. Whereas most people must leave their beds during the day in order to accomplish their jobs, the speaker's insistence that love is the most important occupation anyone could have makes the bed into a sort of daytime workplace. What's more, that workplace is so important that the sun must drop what it is doing everywhere else in order to make the "work" of the bedroom possible.

The way the speaker reverses power in the poem doesn't simply make the sun into a servant of the speaker: the speaker diverts the sun from *everyone else*, demanding that it shine only on him and his lover. In this way, the speaker puts the rest of the world's productivity on hold. Instead of seizing the day by jumping out of bed, he is seizing everyone else's day for himself.

### **Love and Divinity**

The speaker's inflation of his importance in relation to political rulers is underscored by a playfully bold insinuation that to wake up in bed with a lover is analogous to an ascent to divine power. In other words, waking up to your boyfriend or girlfriend can make you feel like a god.

Although the speaker never explicitly names any religious themes, the poem's preoccupation with sovereignty (ruling power) evokes the notion of the divine right of kings. Kings in Donne's day were traditionally thought to derive their ruling power directly from

God. If the speaker becomes more powerful than all of the world's rulers put together, he thus approaches godlike power.

On top of this implicit gesture to the divine, which Donne's readers would definitely have understood, the speaker calls into question that idea that the sun's beams are "reverend," or worthy of being worshipped like God. Whereas earthly kings must still kneel before the sun because it is one of the few things God does not place in their control, the speaker manages to transform the sun into a servant that kneels before him. The speaker thus becomes more "reverend" than the sun.

The poem's title furthermore likens the speaker to Christ upon his resurrection. Although the sun is explicitly the one who is "rising" according to the title, the entire poem is a meditation on the speaker's imperative to rise from bed. Because of this double "rising," and because the speaker positions himself as the one the sun must worship as kings worship the sun, the speaker might be said to be a second "sun rising." Read aloud, as this poem was meant to be, the title contains a double entendre: "sun rising" also sounds like "son rising." The phrase "son rising" naturally evokes the rising or resurrection of Christ, the son of God. The speaker's thwarting of natural laws over the course of the poem is similar to Christ's thwarting of death via crucifixion. This similarity supports the notion that when the speaker wakes up in bed with his lover, he is experiencing a kind of divine resurrection that vests him with new Christlike sovereignty over kings, time, and nature.

The speaker's near-heretical claim to divine power is built upon his relationship with his lover. Only by likening her body to all the world's empires is the speaker able to assert himself as this Christlike figure who is exempt from the natural laws to which emperors must defer. Love, sex, and religion are intertwined in much of Donne's poetry. In this poem, love and sex are not only as powerful as religious devotion. Furthermore, love and sex forge an incredible intimacy between the lover and God. To lie in bed with a lover is not to refuse God. On the contrary, it is to rise as God's son.

## Structure of the poem

This poem does not take any specific, established form, but it does have formal similarities with various versions of the **sonnet**. Whereas a sonnet has 14 lines, this poem has 30, which are divided into three **stanzas** of 10 lines each. However, like most sonnets, the predominant meter of the poem is **iambic** pentameter. The **rhyme scheme** is also a hybrid of Italian and English sonnet rhyme schemes

## John Donne

### Poem 3 Batter My Heart

**Ques** Write theme and summary of the poem “Batter My Heart”.

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#### **Ans** The Agony of Religious Doubt

John Donne wrote the series of poems called the Holy Sonnets during a period of religious conversion from Catholicism to Anglicanism. In this particular poem, the speaker has lost touch with God altogether and prays desperately for God to return. Furthermore, the speaker believes that faith can only return through forceful means: God has to force his way back into the speaker’s heart. The poem, then, is at once a witty and an achingly open portrait of a soul desperate to overcome the torment of religious doubt.

A few lines in, the speaker states the poem’s central problem most clearly: “I [...] labor to admit you, but oh, to no end.” In other words, the speaker is trying to believe in God, to allow God into the soul, but keeps failing. This is the crux of the poem: it’s not so much that the speaker doesn’t believe in God but rather that the speaker cannot feel God in heart and soul, as the speaker once did.

The word “admit” here, then, is a **pun**. It literally means to “let in,” as if God can be let in to the speaker’s soul. But it also puns on the sense of admitting something is true—the speaker is having a hard time admitting that God is real. “Reason,” the speaker’s ability to think logically, has been no help in this matter, pushing the speaker to further desperation rather than comfort; trying to prove God’s existence using logic isn’t necessarily convincing to one’s emotions.

Furthermore, the speaker introduces this problem as a metaphor: “I, like an usurp’d town to another due, / Labor to admit you.” The speaker’s soul is like a “usurp’d town,” a town that has been conquered by an enemy. The identity of this enemy is unspecified, but it can be interpreted as the devil, or atheism, or any other force that leads people away from God. The implied solution, then, is that God must “break” into the “town” of the speaker’s soul, and set the speaker free. Doubt, then, is cast as a kind of painful imprisonment.

In fact, the speaker seems to feel that faith is beyond the speaker’s control. Although the speaker keeps trying to let God in, that won’t work. Instead, the speaker begs God to force his way into the speaker’s soul. That’s why the poem begins, “Batter my heart.” It’s as if the speaker’s heart is a fortress, and God must invade that fortress. Through divine force, God can “make” the speaker “new,” transforming the speaker back into a devout Christian. The speaker’s crisis of faith, then, is so extreme that only extreme measures on the part of God can overcome it. The speaker sincerely wishes to return to God, but doesn’t have the strength to do it alone.

### **Faith as Erotic Love**

The speaker makes a bold comparison between faith in God and erotic love. In fact, the erotic desire expressed here is not simply metaphorical. Rather, it can be thought of as a heightened form of sexuality, a desire for ecstasy on a spiritual, rather than simply physical, plane. The speaker begs for a rough—and consensual—seduction, one that fills the speaker with such passion that it eradicates all doubt in God. It is only through such passion, rather than logic or reason, that the speaker can truly overcome this crisis of faith.

### **Structure of the poem**

"Holy Sonnet 14" is a Petrarchan sonnet, one of the most famous forms of the sonnet made famous by the Italian poet Petrarch. A Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two halves: an octave (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines). In line 9, the first line of the sestet, the speaker usually switches things up in some way, changing tone or the direction of the poem's argument. This is called the volta, or turn.