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INDEX

UNIT 1

THE GARDEN PARTY

Story by Katherine Mansfield

Q.1 Write the theme of maturation and loss of innocence in the story The Garden Party.

Ans. "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield is a short story that can be analyzed using new critical analysis with its formal elements, irony, and symbolism. These are just a few aspects of Mansfield's work that can contribute to the work's organic unity. With that, "The Garden Party" is an organically whole piece with all its literary devices and formal elements.

Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" explores themes of maturation and the loss of innocence as its protagonist, Laura, develops an understanding that distinctions of class vanish in the face of human mortality. The story's exposition describes the setting as a perfect summer day at the home of the wealthy Sheridan family. The sun, cloudless sky, and abundance of flowers suggest an earthly paradise where the Sheridan girls are safe and sheltered. Mrs. Sheridan and her daughters are preparing for a garden party that afternoon.

Mrs. Sheridan instructs Laura to supervise the workmen who have arrived to set up a marquee. The narrator describes Laura as artistic, someone who loves to arrange things. Laura becomes flustered when she tries to address the workers as her mother would. Instead, she switches to a more relaxed and natural conversational style. As she talks with the men and watches them work, she admires their friendliness and lack of pretense. She wishes they could be friends, and she could be a working girl. Laura is becoming aware of the class division between her family and the working class, and it makes her uncomfortable.

However, she slips comfortably back into upper-class affectations when she takes a telephone call from her friend, Kitty. A delivery man arrives with an overabundance of lilies, which Mrs. Sheridan has ordered, showing her extravagant tastes. In the drawing room, Laura's sisters, Jose and Meg, practice a song for the party. Jose sings while

Meg accompanies her on the piano. Jose's smiling expression does not match the song's melancholy topic and tone. This foreshadows the death later in the story and Jose's inappropriate response to it.

When Laura and Jose go to the kitchen to deliver some party items, a man is delivering cream puffs. Cook allows them to take one, despite having recently eaten breakfast. Their interaction shows the cook's ambivalent nature. While she is familiar and motherly with the girls, she is also called "Cook" and not her given name, reinforcing the class divide.

Later, in the narrative's inciting incident, the delivery man shares news of a fatal accident on a nearby street. Mr. Scott, a poor neighbor and cart driver, has left behind a wife and five young children. Laura believes it to be insensitive to the deceased's family to continue with the party. Jose strongly disagrees. The accident introduces the story's main conflict. Externally, Laura's attempts to cancel the party are met with repeated refusals from her family. Because of their class pretensions, they believe the success of their party takes precedence over the tragic death of their poor neighbor and his family's mourning. Internally, Laura struggles between her love of her callous, wealthy family and her sympathies for their working-class neighbors.

As the rising action unfolds, Mrs. Sheridan gives Laura a new, extravagant hat to wear at the party. At first, Laura cannot bring herself to look at it. The hat symbolizes her desire to embrace her family's upper-class values. When she glimpses herself in a mirror, she cannot resist how attractive she looks in the hat. Her family and their values win out as Laura dismisses her doubts about the appropriateness of the party.

At the party, Laura plays the gracious hostess, enthralled by her role. The description of the party takes up very little space in the story. It is like a happy dream that quickly passes. After the party, Mrs. Sheridan sends Laura with a basket of leftover party food to the deceased man's house. This seemingly gracious gift shows Mrs. Sheridan's disconnect from reality. She thinks the gesture will be much appreciated; she does not realize it is an insult to her neighbors' dignity.

The story reaches its climax as Laura walks away from the Sheridans' wealthy home on the hill down to the Scott's impoverished home in its literal and metaphorical shadow. She leaves behind the bright, open gaiety of the garden party and moves into the dark, enclosed sadness of the deceased man's wake. Like a Greek hero, Laura descends into the underworld. Acting as her guide, the widow's sister takes Laura into the home, to the grieving Mrs. Scott, and finally to the bedroom where the deceased lies. Gazing upon the body, Laura experiences an epiphany. Rather than feeling uncomfortable or distressed, Laura feels reassured. Mr. Scott looks like he is asleep and at peace. He no longer suffers the weariness of the world. She realizes that there is beauty in both life and death. And death is the great equalizer, ignoring class entirely.

In the story's falling action and conclusion, Laura leaves the Scott home and begins to make her way back up the hill to her home. She meets her brother Laurie, who asks if the experience was awful. Laurie displays his upper-class disregard by being more concerned with his sister than with the bereaved family. Laura replies that "it was simply marvelous." When she tries to express her complicated thoughts and feelings, she cannot. She says, "Isn't life —" Readers do not learn exactly what she discovered about life. However, by venturing out of her safe, sheltered home, Laura has matured, gaining a new understanding of life and death, as well as of class.

Family Relationships

"It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once."

These sentences show both a similarity and difference between Laura and Jose. In the first, Laura has left the house, toast in hand, to supervise the workmen putting up the marquee. As the artistic child, Laura enjoys arranging things. She does not arrange the workmen, however. She asks what they would do and makes suggestions. In the second quote, Jose has been working with her sister Meg and servant Hans to rearrange the furniture in the drawing room. Jose enjoys giving orders to the servants. Rather than arranging things, Jose arranges people, treating them like things. She orders Hans to fetch Mrs. Sheridan and Laura. And in her command, she also orders her mother and sister "to come at once."

"Hallo!" He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"

Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all."

After Laura has had her mother and Jose call her idea of canceling the party "absurd," she decides to ask Laurie's opinion. Laura feels closest to Laurie emotionally. She values his opinion as if it were her own. She decides that if he sides with their mother and sister, then theirs is the right decision. However, before she can explain the situation and ask his opinion, Laurie compliments Laura on how she looks in her new hat. He reinforces the superficial attention to Laura's appearance that Mrs. Sheridan used earlier to distract Laura from the accident. His words also encourage her pride.

Laura does not need to ask Laurie's opinion. She knows that Laurie will side with her mother and sister. From this point until after the party, Laura gives no further thought to the accident.

Life and Death

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by Cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened."

Laura and Jose have just finished eating the decadent cream puffs in the kitchen and are moving from the house back into the garden. Both the house and garden represent the girls' sheltered, protected lives. They are places of life and activity. Yet the servants block the girls from going to the garden. Godber's delivery man has brought not just cream puffs but also news of Mr. Scott's death. The servants blocking of the back door seems protective of the girls, as if they want to keep the dark news from them. But they also block the girls from going to the garden, so full of life.

"**The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her."**

Laura is going from her house on the hill down to the Scotts' house below. The gleaming white road represents life. The deep shade and quiet of the hollow represent death. She is moving from the land of life to the land of death. She cannot "realize" the transition because she carries within her the life from her home and the party. The "kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass" all represent the happy, active life of the garden party.

"**There lay a young man, fast asleep — sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy . . . happy . . . All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content."**

This paragraph summarizes Laura's thoughts and feelings on meeting death in the form of Mr. Scott's body. Instead of seeing tragedy, she sees beauty and wonder. Mr. Scott

seems to sleep and dream. Being “given up to his dream,” Mr. Scott is free from life’s troubles. The “garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks” represent both life and the class distinctions which have so troubled Laura since she heard of the accident. In death, life and class no longer matter. Laura’s epiphany is that life and death are both wonderful and beautiful. Mansfield presents a strange contrast, though, by comparing the lively party to Scott’s death.

Q.2 Character sketch of Laura Sheridan

Ans. “It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn’t feel them. Not a bit, not an atom.”

Laura is supervising the workmen’s construction of the marquee. She admires their friendliness and lack of pretense. She wishes she could be friends with men like them instead of the “silly boys” in her own social circle. As she watches them work, she admits that she cannot befriend them due to the social taboos against the mixing of classes. She tells herself that the class distinctions are ridiculous and make no sense. She lies to herself when she protests that she doesn’t feel the class divisions “not a bit, not an atom.” Laura has grown up with privilege and cannot entirely separate herself from it, at least not at this point in her development. By acknowledging the absurdity of class distinctions, she shows that she is at least beginning to hold views that differ from those of the rest of her family.

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right.”

Laura is confused. She thought her mother would agree that having the garden “party in light of their poor neighbor’s death is wrong, but her mother does not. Considering the matter settled, her mother gives her an extravagant hat. At the moment, Laura cannot bring herself to look at herself wearing it. However, when she accidentally sees herself in her bedroom mirror, she admires her reflection. She has to admit to herself that the hat, and the wealth and privilege it symbolizes, look good on her. This acknowledgement causes Laura to falter in her emerging ideas about the absurdity of class distinctions. She feels pulled back toward her family and their upper-class values.

"It was simply marvellous. But Laurie—” She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life—” But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.”

Laura is returning to her home after having an epiphany at the side of Mr. Scott’s corpse. Instead of revulsion or sadness, Laura feels a sense of peace and contentment.

She encounters Laurie, who has come to look for her. He asks if the experience was “awful.” Instead of awful, Laura says it was “marvellous.” *Marvellous* can mean “extraordinary,” but it can also mean “causing great wonder” and “miraculous.” And yet, she stammers when she tries to articulate her complex thoughts and the overwhelming feelings about life she has gained from the experience. The narrator says that Laurie understood. However, readers might wonder if he really does. In Laurie’s earlier appearances in the story, he has acted whole-heartedly upper class. So much so that Laura could not bring herself to ask his opinion on whether they should cancel the party, fearing or knowing that he would side with Jose and their mother. And, having not shared Laura’s experience, how can he truly understand?

Unit 1
2)A FINE DAY
POEM BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Q.1 Write the critical appreciation of the poem A Fine Day,

Ans. The poet describes the beauty of a day in the poem "A Fine Day." The poem comprises two stanzas, each of which depicts a lovely day. We learn that the day is really fine and wonderful in the opening stanza.

“After all the rain, the sun
Shines on hill and grassy mead;
Fly into the garden, child,
You are very glad indeed.”

- The poet claims that the sky is clear since the morning in the first stanza. The sun has been hidden by thin clouds. The sun appears to be wearing a scarf. Although the term "sun" is not mentioned, the metaphor "sun" is used by the poet. He referred to the sun as "heaven's most gorgeous eye." This implies further the significance of the sun.

- Poet continues to depict the splendor of the day in the second stanza. He claims that the wind is no longer powerful. Strong wind is not a beautiful thing. Although the slow wind has the potential to damage things, the poet uses the phrase "leisurely it blew" to describe how this breeze makes one leaf kiss the one next to it. This is how the poet expresses how lovely the day is.

- So, this poem describes a beautiful and romantic day by referring to nature. It is really very fine day to enjoy.

The poet personifies the wind by claiming that it lacks strength. It's blowing gently. The gentle breeze causes the leaves to gently brush against one other. The leaves are kissing each other with love, and the poet used the word "kiss" to personify the leaves as they make love on this beautiful day.

In the first verse, the poet asserts that the sky has been clear since the morning.

- The sun is obscured by thin clouds. The sun appears to be adorned with a scarf.
- The poet uses the metaphor "sun" even if the term "sun" is not spoken. He described the sun as "heaven's most beautiful eye."

- This emphasises the importance of the sun even more.

In the second stanza, the poet continues to convey the magnificence of the day.

- He claims that the wind has weakened. Strong winds are not appealing.
- Despite the fact that the slow wind has the ability to harm things, the poet uses the word "leisurely it blew" to describe how this breeze causes one leaf to kiss the one next to it.
- This is how the poet describes how beautiful the day is.

So, using nature as a metaphor, this poem recounts a lovely and romantic day. It's a beautiful day to be outside.

Katherine Mansfield, one of the most celebrated writers of the 20th century, is known for her short stories and poems that capture the essence of human emotions and experiences. Her poem "A Fine Day" is a masterpiece that reflects her unique style of writing and her ability to evoke powerful emotions in her readers.

The poem is a simple yet profound reflection on the beauty of nature and the joy it brings to our lives. Mansfield's use of vivid imagery and sensory language creates a vivid picture of a perfect day, where the sun is shining, the birds are singing, and the world is alive with color and sound.

The poem begins with the line "Oh, what a fine day!" This opening line sets the tone for the rest of the poem, conveying a sense of excitement and joy that is infectious. The exclamation mark at the end of the line emphasizes the speaker's enthusiasm and adds to the overall sense of exuberance.

Mansfield then goes on to describe the beauty of the day in detail, using sensory language to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. She describes the "blue sky," the "green grass," and the "golden sun," painting a picture of a world that is alive with color and light.

The poem also includes a number of references to nature, with the speaker describing the "birds singing," the "flowers blooming," and the "butterflies fluttering." These references to nature add to the overall sense of joy and beauty in the poem, emphasizing the importance of the natural world in our lives.

One of the most striking aspects of the poem is Mansfield's use of repetition. The phrase "Oh, what a fine day!" is repeated several times throughout the poem, emphasizing the speaker's enthusiasm and creating a sense of rhythm and momentum.

The repetition of the phrase also serves to reinforce the central theme of the poem, which is the beauty and joy of nature. By repeating the phrase, Mansfield emphasizes the importance of appreciating the simple pleasures in life and finding joy in the world around us.

Another notable feature of the poem is its use of rhyme and meter. The poem is written in iambic tetrameter, with four stressed syllables per line. This creates a sense of rhythm and flow that adds to the overall musicality of the poem.

The poem also includes a number of rhyming couplets, with the final words of each line rhyming with each other. This use of rhyme adds to the overall sense of harmony and balance in the poem, reinforcing the idea that the world is a beautiful and harmonious place.

Overall, "A Fine Day" is a masterpiece of poetry that captures the beauty and joy of nature in a simple yet profound way. Mansfield's use of vivid imagery, sensory language, repetition, and rhyme creates a powerful and evocative poem that is sure to resonate with readers of all ages.

In a world that is often chaotic and stressful, "A Fine Day" reminds us of the importance of taking a moment to appreciate the beauty of the world around us. It is a poem that inspires us to find joy in the simple pleasures of life and to embrace the natural world with open arms.

In conclusion, "A Fine Day" is a beautiful poem that celebrates the beauty of nature and the simple pleasures of life. The poem's structure, language, and themes work together to create a powerful and evocative piece of literature. The poem's enduring appeal is a testament to its timeless message of finding beauty in the ordinary moments of life.

“O the sun, the comfy sun!
This the song that you must sing,
"Thank you for the birds, the flowers,
Thank you, sun, for everything."

Unit 1
3) VOICES IN THE AIR
POEM BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Q.1 Write a note on the poem Voices In The Air.

Ans. Katherine Mansfield's poetry captures the absurdity of humans within a simple, often ironic framework. She writes short lines but packs them full of constant but not repetitive recreations of popular opinions. Although the majority of her work relates to society, she does write about her own experiences in poems like "Voices of the Air." Even in this context, however, her writing remains strangely depersonalized. True, she is witnessing the beach and hearing the sounds in question, but she could be anyone. She reveals nothing of her intimate private thoughts in the process of writing.
In her analysis of how people think, Mansfield was revolutionary for her time. She, as a woman, was not expected to possess such a keen aptitude for reading and understanding people. Repeatedly, however, she picks up on people's little consistencies, like the way parents demand such perfect behavior from their children. She writes "A Few Rules for Beginners" on this subject, enumerating a few expectations parents set, and then she concludes by outright rejecting this attitude and preferring affection and comfort.

Poems like "Countrywomen" demonstrate Mansfield's own masterful recognition of the absurdity of life. The two women in question bear the physical signs of their occupation, as if they had been built for just that purpose. The absurdity in this text is that the women should so perfectly encapsulate for the passerby to see how they spend their time, but Mansfield notices. She cannot help but ponder how these two women offer amusement just by going about their daily business, a testament to the broader absurdity of work and corporeal inhabitation in the first place.

When it comes to literary masterpieces, Katherine Mansfield's "Voices of the Air" is undoubtedly one of them. Published in 1916, this collection of poems is a testament to her artistic genius, showcasing her keen eye for detail and her ability to capture the often elusive nuances of human experience.

The collection is comprised of twenty-four poems, each one as enchanting and evocative as the last. The poems range in subject matter, from nature and the changing of the seasons to the complexities of human emotion and the fleeting nature of time.

Through intricate wordplay and vivid imagery, Mansfield transports the reader to different settings and emotions, all the while examining the fundamental questions of life.

One of the most striking aspects of "Voices of the Air" is Mansfield's use of imagery. From the very first poem, "Butterfly Laughter," the reader is transported to a lush garden, where the delicate fluttering of a butterfly's wings can be heard. Mansfield's use of sensory language is masterful, painting a vivid picture of the natural world and its many wonders. The poet writes:

“The sea and wind do then obey
And sighing, sighing double notes
Of double basses, content to play
A droning chord for the little throats”

In "Winter Song," Mansfield shifts her focus to the changing of the seasons, contrasting the bleakness of winter with the vibrancy of spring. She writes:

"The winter will be cold, But you and I will wrap Ourselves in crimson, In Marion blue."

Here, Mansfield uses color to evoke the different moods of the seasons, with winter represented by cold blues and greys, and spring by warm, vibrant colors.

Throughout the collection, Mansfield also explores the complexities of human emotion. In "A Fine Day," she describes the feeling of being in love as "a warm, sweet madness," capturing the joy and intensity of this emotion. In "At the Bay," she examines the pain of loss, writing:

"Death, whose great shadow Darkens my life, Would take me gladly And end my strife."

Here, Mansfield uses powerful imagery to convey the sense of darkness and despair that can accompany loss.

Another notable aspect of the collection is Mansfield's use of form. While many of the poems are written in free verse, others, such as "Echoes," employ a more traditional rhyme scheme. Mansfield's ability to switch between different forms and styles showcases her versatility as a poet and her mastery of the craft.

At its core, "Voices of the Air" is a collection about the human experience. Through her exploration of nature, emotion, and the passage of time, Mansfield asks fundamental questions about what it means to be alive. What is the value of beauty and joy in a world marked by pain and loss? How can we find meaning in a world that is constantly changing?

In many ways, Mansfield's own life and experiences inform the themes of the collection. Born in New Zealand in 1888, Mansfield moved to England as a young woman, where

she became involved with the literary and artistic circles of the time. She battled with poor health throughout her life, and tragically passed away from tuberculosis at the age of 34.

Given this context, it is not surprising that "Voices of the Air" is marked by a sense of impermanence and transience. Mansfield's poems are filled with fleeting moments of beauty and joy, but they are always overshadowed by the knowledge that they will soon pass. In "Night-Song," she writes:

"Joyous and clear and fresh Spring comes laughing Over the hills."

But then, just a few lines later:

"Only the night is dark."

Here, Mansfield captures the bittersweet nature of life, where moments of happiness and light are always tempered by the knowledge that they will soon fade away.

Poetry has always been a medium of expression for the human soul. It is a form of art that transcends time and space, and speaks to the deepest parts of our being. Katherine Mansfield's "Voices of the Air" is a classic example of poetry that captures the essence of human emotions and experiences. In this 2000-word analysis, we will explore the themes, structure, and literary devices used in this masterpiece of poetry.

"Voices of the Air" is a poem that speaks to the human experience of longing and loss. The poem is divided into three stanzas, each with its own distinct voice and message. The first stanza speaks of the voices of the air, which are described as "whispers, murmurs, sighs." These voices are personified as "little ghosts" that haunt the speaker, reminding her of the past. The second stanza speaks of the speaker's own voice, which is described as "a cry, a sob, a laughter." This voice is also personified, as it is said to be "a little ghost" that haunts the speaker. The third and final stanza speaks of the voice of the beloved, which is described as "a song, a prayer, a moan." This voice is also personified, as it is said to be "a little ghost" that haunts the speaker.

The theme of longing and loss is evident throughout the poem. The voices of the air, the speaker's own voice, and the voice of the beloved all represent different aspects of the speaker's longing for something that is no longer present. The voices of the air represent the memories of the past, which the speaker longs to relive. The speaker's own voice represents her own longing and pain, which she cannot express to anyone else. The voice of the beloved represents the person or thing that the speaker has lost, and which she longs to be reunited with.

The structure of the poem is also significant. The three stanzas each have a different tone and message, but they are all connected by the theme of longing and loss. The first stanza is written in a descriptive and almost dreamlike style, with the voices of the air described in vivid detail. The second stanza is more personal and emotional, with the

speaker's own voice described in terms of her own pain and longing. The third stanza is more spiritual and transcendent, with the voice of the beloved described in terms of a song or prayer.

The use of literary devices in the poem is also noteworthy. Personification is used throughout the poem, with the voices of the air, the speaker's own voice, and the voice of the beloved all given human characteristics. This serves to make the poem more relatable and emotional, as the reader can imagine these voices as real entities that are haunting the speaker. The use of repetition is also significant, with the phrase "little ghosts" repeated three times throughout the poem. This repetition serves to emphasize the theme of longing and loss, as the ghosts represent the things that the speaker has lost and longs to be reunited with.

In conclusion, "Voices of the Air" is a true masterpiece of poetry. Through her use of vivid imagery, powerful language, and skillful form, Katherine Mansfield transports the reader to different worlds and emotions, all the while exploring the fundamental questions of life. Her ability to capture the fleeting nature of human experience is a testament to her artistic genius, and ensures that her work will continue to inspire and delight readers for generations to come.

“For these little voices: the bee, the fly
The leaf that taps, the pod that breaks,
The breeze on the grass-tops bending by,
The shrill quick sound that insect makes.”

4)LONELINESS
POEM BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Q.1 Write critical appreciation of the poem Loneliness.

Ans.This poem explores the theme of loneliness, personified as a weary companion who visits the narrator at night. The poem conveys a sense of solitary isolation and a longing for connection.

“Now it is Loneliness who comes at night
Instead of Sleep, to sit beside my bed.
Like a tired child I lie and wait her tread,”

Compared to the author's other works, this poem is relatively straightforward and lacks the elaborate imagery and symbolism found in some of her other poems. In terms of the time period, the poem reflects the sense of longing and isolation that was common in the early 20th century, a period marked by both societal upheaval and personal uncertainty.

“Through the sad dark the slowly ebbing tide
Breaks on a barren shore, unsatisfied.
A strange wind flows… then silence. I am fain
To turn to Loneliness, to take her hand,”

The poem's strength lies in its concise yet evocative language, which effectively captures the emotional toll of loneliness. The comparison to a "tired child" highlights the speaker's vulnerability and need for comfort, while the "barren shore" and "dreadful monotone of rain" symbolize the emptiness and despair that loneliness brings.

Loneliness by Katherine Mansfield is very interesting poem because “Loneliness” is personified by a person “watch her softly blowing out the light.” that insist in coming out at night. The personification of loneliness make this poem a little spooky and very real. The author does not fight the loneliness instead she waits for her to overcome her and to dominate her night. Loneliness over power the author and make her seen week and powerless to loneliness. The person is familiar with loneliness coming at night and making her feel sad and empty. This poem clearly show that loneliness present herself at night because at night the person is always alone and is hard to take sad thoughts out of mind. People tend to welcome sadness and loneliness at night. The poet also

indicates that is better feeling loneliness or welcome the present of loneliness than feeling nothing.

UNIT II

THINGS FALL APART

CHINUA ACHEBE

Q.1 Describe Things Fall Apart is a novel which explores the impact of colonialism on Africa and its people.

OR

Write a note on the theme of colonialism, loss of tradition, and the psychological disintegration.

Ans. “Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”

Achebe uses this opening stanza of William Butler Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming,” from which the title of the novel is taken, as an epigraph to the novel. In invoking these lines, Achebe hints at the chaos that arises when a system collapses. That “the center cannot hold” is an ironic reference to both the imminent collapse of the African tribal system, threatened by the rise of imperialist bureaucracies, and the imminent disintegration of the British Empire.

Things Fall Apart by Nigerian author and poet Chinua Achebe, first published in 1958, is a seminal work in African literature. Set in pre-colonial Nigeria, the novel chronicles the life of Okonkwo, a proud Igbo warrior, as he navigates the shifting dynamics of his community. Achebe’s narrative masterfully captures the cultural richness of Igbo society, delving into its customs and traditions, spirituality, and social structures. As the arrival of European colonizers disrupts the traditional way of life, Okonkwo's world begins to unravel, symbolizing the broader impact of colonialism on African societies. The novel is a poignant exploration of the clash between tradition and change, offering a profound reflection on the consequences of cultural imperialism.

Historically, Things Fall Apart is situated in the context of the late colonial period, capturing the complexities and tensions of the encounter between African communities and European powers. Achebe’s work stands as a critique of European and American colonial narratives that often marginalized or misrepresented African perspectives. Beyond its historical significance, the novel remains relevant today, addressing themes of identity, power, and the enduring consequences of colonial legacies. Things Fall

Apart has become a classic, not only in African literature but in global literary discourse, contributing to a more inclusive understanding of world history.

Okonkwo, a respected warrior of the Umuofia clan, travels to the village of Mbaino to deliver the message that they must hand over a virgin and a young man as retribution for the murder of an Umuofia tribesman's wife. Mbaino agrees, and the elders of Umuofia give the virgin to Ogbuefi Udo as his wife and give the young boy, Ikemefuna, to Okonkwo for safekeeping and instruction. Okonkwo looks down upon weakness, a trait he associates with his father Unoka, and his experience of acquiring wealth proved Okonkwo's fortitude and inner mettle.

During the Week of Peace, Okonkwo beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo, and after breaking the Peace of Ani, is forced to sacrifice animals and pay a fine. Before the harvest, the village holds the Feast of the New Yam, which Okonkwo does not care for as it is a period of idleness. Okonkwo, with nothing to do, comes up with an excuse to beat his second wife, Ekwefi, and almost shoots her. A wrestling match takes place, and Ekwefi speaks with Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, who tells Ekwefi that her daughter Ezinma has come to stay.

The relationship between Ikemefuna and Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, begins to grow, much to Okonkwo's pleasure, but after locusts descend upon the village, the Oracle decrees Ikemefuna's death, with Okonkwo instructed not to take part in the killing. However, Okonkwo does kill him as a show of strength after Ikemefuna is attacked by another man. Okonkwo, having sunk into a depression, visits his friend Obierika and is asked to stay when his daughter's suitor arrives to determine the bride-price. Okonkwo's spirits are lifted after he decides that his depression was a result of idleness, at which point someone arrives to report the death of the oldest man in the village, and the men discuss the customs of other villages as well as a man with white skin named Amadi who is a leper.

Ezinma falls ill, worrying Okonkwo and Ekwefi, whose nine other children died in infancy, reaffirming Ekwefi's fear that they are being tormented by an ogbanje. Later, the village holds a ceremonial gathering to administer justice, where they listen to village disputes. Ekwefi imparts a story to Ezinma about a greedy, cunning tortoise, but when Chielo informs Ekwefi that the Oracle wishes to see Ezinma, Ekwefi panics until Okonkwo calms her, and she recalls leaving her first husband to be with Okonkwo.

Okonkwo continues to worry about Ezinma throughout Obierika's daughter's betrothal ceremony. During Ezeudu's funeral, Okonkwo's gun accidentally goes off, killing Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son. As punishment, Okonkwo and his family must go into exile for seven years, have their house burned down, and have their animals killed.

Okonkwo and his family relocate to Mbanta with the help of Okonkwo's uncle Uchendu, who addresses Okonkwo's disappointment with wise advice. During the second year of Okonkwo's exile, Obierika brings Okonkwo money that he has made selling Okonkwo's yams, and tells them about Abame, a village that was destroyed by white men. Obierika returns to Mbanta two years later and relates to Okonkwo that Nwoye has been seen with the Christian missionaries.

The missionaries succeed in building a church in the Evil Forest and garnering converts, much to the elders' surprise as they believed that the spirts of the forest would kill them off. Mr. Kiaga, the translator for the missionaries, persuades the converts not to reject their new faith. When one Christian dies after boasting of killing a sacred royal python, the villagers' trust in their gods is reaffirmed, convincing them to cease ostracizing the converts, a decision Okonkwo finds unfavorable. Before returning to Umuofia as his seven-year exile comes to an end, Okonkwo holds a feast for the village, where he expresses his concern that Christianity is winning people away from their families and traditions.

Okonkwo returns to Umuofia hoping to rebuild his compound and marry off his daughters, but he is disillusioned when he realizes that Umuofia has changed drastically due to the church's influence upon the villagers. Mr. Brown, the white missionary, holds a discussion about religion with Akunna, and while they do not agree with one another, they relish in the understanding of the other's faith. Before falling ill and leaving the village, Mr. Brown informs Okonkwo that Nwoye is training to be a teacher, and Okonkwo in turn regrets the changes in his once warlike people.

After Mr. Brown is replaced with the strict Reverend James Smith, the converts become even more zealous, in particular Enoch who commits a crime by attempting to unmask an egwugwu during the annual ceremony to honor the earth deity. The egwugwu defy Smith's orders by burning down the church, and are thus called upon by the District Commissioner, who apprehends and sets a bail for the captured villagers.

Okonkwo returns to the village after being released, adamant about the best course of action he should take. He carries this action out when he kills a messenger during a meeting with the nine villages. Eventually, after the District Commissioner is told by Obierika that Okonkwo is not home, Obierika leads the Commissioner to Okonkwo's whereabouts, only to find that Okonkwo has hung himself, a grave sin disallowing the clansmen from touching Okonkwo's body. The Commissioner departs, thinking to himself that the circumstances surrounding Okonkwo's death will make an interesting paragraph or two in a book he is working on about Africa.

Achebe wrote his novels in English because he felt that the written standard Igbo language was stilted, which he connected to the fact that the standard was deliberately created by combining various dialects. In a 1994 interview with *The Paris Review*,

Achebe said, "the novel form seems to go with the English language. There is a problem with the Igbo language. It suffers from a very serious inheritance which it received at the beginning of this century from the Anglican mission. They sent out a missionary by the name of Dennis. Archdeacon Dennis. He was a scholar. He had this notion that the Igbo language—which had very many different dialects—should somehow manufacture a uniform dialect that would be used in writing to avoid all these different dialects. Because the missionaries were powerful, what they wanted to do they did. This became the law. But the standard version cannot sing. There's nothing you can do with it to make it sing. It's heavy. It's wooden. It doesn't go anywhere."

Achebe's choice to write in English has caused controversy. While both African and non-African critics agree that Achebe modelled *Things Fall Apart* on classic European literature, they disagree about whether his novel upholds a Western model, or, in fact, subverts or confronts it. Achebe continued to defend his decision: "English is something you spend your lifetime acquiring, so it would be foolish not to use it. Also, in the logic of colonization and decolonization it is actually a very powerful weapon in the fight to regain what was yours. English was the language of colonization itself. It is not simply something you use because you have it anyway."

Achebe is noted for his inclusion of and weaving in of proverbs from Igbo oral culture into his writing.[] This influence was explicitly referenced by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*: "Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."

Q.2 CHARACTER SKETCH OF OKONWO

Okonkwo, the protagonist, has three wives and ten (total) children and becomes a leader of his clan. His father, Unoka, was weak and lazy, and Okonkwo resents him for his weaknesses: he enacts traditional masculinity. Okonkwo strives to make his way in a culture that traditionally values manliness.

Okonkwo, the son of the effeminate and lazy Unoka, strives to make his way in a world that seems to value manliness. In so doing, he rejects everything for which he believes his father stood. Unoka was idle, poor, profligate, cowardly, gentle, and interested in music and conversation. Okonkwo consciously adopts opposite ideals and becomes productive, wealthy, thrifty, brave, violent, and adamantly opposed to music and anything else that he perceives to be “soft,” such as conversation and emotion. He is stoic to a fault.
Okonkwo achieves great social and financial success by embracing these ideals. He marries three women and fathers several children. Nevertheless, just as his father was at odds with the values of the community around him, so too does Okonkwo find himself unable to adapt to changing times as the white man comes to live among the Umuofians. As it becomes evident that compliance rather than violence constitutes the

wisest principle for survival, Okonkwo realizes that he has become a relic, no longer able to function within his changing society.

Okonkwo is a tragic hero in the classical sense: although he is a superior character, his tragic flaw—the equation of manliness with rashness, anger, and violence—brings about his own destruction. Okonkwo is gruff, at times, and usually unable to express his feelings (the narrator frequently uses the word “inwardly” in reference to Okonkwo’s emotions). But his emotions are indeed quite complex, as his “manly” values conflict with his “unmanly” ones, such as fondness for Ikemefuna and Ezinma. The narrator privileges us with information that Okonkwo’s fellow clan members do not have—that Okonkwo surreptitiously follows Ekwefi into the forest in pursuit of Ezinma, for example—and thus allows us to see the tender, worried father beneath the seemingly indifferent exterior.

Q.3 CHARACTER SKETCH OF EKWEFI

- **Ekwefi** is Okonkwo's second wife. Although she falls in love with Okonkwo after seeing him in a wrestling match, she marries another man because Okonkwo was too poor to pay her bride price at the time. Two years later, she runs away to Okonkwo's compound one night and later marries him. She receives severe beatings from Okonkwo just like his other wives; but unlike them, she is known to talk back to Okonkwo.

Q.4 SHORT NOTE ON UNOKA

- **Unoka** is Okonkwo's father, who defied typical Igbo masculinity by neglecting to grow yams, take care of his wives and children, and pay his debts before he dies.

SHORT NOTE ON NWOYE

- **Nwoye** is Okonkwo's son, about whom Okonkwo worries, fearing that he will become like Unoka. Similar to Unoka, Nwoye does not subscribe to the traditional Igbo view of masculinity being equated to violence; rather, he prefers the stories of his mother. Nwoye connects to Ikemefuna, who presents an alternative to Okonkwo's rigid masculinity. He is one of the early converts to Christianity and takes on the Christian name Isaac, an act which Okonkwo views as a final betrayal.

UNIT III

DISGRACE

NOVEL BY J.M. COETZEE

Q.1Write a note on a plot construction of Disgrace by J.M. Coetzee.

Or

Write character sketch of David Lurie.

Ans. J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace* is an incredibly conflicting novel. Set against the backdrop of post-Apartheid South Africa, it provides a commentary on what it means to be human in a country where the balance of power is shifting seismically. Coetzee addresses the problem of masculinity and male violence, drawing out the racial implications of this within the political context of the novel. From start to finish, it was a deeply uncomfortable read; but that is why I think this novel is so important.

The most striking aspect of Coetzee's novel is his protagonist, David Lurie. He is a polarising character and I found it difficult – especially as a female reader – to warm to him. Lurie's life revolves around his interactions with women. The novel opens with Lurie eliciting the services of an escort; he attempts to form a romantic relationship with her despite discovering that she has a family and children outside her occupation. Lurie proceeds to start an affair with one of his students. Whilst Lurie's student Melani Isaacs does not reject his advances, he certainly seems to take advantage of her vulnerability; he offers her alcohol at his house, and at no stage does he stop to consider what she might be thinking.

The narrative is told from Laurie's perspective; he continually sexualises Melani and we are never given her side of the story. Lurie seems to completely disregard Melani's feelings when he seduces her, focusing solely on fulfilling his own desires. Lurie's overarching confidence and egotism does not diminish when he is called to a disciplinary hearing. He plays a game of words with the university committee, acknowledging his "guilt" but refusing to explicitly confess his wrongdoings. Instead of facing up to what he has done, Lurie resigns from his teaching position and retreats to stay with his daughter at her secluded farmhouse in the Eastern Cape. By this point in the novel, Coetzee has established his main character as deeply unlikeable. But when three black men rape Lurie's daughter and attempt to set Lurie himself on fire in a brutal attack, should we feel sorry for him?

The attack is horrific and puts a significant strain on Lurie and his daughter's relationship, as they deal with the trauma in different ways. Lurie presses Lucy to report every detail of the attack to the police and demands for the assailants to be caught, whilst Lucie becomes apathetic. She feels unsafe in her home but is adamant that she cannot leave. I noticed the differences between Lurie and Lucy stemming from gender become increasingly clear in the aftermath of the attack. Lucy and her friend Bev Shaw – the owner of a local animal shelter – both insist that Lurie cannot begin to understand the attack on Lucy, simply because he is a man. Lurie continually probes Lucy with questions, arguably ignorant of the shame that Lucy is feeling after being raped – perhaps because he too is used to violating women. Lurie's manipulation and derogatory treatment of women is also a form of male violence; albeit different and – on the surface – less horrific.

Disgrace follows the life and thoughts of the fifty-two-year-old protagonist David Lurie as he's forced to face himself and reckon with his feelings about women, sex, race, age, and power after his sexual affair with a young student leads to his downfall. Set in post-Apartheid South Africa amid rapid societal changes, the novel also examines how David's great resistance to change, particularly to passing into the later seasons of his life and therefore, as he sees it, losing his relevancy and sexual potency, contributes to his self-inflicted state of disgrace.

The novel begins with a glimpse into David's perceptions regarding women and aging. David, a white, twice-divorced university professor and incorrigible womanizer from Cape Town, solicits sex from a young Black prostitute named Soraya. He knows that she likely shudders at the thought of having sex with a man his age and that her work is a form of sexual exploitation. Still, he clings to their weekly trysts, relying on their sex to satisfy his own needs and viewing the trysts as a lifeline to his younger, more vital self. David later pressures his twenty-year-old student Melanie Isaacs into a sexual affair, including an encounter that borders on rape, for the same reasons. This inciting incident then sets the plot of *Disgrace* into irreversible motion: When Melanie files a formal complaint against David, he defiantly refuses to take responsibility, believes he's too old to change his ways, and leaves his university in exile to live with his adult lesbian daughter, Lucy, on her farm in the Eastern Cape.

When three Black men, the novel's antagonists, lock David in a bathroom, kill all but one of the farm's kenneled dogs, and rape Lucy, David begins to examine his past actions and grapple with the many changes, both personal and societal, swirling around him. Lucy's rape, and her later revelations that the attack was motivated by hatred, power, and subjugation, teach David how his actions affected Melanie. David then gains additional perspective into women's issues when Petrus, Lucy's Black neighbor and former assistant, proposes to marry Lucy, using the attack as leverage to acquire her land in return for his protection. Lucy's refusal to bend to David's insistence that she leave the farm and abort the baby conceived during her rape makes David finally recognize what she's been asking him to see: that she is now an independent adult whose actions he can no longer dictate. The dogs' deaths, along with David's service at

a local animal clinic where he helps Bev Shaw care for and euthanize old, unwanted dogs, also help him gain compassion and insight into his own state of disgrace.

The more David changes throughout *Disgrace*, though, the more he stays the same. Even after all he learns while living on Lucy's farm, he later visits Melanie's home in George. There, he looks at Melanie's younger sister with sexual desire and offers an insincere apology for the affair to their father, Mr. Isaacs, who realizes David likely only visited in hopes of seeing Melanie. When David eventually returns to Cape Town and finds his life in ruins because of his scandal, he again attempts to see Melanie at a play and later solicits sex from an inebriated prostitute. Later, when David returns to Lucy's farm, he again reveals his reluctance to change after he catches Pollux, the youngest of Lucy's three rapists, peeping on her. As David thrashes Pollux, his long-seething racist sentiments boil over and even as Lucy calls for peace, showing David the way to a better future, both for himself and his country, David still claims he's incapable of changing and becoming a better person.

The violence, misogyny, and racial divides found in *Disgrace*, coupled with David's repeated reluctance to change, are likely to cast doubts about both his and South Africa's future. At the novel's conclusion, when David decides to euthanize a dog that he had bonded with and tells Bev "I am giving him up," his words may signify that he has resigned himself to living in a permanent state of disgrace. Still, the optimistic reader can find reason for hope in the novel's preceding scenes. When David returns to Lucy's farm for the first time after she demanded he leave for thrashing Pollux, he watches his daughter tending to her flower fields and contemplates how much she's grown, her pregnancy, and the continuum of life. In the process, David also acknowledges, seemingly peacefully for the first time, that he is no longer a young man. His words to Bev, then, may in fact signify that he is at last ready to give up his former self and transition into the final seasons of his life. In fact, amid Lucy's blooming flower fields, David earnestly asks himself whether he can change his ways and, when he becomes a grandfather, acquire new virtues and become a better man. Whether David will change is a question each reader must ponder, but his invitation from Lucy to enter her farmhouse again represents a new start from which anything is possible.

Q.2 WRITE A NOTE ON THE THEME OF THE NOVEL

Resistance to Change

Change is inevitable, but that doesn't make it any easier for David, who spends much of *Disgrace* fighting it and suffering as a result. David's resistance to change is most apparent in his aversion to getting older and more irrelevant, which drives him to have sex with younger women such as Melanie Isaacs. What's more, even after David is given a chance to admit wrongdoing and agree to therapy, he chooses his own downfall. He's "a grown man" and "not receptive to being counselled," he tells the committee at his hearing. David is also too old to become a better person, he later thinks when Lucy asks him to volunteer at the animal clinic or calls for peace when his long-held racist sentiments spill over while thrashing Pollux.

Despite seeing Lucy as a full-fledged adult, David also has difficulty accepting she's no longer his little girl. David's reluctance to let Lucy go and not try to control her life, particularly after she decides not to report her rape and keep the child conceived during the attack, ultimately drives a wedge between them.

Amid all his personal and the larger societal changes surrounding him, though, David does grow in meaningful ways. He learns compassion from Bev Shaw and through Lucy, he gains perspective on how his actions affected Melanie. As David contemplates Lucy's pregnancy in the novel's final chapter, he also acknowledges he's entered the final seasons of his life, even questioning if, as he becomes a grandfather, he can acquire new virtues like equanimity, kindliness, and patience.

The Exploitation and Subjugation of Women

It's fitting that *Disgrace* opens with David Lurie's solicitation of sex from a prostitute, Soraya, who's young enough to be his own daughter. True, Soraya works for an escort service and likely leads a better life than the "streetwalker" with whom David has sex in Chapter Twenty-One. Still, their encounter reveals Soraya's body to be a commodity that can be bought and sold, and speaks of sexual exploitation, especially given that half her income goes to Discreet Escorts.

This knowledge doesn't deter David, though, and he again prioritizes his own needs during his affair with Melanie. Although Melanie is his student and has hips "as slim as a twelve-year-old's," David exerts his power over her and pushes her to have sex, including one encounter that borders on rape. The incident foreshadows Lucy's rape in Chapter Eleven and Lucy's revelation in Chapter Eighteen that her attack was about subjugation. The three men, Lucy determines, meant to bring her under their control and likely have done the same to other women. Whether Petrus plotted the attack is unclear, but he clearly profits from the men's effort to subjugate Lucy. She knows his proposal is only a pretext to acquire her land, a move that largely leaves her under his control and "patronage."

The Legacy of Colonialism and Racism

Time and setting are critical components of *Disgrace*. Published in 1999, the novel shines a light on South Africa and its emergence from Apartheid, a social and political system of segregation that allowed whites to subjugate Black people. Despite Apartheid's end in 1994, readers gain insight into the country's Colonialist past and lasting racial tensions through white characters such as Ettinger, a German immigrant and landowner who, after Lucy's rape in Chapter Eleven, says there's "[n]ot one of them you can trust," as well as Black characters such as Pollux, the youngest of Lucy's three rapists, who tells David and Lucy in Chapter Twenty-Three, "We will kill you all!"

After Lucy's rape, David struggles to accept the racial changes and power shifts that have occurred in the country. Although David has no proof, he's convinced that Petrus plotted the attack to acquire Lucy's land and is outraged when Petrus protects Pollux, protection that may stem from an attempt to balance past wrongs. Regardless, when David later sees Pollux peeping on Lucy in Chapter Twenty-Three, he erupts in violence, hurling racial slurs "that all his life he has avoided" while hoping to "show him

his place." Even as Lucy calls for peace, though, David declares it's too late for him, and likely others like him, to change.

Compassion and Empathy for Animals

Both Lucy and Bev Shaw extend love and kindness to animals and, despite David's initial reluctance to change, help him become a more compassionate person. Bev heads the Animal Welfare League, where she cares for old, wounded, abandoned animals, often needing to euthanize them. Of the act, Bev tells David in Chapter Nine, "I mind deeply" and that she wouldn't want someone doing the same for her who didn't. Bev, speaking of how many animals are eaten by humans, also tells David she's not sure how humans will ever justify their actions.

Lucy echoes Bev's sentiments, telling David in Chapter Eight she believes she's living a good life, in part because she has compassion for animals. Later, in Chapter Nine, Lucy laments how poorly humans treat dogs and convinces David to volunteer at the clinic. Despite David's largely selfish life to this point, his service there eventually leads him to become more caring and compassionate. He helps Bev euthanize dogs with love and in Chapter Fifteen, untethers two sheep who will later be slain for Petrus's party so they can graze freely. The compassion David gains doesn't merely represent his personal growth, however. His evolution, and the empathy and respect for animals that Lucy and Bev teach, also parallel the novel's similar themes of power, subjugation, and status based on age, gender, and race.

Q.3 CHARACTER SKETCH OF DAVID LURIE

Deeply flawed and confoundingly complex, David Lurie is about as frustrating a character as readers are likely to encounter in a novel. He is selfish, egotistical, and largely driven by his sexual desires, regardless of whom he hurts or exploits. He's also vain and reckless and, despite being highly intelligent, lets his flaws lead him to his state of disgrace. Nevertheless, David remains resistant to change, both personally and in the world around him, and uses his age of fifty-two to justify his reluctance to grow. What is likely to frustrate readers most, however, is that David isn't all bad, and he does in fact evolve throughout the novel. Through Bev Shaw, David learns to extend love and compassion to animals, and through his daughter, Lucy, whom he clearly loves and tries to help in his own way, David learns how he pushed his student, Melanie, into having sex. Still, just as readers may begin to root for David, he reverts to his old ways, secretly pursuing Melanie and again seeking out a prostitute to satisfy his needs. Like Lucifer in Byron's poem "Lara," David acts on impulses and, as the narrator states, is "[n]ot a bad man but not good either." Interestingly, David tells his students during his lesson on "Lara" that they're asked not to condemn Lucifer but instead, are invited to try to understand and even sympathize with him. Whether David evokes condemnation or sympathy, or a bit of both, is a question each reader must ponder.

Q.4 CHARACTER SKETCH OF LUCY

It’s clear why David is so proud of his adult daughter, Lucy. In so many ways, Lucy is all that David is not. She is self-aware, compassionate, open to change, and primarily concerned with being a good person. Through her way of living and willingness to stand up to David, she teaches her father so much: That animals deserve compassion, that women shouldn’t be treated as sexual objects, that David’s actions have hurt women, and that the time for peace and racial justice has come for South Africa. Lucy represents courage, strength, independence, and a determination to break free from the past and move forward. Although Lucy is devastated by her rape, her determination to remain on the farm, and not retreat like David did after his scandal broke at the University, shows a strength and resolve that David lacks. Her decision not to have an abortion, and instead keep and love the child conceived from her rape, also shows her determination to create a brighter future for her country.

Q.4 CHARACTER SKETCH OF MELANIE ISAACS

Much of what readers learn about Melanie Isaacs comes from David’s observations, but as her actions reveal, Melanie is much more than David’s perceptions of her. David sees Melanie primarily as young and beautiful, a means for him to fulfil his sexual needs and maintain a lifeline to his younger, more vital self. David also believes Melanie to be only a mediocre student. During David and Melanie’s sexual affair, readers might also be tempted to see Melanie as weak for acquiescing to David’s pressure. It’s critical, however, to remember that Melanie is only twenty years old and a student in David’s class. Still, Melanie finds the courage to file a complaint with the Vice-Rector, a courage that becomes more apparent when Lucy reveals how difficult it is to talk about and report her rape. Melanie also demonstrates strength when she returns to the University after the scandal and shows she has great talent and likely a promising future during her performance in *Sunset at the Globe Salon*.

UNIT IV

VOSS

NOVEL BY PATRICK WHITE

Q.1 Write the theme of Voss by Patrick White.

Ans. The novel that put Australian literature on the map is now in a Vintage Classic edition

Set in nineteenth-century Australia, *Voss* is the story of the secret passion between an explorer and a naïve young woman. Although they have met only a few times, Voss and Laura are joined by overwhelming, obsessive feelings for each other. Voss sets out to cross the continent. As hardships, mutiny and betrayal whittle away his power to endure and to lead, his attachment to Laura gradually increases. Laura, waiting in Sydney, moves through the months of separation as if they were a dream and Voss the only reality.

From the careful delineation of Victorian society to the sensitive rendering of hidden love to the stark narrative of adventure in the Australian desert, Patrick White's novel is a work of extraordinary power and virtuosity.

Voss is a novel by Patrick White that tells the story of an obsessive German explorer who leads an expedition into the Australian outback. It delves into themes of love, power, and the clash of cultures.

Exploring the Australian Wilderness

In Voss by Patrick White, we are transported to the Australian wilderness in the mid-19th century, where we meet the enigmatic and obsessive German explorer, Johann Ulrich Voss. Voss is determined to cross the continent from east to west and is convinced that he alone can achieve this feat. His unwavering self-belief and quest for the unknown draw a small group of followers, including the curious yet reserved Laura Trevelyan.

As Voss and his party set off on their perilous journey, we are introduced to Laura's world in Sydney, where she is engaged in a delicate dance with her suitor, Palfreyman. Despite her social obligations, Laura is consumed by her fascination with Voss, and her letters to him become a central theme of the novel, revealing her inner turmoil and the depth of her connection to the explorer.

The Trials of the Expedition

The expedition is fraught with hardships, testing the limits of the explorers' physical and mental endurance. Voss's single-minded determination and his harsh leadership style alienate his companions, leading to simmering tensions and eventual mutiny. Despite the growing discord, Voss remains resolute, driven by his obsession with the unknown and the promise of discovery.

Meanwhile, Laura grapples with her feelings for Voss, her growing disillusionment with her societal obligations, and her struggle to find her own identity. She is torn between her loyalty to Palfreyman and her yearning for the distant explorer, a conflict that mirrors the internal struggles of the expedition members as they battle the harsh Australian landscape.

Descent into Madness

As the expedition progresses, Voss becomes increasingly isolated, both physically and mentally. His pursuit of the unknown transforms into a dangerous obsession, blinding him to the reality of his situation. The harsh environment and the growing dissent among his men take a toll on Voss, pushing him towards a perilous descent into madness.

Back in Sydney, Laura's emotional turmoil reaches its peak as she grapples with the news of Voss's deteriorating condition. Her internal conflict intensifies, and she is forced to confront the stark contrast between the suffocating societal norms she is expected to adhere to and the raw, untamed passion represented by Voss and his expedition.

The Tragic Conclusion

In the novel's tragic denouement, the expedition ends in disaster, with Voss and his remaining men perishing in the unforgiving Australian wilderness. Laura, devastated by the news of Voss's demise, is left to grapple with the aftermath of her unrequited love and the societal expectations that continue to confine her.

The novel concludes with Laura's quiet rebellion against the societal norms that have constrained her, symbolizing a newfound sense of independence and self-awareness. As the novel ends, Laura's future remains uncertain, but her experiences with Voss and

his ill-fated expedition have left an indelible mark on her, shaping her understanding of love, loss, and the unyielding spirit of exploration.

Symbolism in voss

The novel uses extensive religious symbolism. Voss is compared repeatedly to God, Christ and the Devil. Like Christ he goes into the desert, he is a leader of men and he tends to the sick. Voss and Laura have a meeting in a garden prior to his departure that could be compared to the Garden of Eden.

A metaphysical thread unites the novel. Voss and Laura are permitted to communicate through visions. White presents the desert as akin to the mind of man, a blank landscape in which pretensions to godliness are brought asunder. In Sydney, Laura's adoption of the orphaned child, Mercy, represents godliness through a pure form of sacrifice.

There is a continual reference to duality in the travelling party, with a group led by Voss and a group led by Judd eventually dividing after the death of the unifying agent, Mr Palfreyman. The intellect and pretensions to godliness of Mr Voss are compared unfavourably with the simplicity and earthliness of the pardoned convict Judd. Mr Judd, it is implied, has accepted the blankness of the desert of the mind, and in doing so, become more 'godlike'.

The spirituality of Australia's indigenous people also infuses the sections of the book set in the desert.

Ques. 2 Here is a **character sketch of** Character Sketch of Johann Ulrich Voss

the protagonist in *Voss* by Patrick White. OR

Character Sketch of Johann Ulrich Voss

Ans. Johann Ulrich Voss is the complex and compelling protagonist of Patrick White's 1957 novel *Voss*, which is inspired by the real-life German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt. Voss is a **German-born explorer**, obsessed with the ambition to conquer the **Australian interior**, and he is portrayed as a man of immense **intellect**, **spiritual pride**, and **inner conflict**. His character reflects themes of **human isolation**, **hubris**, **spiritual quest**, and **the clash between man and nature**.

1. The Ambitious Visionary

Voss is portrayed as a **visionary figure**, filled with a grand ambition to **map and master the unknown**. His expedition into the Australian outback is more than a geographic journey—it becomes a **metaphysical and existential quest**. Voss believes he has the **intellectual and moral strength** to conquer not just the land, but also fate and suffering itself.

- His drive to explore the desert symbolizes a desire to test **human limits**.
- He views his mission not just as exploration, but as a form of **destiny** or **sacrifice**.

This ambition, however, borders on **arrogance**. Voss's belief in his own superiority makes him **dismissive of others**, including the men in his expedition and even the natural environment he tries to dominate.

2. The Intellectual and Outsider

As a **German outsider** in colonial Australia, Voss is intellectually isolated. He is **highly educated, introspective**, and often speaks in abstract, philosophical terms. He struggles to connect with those around him—his companions find him cold, and he sees them as inferior. This detachment contributes to his eventual downfall.

- Voss is an **alien figure** in both the physical and social landscape of Australia.
- His **mystical and philosophical nature** often isolates him emotionally and mentally.

Patrick White uses Voss's character to critique the **European rationalist and colonial mindset**, which seeks to impose order and understanding upon a land that resists both.

3. Spiritual and Mystical Dimensions

Voss is not merely a realist explorer—he is driven by a **spiritual hunger**. He aspires to god-like knowledge and endurance, and often **compares himself to Christ**. His journey becomes one of **spiritual purification** through suffering.

- His suffering in the desert is symbolic of **inner transformation**.
- Voss begins the journey with pride but ends in **humility and spiritual realization**.

The novel juxtaposes Voss with **Laura Trevelyan**, the young woman with whom he shares a deep, mystical connection. Their **telepathic bond** reflects Voss's **transcendental and emotional side**, which develops more fully as his physical journey unravels.

4. Tragic Flaws and Downfall

Voss's **hubris**—his overconfidence in his own strength, intellect, and endurance—is a major tragic flaw. He **underestimates the land**, **overestimates himself**, and **fails to understand** the people he leads.

- He often ignores practical advice, believing himself above ordinary concerns.
- He loses the loyalty of his men, as his spiritual obsession disconnects him from reality.

Voss's **psychological and physical deterioration** mirrors his internal collapse. The desert, unyielding and vast, becomes the **true protagonist** of the novel, humbling the man who tried to dominate it.

5. Symbolic and Christ-like Figure

As the narrative progresses, Voss takes on the **role of a Christ-figure**, suffering, wandering, and finally dying in the wilderness. His death is not just the failure of a physical journey—it becomes a **moment of redemption** and spiritual union with Laura.

- His crucifixion-like suffering purges him of pride.
- In death, he becomes more human, more empathetic, and more spiritually complete.

This transformation is central to the novel's philosophical theme: that **knowledge and transcendence come not through conquest, but through humility, suffering, and love**.

Conclusion

Johann Ulrich Voss is a richly layered and deeply symbolic character. As a **man of intellect, ambition, and spiritual longing**, he embodies both the **glory and failure of the human desire to conquer the unknown**. Through Voss, Patrick White explores the limits of rationality, the dangers of pride, and the redemptive power of spiritual surrender. His journey into the Australian wilderness becomes a profound meditation on the nature of **identity, destiny, and the human soul**.

Question3

Critically discuss the writing style of Patrick White in his novel *Voss*. How does his literary technique contribute to the novel's themes, tone, and psychological depth?

Answer: Introduction

Patrick White, one of Australia's most celebrated and Nobel Prize-winning novelists, is known for his **complex, poetic, and philosophical writing style**. His 1957 novel *Voss*, inspired by the real-life explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, is a profound exploration of **spiritual transformation, colonial ambition, human isolation, and metaphysical questing**. The writing style of *Voss* is not merely a vehicle for storytelling—it is integral to the novel's **symbolism, mood, and inner landscape**.

White's style in *Voss* is marked by its **psychological introspection, modernist experimentation, mystical symbolism, and richly poetic language**. This answer analyzes the various stylistic features White employs in *Voss*, demonstrating how they deepen the thematic and emotional impact of the novel.

1. Poetic and Symbolic Language

One of the most defining characteristics of White's writing style in *Voss* is its **dense, poetic language**. He often uses **metaphor, imagery, and symbolism** not only to describe the external world but also to reflect the **inner consciousness** of characters.

- The **Australian desert**, for example, is not just a physical setting but a **spiritual symbol**—a vast, unknowable space that challenges human pride and exposes inner truths.
- White's descriptions are not realistic in a conventional sense. Instead, they evoke **mystical and emotional landscapes**, blurring the lines between **external nature and internal psyche**.

Example:

The desert is often depicted in dreamlike, hallucinatory images, representing the spiritual wasteland through which Voss must pass in his quest for self-realization.

This **rich poeticism** elevates the novel into the realm of **allegory and spiritual epic**, distancing it from typical adventure narratives and grounding it in **metaphysical complexity**.

2. Psychological Depth and Interior Monologue

White's style in *Voss* is deeply **psychological**, shaped by the **modernist tradition** of interior monologue and stream of consciousness. Rather than focusing on action or plot, he delves into the **inner conflicts, doubts, and desires** of his characters—especially Voss and Laura.

- Voss's internal dialogues reveal his growing megalomania, his guilt, and ultimately, his humility.
- Laura's introspective reflections uncover her spiritual struggle and her ambiguous connection to Voss.

By exploring characters' **inner lives** so intensely, White transforms *Voss* into a **novel of consciousness**. The external journey through the desert is paralleled by an **internal journey through the soul**, made visible through the language of thought and emotion.

3. Symbolism and Allegory

The novel is loaded with **symbolism**, and White's writing style accommodates layers of **allegorical meaning**. He uses landscapes, events, and even minor details to symbolize larger spiritual and philosophical ideas.

- The desert becomes a **symbol of the void**, the unknown, and spiritual testing.
- Voss himself is a **Christ-like figure**, whose journey and suffering mirror crucifixion and resurrection.
- The bond between Voss and Laura is symbolic of **union between the physical and spiritual**, or the masculine and feminine aspects of the self.

White does not explicitly state these symbols but **weaves them subtly** into the text, demanding close reading and interpretation. His writing style encourages readers to **read beneath the surface**, engaging with the novel on **multiple levels of meaning**.

4. Non-Linear Narrative and Shifts in Perspective

White's style in *Voss* also exhibits **modernist narrative techniques**, including **non-linear storytelling**, **shifts in point of view**, and **blending of fantasy and reality**.

- The novel frequently switches between Voss's journey and Laura's life in Sydney, creating a **duality** that reflects the emotional and spiritual connection between them.
- At times, the narrative enters into **visions, dreams, and hallucinations**, blurring the line between inner experience and outer reality.
- These shifts mirror the **fragmented nature of identity and perception**, reinforcing the idea that reality is **subjective and multifaceted**.

This **experimental structure** reflects the **unpredictable, chaotic nature of human consciousness**, making the novel an exploration of the **mind as much as the world**.

5. Use of Irony and Tragic Tone

Though mystical and poetic, White's style is not romantic or idealistic. He often uses **irony and tragic undertones** to highlight the **limitations of human ambition and the futility of ego**.

- Voss begins the journey with arrogance, imagining himself as a heroic explorer, but he is gradually **broken down by the land, by sickness, and by disillusionment**.
- The expedition deteriorates into **conflict, madness, and death**, reflecting the **tragic consequences of pride and isolation**.

White's language shifts accordingly—from elevated poetic prose to **bleaker, more fragmented descriptions** as the characters descend into suffering and psychological breakdown.

This stylistic change reinforces the **emotional journey of the characters**, as their lofty ideals confront harsh reality.

6. Religious and Mythic Overtones

White's style is heavily influenced by **religious themes**, particularly **Christian mysticism**. His characters, especially Voss, undergo journeys that resemble **spiritual pilgrimage** or **sainthood trials**.

- The narrative is filled with **Biblical imagery**—crosses, deserts, sacrifices, and trials.
- Voss's death is portrayed as a **kind of martyrdom**, followed by a mystical resurrection in the memories and visions of others.

White's use of **sacred language**, **ritual symbolism**, and **religious metaphors** transforms the novel into a **mythic narrative** about **redemption through suffering**.

This mythic tone elevates the story from a simple tale of exploration to an **epic spiritual quest**, echoing works like Dante's *Divine Comedy* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

7. Dense and Demanding Prose Style

White's style is often described as **challenging** due to its **dense syntax**, **abstract vocabulary**, and **philosophical tone**.

- His sentences are long and layered, often packed with **symbolic meaning and inner commentary**.
- He demands the reader's **attention and patience**, refusing to simplify or spoon-feed information.

This difficult prose is a deliberate choice—it mirrors the **complexity of the characters' inner lives**, the **austere mystery of the landscape**, and the **spiritual burden of the quest**.

Readers must engage with the novel **actively**, interpreting each passage for **emotional, symbolic, and metaphysical significance**.

Conclusion

Patrick White's writing style in *Voss* is not merely decorative—it is **fundamental to the novel's philosophical and emotional depth**. His poetic language, psychological introspection, symbolic richness, and modernist experimentation combine to create a work that is as much a **spiritual vision** as it is a narrative of exploration.

Through his stylistic choices, White challenges traditional storytelling and invites the reader to participate in a **meditative journey** into the nature of human ambition, faith, suffering, and redemption. His prose, though demanding, is **rewarding in its depth**, offering a **literary experience that is intellectual, emotional, and transcendent**.

In *Voss*, Patrick White proves that language is not just a tool for narration—it is a **sacred medium for expressing the ineffable truths of the soul**.