M.A. English III Semester

Course XII

American Literature

Session: 2024-25

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INDEX

UNIT- I NON-DETAILED READING.

John Winthrop

If George Washington is the father of our country John Winthrop probably could rightly be considered the grandfather. Winthrop built up the Massachusetts Bay Colony – the first major settlement in America. He was an English Puritan who became an influential governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was re-elected twelve times to the position and his leaderships shaped the approach to law and religious governance in the first decades of the colony. He often paid his own money to build buildings or help families emigrate.

Winthrop delivered a sermon, titled “A Modell of Christian Charity”, which was later published. The address reminded the travellers of their covenant or agreement, encouraged them., to remain pious in their approach to their duties and obligations to each other. The sermon makes reference to Matthew 5:14 (“ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill can’t be hid”) with Winthrop saying “for we must consider that wee shall be as a city upon a hill”. The phrase “City on a Hill” became woven into the canon of American myths and has been used in Speeches by generations of US political figures, including Kennedy, Reagan and Obama. Winthrop is important because of how he merged political and religious authority in the colony.

Fennimore cooper (American Novelist)

“Twain is attacking Cooper’s. diction or Hawkeye’s tracking feats, his strategy is to with one charge cooper with one small inaccuracy, reconstruct the surrounding narrative or sentence around it, and then produce the whole as evidence that Cooper’s kind of English would prevent anyone from seeing reality.”

-John Mc Williams

James Fennimore Cooper was one of the first popular American novelists, born in September 1789 in Burlington, New Jersey. Cooper grew up in Coopers town, New York a frontier settlement that he later dramatized in his novels. Cooper had a rambling and unpredictable early life. He attended Yale when he was only thirteen but was expelled for instigating a practical joke. His father forced him to join Navy. Cooper began writing almost by accident.

When reading a popular English Novel allowed to his wife on day, Cooper suddenly tossed the book aside and said, “I could write a better book myself?” He lived up to his claim by writing precaution in 1820 and the spy, his first popular success, the following year. For the rest of his life, Cooper attracted a massive readership on both sides of Atlantic, a following rivalled in size only by that of Sir Walter Scott. When he died in 1851 Cooper was one of the most famous writer in the world.

Ralf Waldo Emerson

(American Essayist)

"As the celebrated author of self- Reliance a pioneer of American thought and a proponent of Transcendentalism, Ralf Waldo Emerson remains a central figure in studies of 19th century America and the American Renaissance."

Ralf Waldo Emerson was an essayist, philosopher and poet. He graduated from Harvard university. He was ordained a Unitarian minister in 1829. His questioning of traditional doctrine led him to resign the ministry 3 years later. He formulated his philosophy in "nature"(1836). This book helped initiate New England transcendentalism, a movement of which he soon became the leading exponent. In 1834 he moved to Concord, Mass; the home of his friend Henry David Thoreau. His lectures on the proper role of the scholars and the waning of the Christian tradition caused considerable controversy. In 1840, with Margaret Fuller, he helped launch 'The Dial', a journal that provided an outlet for transcendentalist ideas. He became internationally famous with his 'Essays' (1841-1844) including "self reliance". 'Representative Men" (1850) consists of biographies of historical figures. "The Conduct of Life"(1860), his most mature work, reveals a developed humanism and a full awareness of human limitations. His 'Poems'(1847) and May Day (1867) established as a major poet. Walt Whitman called him his 'master'.

Friedrich Nietzsche says:

"...he was the most gifted of the Americans"

Frederick Douglas

(American Social Reformer)

“The white man’s happiness cannot be purchased by the black man’s misery”

-Frederick Douglas

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland as Frederick Bailey, circa 1818. Douglass was raised in slavery on farms on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and in Baltimore. In Baltimore, the wife of Douglass’ “owner” taught Douglass to read, and he began making contacts with educated free Blacks.

Douglass escaped to New York around age twenty. Here he reunited with and married his fiancée, a free Black woman from Baltimore named Anna Murray. Uneasy about Douglass’s fugitive status, the two finally settled further north in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Frederick changed his last name from Bailey to Douglass. Douglass worked for the next three years as a laborer and continued his self-education.

Douglass writes:

> “Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave”.

Herman Melville (American Novelist & short story writer)

Lawrence Buell argued that :

“Melville is justly said to be nineteenth century America’s leading poet after Whitman and Dickinson.”

Herman Melville was born on August 1, 1819 on Pearl Street in New York City, the third of eight children born to Maria Gansevoort Melville and Allan Melville. Both the Gansevoort and the Melville had ties to the American upper class; the families both played important roles during the Revolution.

Melville was an American novelist and short story writer poet of American Renaissance. Moby- Dick is one of his famous works. Moby – Dick is considered one great the American novels. At the time of his death, Melville had recently completed his first extended prose narrative in more than thirty years.

This work would remain unpublished for yet another 33 years. In1924 another this work was published under the title “ Billy Budd”.

Melville writes:

> “ A smile is the chosen vehicle of all ambiguities!”

Mark Twain (American Writer, Humorist & Essayist)

Mark Twain quotes:

“The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can not read them”

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in the town of Florida, Missouri, in 1835. When he was four years old, his family moved to Hannibal, a town on the Mississippi River much like the towns depicted in his two most famous novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

He was an American writer, humorist and essayist. He was praised as “greatest humourist the Unites States has produced.”

He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters (D Litt) by Yale University in 1901 and Doctor of Law by the university of Missouri in 1902.

Mark Twain quotes:

“Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

President William Howard Taft remarks about Mark Twain :

“Mark Twain gave pleasure- to works will continue to give such pleasure, to millions and his works will continue to give such pleasure to millions yet to come....”

Henry James (American British Author)

"It takes to great deal of history a produce a little literature"

-Henry James

Henry James, whose mastery of the psychological novel markedly influenced twentieth-century literature, was born in New York City. His father, Henry James, Sr., was an unconventional thinker who had inherited considerable wealth. He began writing short stories and book reviews when he was at of Harward Law School. By the time James died, he had written the more than a hundred short stories and novellas, as well as literary and dramatic criticism, plays, travel essays, book reviews and twenty novels, including The Portrait of a Lady (1881), The Bostanions (1886), The Wings of the Dove (1902), The Ambassadors (1903), and The Golden Bowl (1904).

James had maintained a certain reserve towards most people, although he had many friends and acquaintances. He never married. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature three times.

David Belasco

(producer & Playwright)

David Belasco was an American theatrical producer and playwright whose important innovations in the techniques and standards of staging and design were in contrast to the quality of the place he produced.

As a child actor, Belasco appeared with Charles Kean in Richard 3rd and later played in stock companies touring the mining camps.

Belasco was the first American producer whose name, regardless of star actor or play, attracted patrons to the theatre. He chose unknown actors and elevated them to stardom. He also preferred playwrights whose success depended upon his collaboration. He gained a reputation for minute attention to detail, sensational realism, lavish settings, astonishing mechanical effects, and experiments in lighting. He maintained a large permanent staff that worked constantly to perfect surprising effects.

Belasco claimed to have been connected with the production of 374 plays, most of them written or adapted by himself.

Benjamin Franklin

(writer & scientist)

Benjamin Franklin wo was born in Boston on January 6, 1706. He was the eleventh child of of Josiah Franklin, a candle maker, His mother was Abiah. Franklin's father put him in grammar school to become a minister, but soon took him out again because he could not afford it. He was an American Polymath, inventor, ,leading writer, American Scientist, Statesman, diplomat, printer, publisher and political philosopher.

He was active in community affairs and colonial and state politics as well as national and international affairs, He served as President of Pennsylvania.for four years. As a scientist, his studies of electricity made him a major figure in the American enlightenment and the history of physics.

His life and legacy of scientific and political achievement, and his Status as one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, seen Franklin honored for more than two centuries after his death.

Abraham Lincoln

(16th President of USA)

Abraham Lincoln was born in rural Kentucky in 1809.During his childhood and early youth the family would move several times, first to Indianna and later to Illinois . Lincoln's mother Nancy Hanks, died when he was still a boy , and the next year his father died. He married Marry Todd in 1842. The couple had four sons, two of whom would died tragicall. In 1846 Lincoln was elected to US congress, and moved to Washington to serve. Lincoln took an overpowering role as commander in chief in a time of war. Controversially he suspended several rights as defined by constitution and expanded the powers of both the executive and federal government considerably.

Lincoln's most significant action, as president to be his emancipation proclamation of January 1, 1863. It paved the way for the thirteenth amendment and abolishment of the slavery in the United States. Despite heavy criticism from all sides, Lincoln maintained enough support to win re-election in 1864.

While attending a Washington theatre, Lincoln was assassinated By John Wilkes Booth. The nations mourned as he lay in state, and Illinois wept when her favorite son was interred Springfield a few weeks later. Abraham Lincoln would come to earn a place of honour among the greatest of American heroes. A famous American poet Walt Whitman mourns on the assassination of Lincoln in his poem "O Captain! My captain:

"Here captain! Dear Father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream on the deck,

You've fallen cold and dead"

_ "O Captain! My Captain!"

Uncle Tom's Cabin

(Novel by Harriet Beecher)

"Think of your freedom, every time you see uncle Tom's Cabin'; and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind. To follow an in his steps, and be honest and faithful on Christian as he was."

. Uncle Tom's Cabin, written by Harriet Beecher Stowe and published in 1852, is an abolitionist novel that follows Uncle Tom. He was a devout and Kind hearted and enslaved man. The story depict the brutality of slavery and its impact on families. It portrays Tom's resilience and 'Christian faith. The novel was inspired by books about the experiences of formerly enslaved individuals and passage of the fugitive Slave Act 1850. Uncle Toms Cabin was an immediate best seller's and is often credited with helping to glavanize anti-slavery sentiment in the North.

In an era where knowledge is highly regarded this quote Serves as a poignant reminder that sometimes,it is the simplicity of virtue that truly matters:

"The longer I live, the more I read, the more patiently I think, and the more anxiously I inquire, the less I seen to know…..do justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly. this is enough."

The Scarlet Letter (Novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne)

"A pure hand needs no glove to cover it”

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, published in 1850, is a Classic novel set in Puritanical 17th Century Massachusetts. The story revolves around Hester Prynne , a woman who is condemned by her community for committing adultery and forced to wear a scarlet letter “A” on her chest as a symbol of her sin. She cries:

“. Thou shalt forgive me! Cried Hester, flinging herself on the fallen leaves, beside him. Let God punish! Thou shalt f forgive!”

The novel delves into themes of sin, guilt societal expectations, offering a compelling exploration of human nature and morality. The vivid portrayal of austere Puritan society serves as a backdrop to the and The complex characters and their internal struggles. Historically, The Scarlet Letter values and attitudes of 19th-century America while timeless insights providing timeless insights into the human condition.

The Scarlet Letter remains relevant in contemporary discussions about morality, judgement and the oppressive force of societal norms .Its investigation of the human psyche and the impact of social stigma contributes to its enduring appeal.

Walden:

(A Memoir by Henery David Thoreau)

“Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth.”

_Walden

‘Walden’ is a memoir by the transcendentalist writer and philosopher Henry David Thoreau that was first published in1854. It opens with the author’s straight forward statement that he spent two years in Walden Pond, near concord Massachusetts, living a simple life supported by no one. Walden concludes with “Thoreau’s comment that with his project over, he returned to civilize life on September 6,1847. In between, Thoreau weaves together moral philosophy, natural history, and social criticism to describe this experience and to stress the value of simplicity and the importance of self reliance. Thoreau writes in Walden:

“Things do not change, we change.”

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The Red Badge of Courage (Novel by American author Stephen Crane)

“ He wished that he, too, had a wound, red badge of courage”.

The Red Badge of courage, published in 1895 by American author Stephen Crane, is the novel that serves as a poignant exploration of fear, courage, and self discovery during the American civil war. The novel follows the young soldier Henry Fleming , who grappels with the internal conflicts of cowardice and bravery. As he confronts the harsh realities of battle, the narrative delves into the psychological toll of war and the quest for personal honour. The Red Badge of Courage has been adapted to the screen many times, including. A 1951version directed by John Huston.

The Red Badge of courage, has a distinctive style, which is often described as naturalistic, realistic, impressionistic. The novel reflects the inner experience of Henry Fleming a young soldiers who flees from combat.

While the novel takes place during a series of battles, there is not a traditional Civil War narrative. Focusing on the complex internal struggle of its main character, rather than on the war itself. The young Soldier says:

“He Suddenly leaned forward and pressed his face to the ground. Oh God, don’t let me be killed.”

The Great Gatsby

F. scott Fitzgerald

“ Reserving judgement is a matter of infinite hope.”

_(The Great Gatsby)

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald was published in 1925 during the Roaring Twenties, a period of economic prosperity and social change in the United States. Set in the summer of 1922, the novel unfolds in the fictional town of West Egg on Long Island and follows the life of Nick Carraway. Nick, the narrator, becomes entangled in the lives of his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and his mysterious neighbor, Jay Gatsby. Gatsby is a wealthy and enigmatic man known for his extravagant parties and his unrequited love for Daisy. The novel explores themes of wealth and class, with Gatsby’s pursuit of success and love serving as a symbol of the elusive and often unattainable nature of the American Dream.

The story is layered with symbolism and explores the moral and social decay hidden beneath the surface of the glittering Jazz Age. Fitzgerald’s portrayal of the excesses and moral bankruptcy of the era offers a critique of the American society of his time. *The Great Gatsby* remains relevant today as a commentary on the pursuit of wealth and the corruption of the American Dream.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Novel by Zoora Neale Hurston

Their Eyes Were Watching God, published in 1937, is a novel that explores the journey of Janie Mae Crawford, a Black woman living in the early 20th century. The narrative is framed as Janie's reflection on her life, recounting her experiences and relationships to her friend Pheoby. Janie's quest for self-discovery and fulfillment takes her through three marriages, each providing unique insights into love, independence, and societal expectations.

Set in the rural South, the novel vividly captures the cultural and social context of the time, including issues of race, gender, and class. Janie's story is a powerful exploration of identity, resilience, and the quest for autonomy in a society marked by racial and gendered oppression.

"Janie knew that God tore down the old world every evening and built a new one by sun up . It was wonderful to see it take form with the sun and emerge from the grey dust of its making" .

Their Eyes Were Watching God is celebrated for its rich prose and unique narrative voice, incorporating elements of African American vernacular and folklore. Hurston's portrayal of Janie's individuality and her defiance of societal norms contributes to the novel's enduring significance in discussions of African Literature and feminist literature.

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The Hairy Ape

“Play by Eugene o’ Neill

He slips on the floor and dies. The monkeys set up a chattering, whimpering wail. And, perhaps the Hairy ape at last belongs.

This quote is taken from the final stage direction of the play in Scene Eight, evokes a sense of Yank coming home to the animal world. O’Neill’s final reading of the play is clear. Yank is accepted by the animal kingdom, finally discovering the sense of ‘belonging’ he has been searching for. Yank has been rejected from human society and has finally found refuge in the basest form of himself- the animal. However, this refuge is death. Yank finally finds refugee as he lies dead on the floor of the ape’s cage,

Yank’s death can be interpreted in numerous ways. O’Neil reveals that such a bond between a living human and animal is unattainable on Earth, but also suggests that impetus for yank's belonging is his death- he has succumbed to nature and been destroyed by it.

This play was first performance in 1922. Yank who was a brutish stoker, feels alienated from both the upper-class passengers and the labourers in the ship’s engine room. When he met Mildred, the daughter of a steel-magnate, Yank becomes obsessed with the idea that he is not truly human and embarks on a quest to find his place in the world.

On The Road

Novel by American author Jack Kerouac

“But why think about that when all the golden lands ahead of you and all kinds of unforseen events wait lurking to surprise you and make you glad you’re alive to see.”

-On The Road

On the Road, published in 1957, is a novel by American author Jack Kerouac that follows the cross-country adventures of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, two young men who reject societal norms and seek meaning and self-discovery through travel. Set against the backdrop of the 1950s, the novel explores the restless pursuit of freedom and self-discovery

“Sal, we gotta go and never stop going

Till we get there.

Where we going man ?”

I don’t know but we gotta go.”

On The Road is a defining work of the Beat Generation, a literary movement that emerged in 1950’s and rejected the materialism and conformity of post World War II.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

Play by Edward Albee

Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was first performed in 1962. It follows the volatile relationship between George and Martha, a middle-aged married couple. Set against the backdrop of a late-night gathering with a younger couple, Nick and Honey, the play portrays a night of verbal sparring, emotional revelations, and gamesmanship. The play is known for its dark humor and its exploration of themes such as truth, disillusionment, and the nature of reality. It won the Tony Award for Best Play in 1963 and was adapted into a film in 1966 that won five Academy Awards.

Albee has said that the title of the play "means who's afraid of the big bad wolf ... who's afraid of living life without false illusions". Albee's interest in the theme of reality versus illusion is expressed in a number of his plays. In discussing *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* he cites Nietzsche's interpretation of the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy of ancient Greek drama, as described in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Albee says,

There was a time when people believed in deities. And then revolutions came – industrial, French, Freudian, Marxist. God and absolutes vanished. Individuals find this very difficult and uncomfortable. All they have left is fantasy or the examination of the self.

UNIT-II

1) **WALT WHITMAN**

Song of Myself

Poem by Walt Whitman

Question: Critical Appreciation of song of Myself/ Theme of song of Myself

ANS.

“I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

And what I assume, you shall assume
For every atom belonging to me

as good belongs to you”

-Song of Myself Section1

These lines are derived from the opening section of song of myself which introduces the theme of the long poem. It is the study of the post himself. Indirectly it is study of all mankind. While singing of himself he is singing the glory of all humanity. He sees himself in others. Whatever is within him, he finds it in others. Hence the poem has a all embracing universal theme. Hyatt H. Waggoner quotes on Walt Whitman the port:

“Whitman is the poet of the self, but not merely of the self that loves and dies, the naturalistic self,….. Whitman is our greatest exponent of the individual conceived as containing the possibility of self transcendence, or growth beyond the determined and known.”

Development of self:

Song of Myself in the various section is the development of the self of the poet. It enlarges itself in the entire “kosmos”. The “self” oozes itself in the Universe. It identifies itself with everything in this universe. It studies nature around. Step by Step the self of the poet transcends the physical limits and sets out on a mystical journey. Whitman deals with ‘self’, ‘love’, “nature” “death’ and’ transcendence’ in appealing manner. His faith in reality and in presenting it as it is, is inherent throughout his poetry.

Deep Meaning:

The different sections of the song of Myself are intense, original and packed with meaning..

To quote James E Miller: “Like no other poem in American literature, this long self centred and prophetic chant, deliberately physical and aggressively spiritual, seems designed to shock and startle, surprise and disturb.”

Song of Myself gives birth and original shape and identity to the new world personality - a new conscious self hood that provides a model for America and for modern man. The poet magnifies himself. Poem represents an awakening of the self, a coming to consciousness for the first time of the real meaning of being alive and in the flesh, of seeing and hearing, of tasting and feeling. It discovers secrets and uncovers mysteries- the eternity and infinity, of the self, the glories of the body and soul, the completion of life through death.

Element of Mysticism:

“When viewed in terms of the phases of the traditional mystical experience, song of myself takes on a comprehensive structural shape.”

Section1-5 entry into the mystical state

Section 6-16 awakening of self

Section 17-32 purification of self

Section 33-37 illumination of the dark night of soul

Section 38-43 union (emphasis on faith and love)

Section 44-49 union (emphasis on perception)

Section 50-52 emergence from mystical state

The traditional mystic attempted to annihilate himself and mortify his senses in preparation for absorption into the transcendent. Whitman magnifies the self and glorifies the senses in his progress toward union.

Reality Presented: Whitman observes life and presents it in the poem. It is a profound sensual experience. He gives the inner qualities of things he observes as they exist: the reality grasped by devoted concentration on its manifest being. The sections in total have an appealing quality. Yet there is an individuality about each section. Each section when read separately stand out with Whitman’s impression on it. H every well mirrors the contraries present in the Universe. It shows “poetry in the closest and most intimate union with the positive realities and complexities of life.”

Americanism plus universality: the long poem reveals Whitman’s pleasure in the native scene. He mentions the rich variety in nature and life of America. He next

elevates the citizen of America to a citizen of the world. His self becomes all inclusive. He also shows the strong bondage which he has with the universe. H e describes the acceptance of the existence of God, he describes the various creations of God, as evidence to it.

Bard of Democracy: The poem also exhibits the poet as a bard of democracy. He considers all being equal irrespective of their caste, sex, colour, religion and status. Dowdon quotes:

“He is the comrade of every man high and low. His admiration of a strong, healthy and a beautiful body or strong, healthy and beautiful soul.”

Whitman talks of the individual self no doubt. But the individual stands for a group of persons. The group symbolises multitude. His poem automatically becomes a catalogue of persons, beings, of animate and inanimate objects.

Thus the Song of Myself is not just the poet’s self- celebration, but it is a celebration of himself as a man and American: it is what he possesses in common with all others that he feels to be glorious and worthy of song. D.H. Lawrence quotes about Whitman, the poet in Song of Myself:

“This poet with the private soul leaking out of him all the time… All his privacy leaking out in a sort of dribble, oozing into the universe. Walt becomes in his own person, the whole world, the whole universe, the whole eternity of time…. Democracy, En Masse, one identity.”

Epic value: Song of Myself, though a group of lyrics is epical in it’s value. The poet in singing of himself sings of America and its people. It is thus called by critics as “the epic of America”. “The epic of America, The song of America”. It unfolds Whitman the poet. It gives an insight to Whitman’s approach to the mysteries of life, death and universe. It would be apt to conclude with D. Mirsky’s words that,

“It would be more correct to say that its ?(song of myself) basic theme is unity, unity of all creation, both animate and inanimate. The poem is thus all embracing, in its sweep, cosmic and universal.”

UNIT II

2) Emily Dickinson

POEM 1 Hope is the Thing with Feathers

Ques. Write the theme of the poem ‘ Hope is the Thing with Feathers’.

Ans. “Hope is the thing with feathers” is a kind of hymn of praise, written to honor the human capacity for hope. Using **extended metaphor**, the poem portrays hope as a bird that lives within the human soul; this bird sings come rain or shine, gale or storm, good times or bad. The poem argues that hope is miraculous and almost impossible to defeat. Furthermore, hope never asks for anything in return—it costs nothing for people to maintain hope. By extension, then, “Hope is the thing with feathers” implores its readers to make good use of hope—and to see it as an essential, deeply valuable part of themselves.

The poem begins by establishing its key metaphor—that hope is a bird. It then tells the reader more about this bird, adding detail, before showing it in different situations. The poem concludes by stating that, despite all it does, hope never asks for anything from the speaker. Overall, then, the poem turns hope into a vivid imagined character in order to show how important it is, both to individuals and to humanity as a whole.

The poem initially defines hope as “the thing with feathers.” Though it’s obvious that this is a bird (as confirmed in line 7), the unusualness of this first description shows that the poem wants the reader to look afresh at hope—to see hope with clear eyes and not take it for granted. Starting with “hope is a bird” would have the same literal meaning but would feel much less surprising, and the surprise element helps establish the poem’s purpose of redefining hope.

This "Hope" bird “perches” in the soul, showing that the soul itself is hope’s home. Hope is thus directly linked with the human spirit, where it sings without ever stopping. This perseverance, then, is a representation of humanity’s infinite capacity for hope. Even in the depths of despair, the poem seems to say, people can still have hope—and this hope will sustain them. Indeed, the bird sings “sweetest” in the storm. In other words, hope shows its importance in times of adversity and seems to guide people through that adversity. This point could apply to humanity’s challenges in a general sense, or it could relate to more personal experiences like individual grief and loss. In either case, hope gives people the strength to carry on, and it’s at its most useful when circumstances are at their worst.

Of course, there might be times when people do seem to lose their strength—but, the poem argues, hope still plays an important role in these situations. The poem demonstrates this by gesturing towards the sheer number of people (“so many”) who have been sustained by hope, saying that it would have to be a truly “sore” “storm” that could diminish the strength of “the little Bird.” Hope, it seems, can keep people “warm” even in the worst situations.

And though hope is so essential to human life, the beauty of it—according to the poem—is that it requires practically nothing of people. Hope costs nothing, not a “crumb”—yet it can literally and figuratively keep people alive. With hope, people can make it through the hardest of times—they just have to listen to “the little Bird” singing its tune. Overall, then, “Hope is the thing with feathers” implores its readers to value their capacity for hope—and to recognize that it’s never really gone. Without becoming overly specific, the poem argues that hope can be especially helpful in the most extreme situations and that people should therefore rely on it as a precious resource.

Emily Dickinson

POEM 2

I Felt a Funeral in My Brain

Ques Write Critical appreciation of the poem 'I Felt a Funeral in My Brain'.

OR

Madness and Nature of Despair is the theme of the poem. Comment.

ANS. The speaker feels as though a funeral service is taking place within his or her own mind. It feels like the funeral attendees are pacing back and forth inside the speaker's head, so much so that whatever they're walking on might break under the strain and then cause reason itself to fall through the newly created hole in the speaker's mind.

The mourners finally take their seats for the funeral service. Yet this service doesn't contain any words. Instead, the speaker can only make out a repetitive, drum-like noise. This noise overwhelms this speaker, causing the speaker's mind to go blank, as if numb.

Now the service ends and the funeral procession begins. The mourners lift a coffin and carry it as they walk across the speaker's soul, which creaks like an old wooden floor. Everyone in the funeral procession wears heavy boots made out of lead, which is why their walking once again puts such a strain on the speaker's mind. Suddenly, there's the sound of a bell ringing, but rather than coming from a single source it seems to be coming from the whole world at once.

Even the sky (and possibly Heaven itself) rings like a bell. The speaker says that people exist only to listen to the world's ringing. The speaker—whose mind has been reduced to a numb silence—feels as though he or she is no longer human but instead has become some strange creature. The speaker is alone in his or her own body and mind, as if shipwrecked there.

Finally, one of the metaphorical floorboards in the speaker's rational mind does break, creating a hole through which the speaker falls further and further down. While falling, the speaker seems to collide with entire worlds, until the speaker's mind shuts down altogether and the speaker is no longer able to understand anything at all. Just as the speaker is about the say what comes after this state, the poem ends.

Madness

Dickinson's poem depicts the difficulty of understanding the mysterious thoughts and feelings that happen inside people. Often interpreted as chronicling a nightmarish descent into madness, the poem can be read as depicting the terror and helplessness that accompany losing one's grip on reality.

Throughout the poem, the speaker's mind seems passive and confused. Indeed, the "Funeral" of the opening line can arguably be read as a reference to the death of the speaker's reason or sanity. As the funeral's "Mourners" repetitively tread through the speaker's mind, their steps seem to wear down whatever is holding "Sense" back. The speaker waits for "Sense" to come "breaking through"—basically, for meaning and reason to return. Alternatively, "Sense breaking through" could imply the fragility of that sense itself, further reflecting the disordered, easily-shattered nature of the speaker's mind.

In either case, sense—physical or rational—never returns; the mind goes "numb" in response to the drum-like "beating" of the funeral service. This strange **simile** evokes a sense of maddening, thudding repetition, perhaps representative of the—rather paradoxical—awareness of the fact that the mind is deteriorating. In other words, the "funeral" hammers home the death of the speaker's sanity. The speaker can't escape the knowledge that his or her knowledge is collapsing . The mourners carry a "Box"—perhaps a coffin containing the speaker's reason—as the speaker is left "Wrecked, solitary, here" in a space unfamiliar even to him- or herself. This loss of sanity is thus a painful, isolating experience.

Indeed, the poem's initial **conceit**, of a funeral in the brain, summons an elaborate vision of the mind's structure as being full of mysterious, inaccessible elements. For instance, the first stanza basically asks readers to imagine the speaker's mind as a two-floor structure. The speaker only has partial access to this structure, listening from below to the funeral on the second floor. Additionally, the proceedings of the

funeral itself are secret and hard to perceive. They are “felt” and “heard” rather than seen. And again, the service doesn’t contain words, but rather beats “like a Drum.”

Because of all this secrecy, the speaker almost becomes a stranger in his or her own mind. These **metaphorical** events have taken on a life of their own, reflecting an increasing sense of psychological dislocation; in other words, the speaker becomes ever more isolated from his or her own thoughts.

In the last stanza, “Reason” breaks and the speaker plunges “down and down” into—well, it’s unclear, which is part of the point! The image of falling that dominates this stanza shows how the speaker’s mind has finally lost all control. Finally, the speaker is “Finished knowing.” The “then -” that ends the poem represents an ultimate unknowability: the speaker can’t even say what comes next. The rational mind, in effect, has shut down. Ultimately, the poem evokes a sense of wonder and terror as it traces out a path that leads to inner destruction and, finally, a total absence of rational awareness altogether.

The Nature of Despair

- Throughout the poem the speaker references mourning, numbness, and a loss of control. Using those characterizations as guideposts, readers can think of the poem as offering an idiosyncratic depiction of despair. The speaker presents no explanation or solution. Instead, the poem tracks despair from its onset to the darkest abyss of isolation.

The central **metaphor** of a funeral in the brain establishes the speaker’s state of mind. The first two lines clue readers in: the speaker’s brain contains a “Funeral” and “Mourners.” Something has died within the speaker, and the speaker’s mind mourns that loss. Rather than give a specific cause for this feeling, however, the speaker lets it remain ambiguous. Despair becomes a mysterious phenomenon without a clear cause.

The proceedings then continue for three stanzas, as the mourners sit for a service and carry a “Box,” (i.e. a coffin) through the speaker. This suggests that despair can feel like a funeral procession for an unknown person. It creates a feeling of anonymity and confusion. Additionally, by taking up three stanzas, the funeral depicts how despair can seem unending, always finding new ways to make one’s life bleaker.

The poem also evokes despair through physical metaphors. The funeral’s drum-like “beating - beating -” along with the mourner’s heavy “treading - treading -” affect the mind as if striking it. They cause the mind to go “numb.” Just as repeated pounding can cause skin to lose sensation, so here the speaker’s inner bleakness prevents the mind from thinking or feeling. Next the mourners’ feet become “Boots of Lead.” The speaker feels an increased heaviness inside. Because of this heaviness, the soul can only “creak” mournfully.

Finally, all this beating and heaviness causes something to snap in the final stanza (“then a plank in Reason, broke”). The speaker loses hold of certainty and falls completely into an abyss (“And I dropped down, and down”). Again, the speaker’s mind gets repeatedly “hit,” this time by the multitude of “World[s]” that populate the universe, until reaching a final numbness.

That physicality is compounded with a sense of loneliness, of being trapped within the mind. This loneliness stems from a dawning awareness of the enormity of the universe. Readers see this most clearly in the fourth stanza, when the speaker is “Wrecked, solitary, here.” “Here” can be seen as representing the inescapable isolation of the self, how each person is trapped within the “here” of their own minds. The immensity of the universe—whose “Heavens” blare loudly like bells and whose plunging depths contain an unending series of alternate “Worlds”—dwarfs the speaker. By the end of the poem, even the mysterious “Mourners” have disappeared, leaving the speaker to fall down into this abyss totally alone.

Thus after depicting a kind of inner mourning, the poem comes to represent despair as a force that beats the mind to numbness, heightens the effects of loneliness, and finally throws the speaker down a pit of isolation.

I

The Irrational Universe

As the poem progresses, the speaker undergoes increasingly broad visions of the world. In these visions, reason—the ability to find order and meaning in the world—is seen as a human invention that the unknowable universe gradually breaks down. This can be thought of as a complement to the theme of madness in the poem: the speaker loses "Sense" specifically *because* the speaker is exposed to the senselessness of the universe.

In the final three stanzas, the poem expands dramatically, leading the inner space of the mind into contact with the larger universe. Note how, in the third stanza, the sound from the creaking of the soul and the stomping of the "Boots of Lead" transforms into the "toll" of the entirety of "Space." This moment seamlessly transforms the inner world ("the soul") into the outer world ("Space). "Toll" here references the ringing of a bell. It's as if the whole world, even its empty spaces, has suddenly filled with a mysterious sound whose source can't be placed or explained. This sound also has an ominous quality to it (think how frightening such a moment would be). Since Dickinson's poems often speculate on the existence of God, this can be read as a moment of confrontation between the speaker and a terrifying, God-like force, a kind of divine noise that fills the universe.

This in turn leads the speaker to speculate on the mind's place in the universe, saying, "Being" is "but an Ear." Existence thus becomes passive; things exist only to be present to the world, to *perceive* but not to *explain*. This line signals that the speaker has come to a new understanding of what it means to be human. Or rather, the speaker seems to have *become* something that's almost not human at all—"some strange Race" that exists, along with silence, as the means by which the

universe makes itself known. It’s as if the speaker’s journey has simplified the speaker's mind, reducing it to this state. (This state also can serve as a model for the poet. That is, the poet can only “listen” to the universe as intently as possible, not explain it.)

When the poem began, it implicitly compared the speaker’s mind to a building. That building's collapse represents the collapse of order and reason, so that the speaker confronts an endless universe that cannot be explained through human means. When the speaker says “a Plank in Reason, broke,” the floorboards of the mind finally snap. By explicitly associating these boards with “Reason,” the speaker treats rationality as a manmade structure, one that can be broken by external forces. In other words, the universe *doesn’t* obey the supposedly rational rules created by people; in fact, it actively works to destroy them.

The final collapse of reason coincides with a vision of the universe as an abyss that contains “a World, at every plunge.” That is, the world contains many worlds, or infinite possibilities. There’s nothing exciting about this, however, as the speaker bangs against these “worlds” without being able to grasp any of them. This exposure provides an overwhelming glimpse of the universe’s mystery and complexity—the way it seems ultimately irrational and unknowable to human beings. And it is this awareness, ironically, that causes the speaker to be "Finished knowing" altogether.

EMILY DICKINSON

POEM 3

I Heard a Fly Buzz when I Died

Ques. Write Critical appreciation of the poem 'I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died'

Ans I could hear a fly buzzing around the room at the moment I died. The room felt very still, like the calm, tense air in between the gusts of a storm.

The people gathered around me had cried until they had no tears left, and everyone seemed like they were holding their breath, waiting for my final moment and anticipating the arrival of God in the room.

I had signed a will that gave away all my possessions, dividing up all the parts of my life that could be divided up. And then, suddenly, a fly interrupted the proceedings.

The fly looked blue and buzzed around the room erratically. It flew in front of the light, blocking it. Then the light from the windows faded away, and I could not see anything at all.

The Mystery of Death

"I heard a Fly buzz – when I died" attempts to imagine the transition between life and death. While the poem does have questions about whether there is an afterlife, it conveys its uncertainty by focusing on the actual *moment* of death itself. Told from the perspective of someone who seems to have already died, the poem is mysterious and paradoxical—obviously, no one has yet been able to describe what it feels like to actually die! Dickinson tries to imagine it anyway—and her take is decidedly less sentimental than most, as the speaker's final moments are interrupted by a buzzing fly. Perhaps this suggests the sheer mundanity of mortality—there is nothing so ordinary as a bug—or that no matter how well one prepares to face the other side, it's impossible to be ready for something unknowable.

Though the speaker is reciting this poem *after* having died, what the speaker describes takes place just *before* this, as the speaker is on his or her deathbed. In

these final moments, the room and the air are notably filled with “stillness.” This seems to anticipate the stillness of death, and suggests a sort of blurring of the border between these two states—as if the transition between life and death isn’t a sharp jump cut but rather a slow crossfade. Alternatively, maybe the other people in the room are trying to remain still on purpose in order to make the transition from life to death as seamless as possible for the speaker. This, in turn, creates a sort of tension, as everyone is done with the sad part (their “Eyes” have been “wrung dry” of tears), and is waiting with for “the King”—that is, God—to take the speaker away.

Except, instead of God arriving to aid with the passage from life to death, there is only the “uncertain, stumbling Buzz” of the fly. The timing of the fly’s arrival suggests that, surprisingly, *it* might be the ambassador of the underworld. Though some critics see the fly as an emissary of death—the grim reaper, perhaps—it might also just be a literal fly. In that case, it represents the *absence* of “the King,” undermining any certainties that the speaker might have held on to about the afterlife. Its annoying buzzing sound is darkly funny, preventing the speaker from attaining the state of spiritual contemplation or grace that would seem more fitting for the occasion. In other words, at perhaps the most spiritually significant moment in life, the speaker is distracted by a bug.

The fly, then, is a perfect symbol for spiritual doubt, its seemingly aimless airborne wandering suggesting the earthly *wondering* of the human mind. Indeed, part of the poem’s power comes from the fact the fly is interpretable as both significant *and* insignificant, symbolic *and* meaningless. Either way, the moment of death remains shrouded in mystery. Whatever people *hope* comes after life, they can’t know for sure. Ultimately, then, the poem ends on an inconclusive note, with the “failing” light of the window representing the speaker’s inability to see beyond these last living moments—despite the fact that the speaker seemingly talks from the afterlife. Death remains as unknowable as ever.

Ritual and Meaning

Describing the speaker's dying moments, "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died" presents a scene of ritual and ceremony. In essence, the speaker is going through the motions of what people are *supposed* to do when they die, and the people around the dying speaker are playing their part in this ritual too—gathering solemnly around the speaker's death bed, crying, and dealing with the will. These last few moments are a revealing commentary on the way people conceive of life itself—but the presence of the fly casts doubts on the priorities and beliefs of human existence.

The deathbed scene the speaker describes is like a miniature of humankind's long-established traditions and customs around death. Religion, family, and the law are all represented here. The speaker and those gathered around the speaker *believe* in the norms of their world. Loved ones are gathered around, suggesting the importance of human relationships, specifically of family. The crying "Eyes" suggest that life is something to value—and that its loss is worthy of mourning.

The speaker hopes for spiritual salvation from "the King," as is the norm for the speaker's society. Thus the religious institutions of Dickinson's day, so integral to 19th century America *and* to Dickinson's poetry, are also represented. And, as though to underscore the importance of earthly possession, the speaker's final act is to "Sign[] away" his or her "Keepsakes." This is a reference to the will that passes down all the speaker's property and possessions—but only what "portion of me be / Assignable" (which subtly casts doubt on whether these "Keepsakes" are all that important).

Everything is set up, then, for this to be a kind of picture-perfect death—the mourners are in place and the event is unfolding according to traditions and customs of the time. But it's then—and *explicitly* "then" in line 11—that the fly comes into view and earshot. It disturbs this perfect scene in a way that seems ironic, tragically comic, and incredibly well-timed.

Flies, of course, are notoriously annoying; the fly, with its meandering flight and high-pitched buzz, undermines the gravity of the situation. It functions almost like a

streaker at a serious public event, farcically mocking the occasion. In turn, the presence of the fly questions whether the “keepsakes” really *were* important—or if maybe it was the *un*-assignable portion of existence that was important after all. Or perhaps even *none* of it was important!

Indeed, if the pre-death rituals are partly about reassuring the speaker that some part of him or her will continue to exist after death—whether in the afterlife, other peoples’ memories, or physical possessions—the fly disturbs these reassurances too. Flies are often associated with the decay of the human body. They are scavengers, happily feeding on decomposing fruit and flesh. Here, then, the fly is a reminder of what will happen to the speaker’s body once he or she is (presumably) buried. Over time, the physical features that made the speaker recognizable will waste away, leaving only bones. This is a stark reminder of the physical reality of death and seems to undermine what usually gives life meaning, whether that be possessions, beliefs, or interpersonal relationships.

EMILY DICKINSON

POEM 4

Apparently with No Surprise

Q.1 Write critical analysis of the poem 'Apparently with No Surprise'.

ANS 'Apparently with no surprise' by Emily Dickinson is a short poem that effectively conveys the natural process of life and death through images of Frost and Flower.

The poem describes, through simple language and short lines, the inevitability of death. The poet depicts a happy flower that is beheaded by the frost. This is something that happens quickly and without fanfare. The sun does not stop to take notice nor does God do anything to stop it.

'Apparently with no surprise' by Emily Dickinson is a one-stanza poem that is made up of eight lines. These lines follow a rhyme scheme of ABCB, common for Dickinson's poems. The meter is also easily recognizable as Dickinson's favorite. The lines alternate between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter.

The first of these two forms means that the lines contain four sets of two beats. The first of these is unstressed and the second is stressed. While the next line follows the same pattern of stressed and unstressed, it only contains three sets of two beats. The combination of this metrical pattern with the rhyme scheme of ABCB is known as a ballad meter or hymn meter.

In the first four lines of '*Apparently with no surprise,'* the speaker begins by describing a normal occurrence, the beheading of a flower. This is something that happens naturally as the frost picks up. Its power becomes too great, "accidental power" that is, and it destroys the flower, a symbol of spring. In these lines, a reader should immediately take note of the use of personification. It is seen through the description of the flower as "happy" and with the "Frost" having "power". Because winter kills flowers every year, the death of this particular flower is of no surprise to anyone.

By capitalizing "Flower" and "Frost," when they aren't proper nouns, the poet is calling attention to them for another reason. A reader should consider what this reason might be and if the flower and frost might symbolize other things. The frost, for example, is a likely representative for death, a more powerful force. The flower might represent humanity, hope, or any form of life that is cut short.

In the fifth line of '*Apparently with no surprise,'* the speaker refers to the frost as a "blond Assassin". This is an interesting and surprising description and only adds more personification to the poem. There is an immediate juxtaposition between the work of an assassin, to kill on purpose, and the action of the frost, killing accidentally. The word "blonde" is also an unusual choice. This likely refers to how pale the frost is or perhaps what it looks like when the sun hits it just right. This is supported by the next line which mentions the sun.

She goes on to say that the sun is proceeding "unmoved / To measure off another Day". The death of the flower and the destructive power of the frost, or death, is not strange. There is nothing world-ending about this loss. The sun is here as a symbol of time, moving on without a worry for anything going on in the world.

These lines are all good examples of another technique known as enjambment. IT can be seen in the transitions between lines six, seven, and eight. Between seven and eight the poet introduces God into the poem. God, she says, is approving of everything that's going on in the world. He is well aware of the life and death of his creation and is happy to let things go on as they are. This is yet one more way that the poet is able to show that life moves as it will. There is no way to influence God, stop time, or slow death and everyone should be as "happy" and accepting of it as the flower is.

EMILY DICKINSON

POEM 5

Because I could not stop for Death

Q.1 Write the theme of Death, Mortality and Eternity in 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death'.

ANS

I couldn't stop for "Death," so instead he came to get me. I climbed in his carriage, which held just the two of us—as well as Eternal Life.

We drove unhurriedly, with Death in no rush. I had left all my work and pleasures behind, in order to be respectful of his gentlemanly nature.

We went by a school, where children played during their break time, arranged in a circle. Then we passed fields of crops—which seemed to stare—and the sun as it set in the sky.

Actually, we didn't pass the sun—it passed us. As it did so, dew formed, shivering and cold. I was cold too, as I was only wearing a thin gown and a lightweight scarf.

Our next stop was at what looked like a house, except it was partly buried in the ground. I could just about see the roof; even the ceiling was in the ground.

Since that day, centuries have passed. That said, it feels as though less than a day has gone by since then—the day that I realized that Death's horses were headed in the direction of eternity.

Death, Immortality, and Eternity

- "Because I could not stop for death" is an exploration of both the inevitability of death and the uncertainties that surround what happens when people actually die. In the poem, a woman takes a ride with a **personified** "Death" in his carriage, by all likelihood heading towards her place in the afterlife. The poem's matter-of-fact tone, which underplays the fantastical nature of what is happening, quickly establishes this journey as something beyond the speaker's control. It's not clear if the speaker is

already dead, or she is traveling *towards* death. Either way, her death is presented as something natural, strange, and inescapable.

Indeed, the poem's opening lines make this clear. The speaker herself couldn't "stop for Death"—and not many people would—but "Death" has every intention of stopping for her. Notably, "Death" here is presented as something of a gentleman, "kindly" stopping his carriage so that the speaker can climb in. This suggests a certain comfort with, or at least acceptance of, dying on the part of the speaker, even as what this process actually entails remains mysterious.

Also in the carriage is "Immortality." It's not clear if this is another personified figure—a kind of chaperone—or something more abstract. But the presence of "Immortality" does speak to one of humanity's deepest questions: what happens when to people when they die?

"Immortality" is ambiguous here. Its presence could support the Christian idea of the afterlife—which some critics feel runs throughout Dickinson's poems. Or, by contrast, "Immortality" could be somewhat ironic, hinting at the permanent nothingness that awaits in death. Either way, such is the eternal inevitability of "Death" that he himself is in "no haste." That is, he doesn't need to hurry to make death happen, because it is an automatic fact of life. In fact, the whole journey has the air of unhurried purpose, as though reaching the destination is a given and that therefore rushing is unnecessary. The carriage stops by a school, fields, and perhaps even the speaker's own grave (stanza five). These seem to represent different stages of life, starting from childhood and preceding—like the journey itself—to the inevitable final destination.

To underscore the poem's sense of awe surrounding the mysteries of death, the final stanza is filled with ambiguity and contradiction. The speaker explains that the carriage passed these sights "Centuries" ago, but that the entire time that has elapsed *also* feels "shorter than a Day." In the grand scheme of eternity, hundreds of years might indeed feel like a blip on the radar. This contradiction thus highlights the difficulty of imagining eternity. Life is measured by time, moving through different

stages as people age; people sense the story of their lives unfolding as time goes on. But in death, the perception of time—indeed, all perception—ceases to exist. Unless, of course, there is an afterlife, an idea which the poem seems open to but inconclusive about.

Indeed, it's in large part this inconclusiveness that makes the poem so powerful. On the one hand, "Death's" kind and calm treatment of the woman could signal the comfort of a Christian afterlife—entrance to heaven and an eternity in God's presence. But more darkly, the way that the poem plays with ideas of immortality and eternity can also be read as nothing more than the dark nothingness of death itself—that life, when it's gone, is gone for good.

The Cyclical Nature of Life and Death

In addition to looking at the mysteries of *death*, "Because I could not stop for death" comments on the nature of *life*. During the speaker's journey with the **personified** "Death," the points that they pass along the way seem charged with significance. The journey format of the poem mimics the way that life itself is a journey from birth to death—from the arrival of new life to its absence. The observations that the speaker makes along this journey seem to reinforce the idea that life and death are in cyclical balance; in a way, the poem suggests life is not possible without death.

Firstly, though it is not an explicitly stated symbol in the poem, it's important to bear in mind that this a journey taken with the aid of wheels. The carriage's wheels are, of course, circular, gently hinting at the circular transformation from nothingness to life to nothingness once more.

While the first two stanzas set up the journey itself, it's from the third onwards that the speaker starts to notice the environment around her as it passes. The first point along the way is a school, "where Children strove / at Recess – in the Ring." This image of children playing is important, symbolizing the continuation of life even after the speaker is no longer around to witness it (one of the facts that confronts everyone about death). The verb "strove" seems to suggest human effort, hinting at

the way people strive to keep living even in the knowledge of inevitable death. The children are also playing in a “Ring,” the circular nature of which further reflects the cycle of life and death.

Soon after, the traveling party goes by a field. While the sun is setting—representing the speaker’s death—the “Gazing Grain” seems to be growing strong. This, then, is another example of the continuation of life after death. Every year crops are harvested (representing death) and then are replanted or regrown, enacting the shift from life into death and back again.

Then, in the penultimate stanza, the speaker seems to see her own grave. There is a sense here that the reality of death has arrived—that the speaker will no longer be around to witness children playing or crops growing. But because of the other sights that have been mentioned earlier, the grave visit doesn’t really feel as significant as one might expect. That is, the speaker herself will of course soon be gone, but the poem is charged with the knowledge that everything else will carry on as before. Perhaps her death even makes way for the continuation of life in her absence—for new children to “strive,” just as harvested grain makes way for new crops.

Subtly, then, the poem suggests an interdependence between life and death. Both seem like necessary parts of the world as presented in the poem, even if their relationship is by its nature perplexing and intriguing. Dickinson manages to put into images the complexity of these thoughts, and intentionally leaves such questions unresolved for the reader to consider.

UNIT III

LORRAINE HANSBERRY:

A Raisin in the Sun (Play)

Q.1 Write the theme of "A Raisin in the Sun".

OR

Write a note on the appropriateness of the title of this play.

ANS. A Raisin in the Sun, written by Lorraine Hansberry and first performed in 1959, is a groundbreaking play that explores the struggles of a Black American family living in Chicago's South Side during the 1950s. The story revolves around the Younger family, who are awaiting a $10,000 life insurance check following the death of the father. Each family member has different dreams and aspirations for the money, leading to conflicts.

"What you ain't never understood is that I ain't got nothing, don't own nothing, ain't never really wanted nothing that wasn't for you. There ain't nothing as precious to me...There ain't nothing worth holding on to, money, dreams, nothing else--"
— **Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun**

The play delves into themes of racial discrimination, the importance of family, and the pursuit of the American Dream. The title, taken from Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem" (which is also sometimes called "A Dream Deferred") suggests the central question of the play: What happens to a dream that is deferred or postponed?

The characters, including the matriarch Lena, her son Walter Lee, his wife Ruth, and his sister Beneatha, grapple with their individual identities and desires while facing external pressures. Hansberry's work is notable for its realistic portrayal of African American life and its honest examination of the challenges faced by the family. Lorraine Hansberry write in a raisin of the sun:

"Perhaps I will be a great man...I mean perhaps I will hold on to the substance of truth and find my way always with the right course"

A Raisin in the Sun holds historical significance as one of the first plays to portray the Black American experience on Broadway. Its success paved the way for more diverse voices in American theater. The play has been adapted into films in 1961 and in 2008, and remains a staple in literature and drama courses across the country.

In the Youngers' apartment, the family discusses their plans for the life insurance check left behind after Beneatha and Walter's father died. Beneatha wants to use the

money to pay for medical school, but Walter wishes to invest in a liquor store, an idea that Mama does not agree with, as she wants to pursue the dream of owning a home. Ruth faints suddenly while talking with Mama about her husband Walter and Beneatha.

Walter receives a call from Willy Harris with whom he discusses his liquor store business venture. Meanwhile Beneatha invites Joseph Asagai to their apartment. Asagai flirts with Beneatha, telling her that she has to tap into her African identity, and meets Mama who tells him Beneatha's view on African people. Ruth returns home from the doctor and reveals that she is pregnant, but she becomes upset when she tries to discuss her pregnancy with Walter, and Ruth confirms she wants an abortion.

Walter comes home drunk and finds Beneatha wearing Nigerian clothing and performing a tribal dance, which he then mocks and performs his own. When George arrives to pick Beneatha up for a date, Beneatha unveils her new haircut to everyone's surprise. George and Walter get into an argument, and later Walter argues with Ruth about his drinking and spending money. Walter is crushed after learning that Mama has placed a down payment on a home in a white neighbourhood. Lorraine quotes:

"Mama--Mama--I want so many things... I want so many things that they are driving me kind of crazy...

Weeks later, Beneatha kicks George out after he belittles her views on the plight of Black Americans. The Youngers are then visited by their neighbor Mrs. Johnson who tells them of a Black family that was bombed out of their home in a white neighborhood, a fate she says the Youngers will most likely face as well. Ruth confronts Walter about his absence from work, at which point he explains that he has felt hopeless due to his failure as the man of the house. Upon hearing his lament, Mama agrees to give Walter the remaining insurance money and tells him to invest it

On moving day, the attitudes in the Younger household have changed for the better, but the mood changes when Karl Lindner arrives to dissuade the Youngers from moving to the all-white neighbourhood, suggesting that the Youngers living there will ruin the dreams of the white people. The write says:

"Seem like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams -but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worth while."

Mama learns that the Youngers refused Lindner's buyout. When Bobo, Walter's friend, reveals that Willy ran off with Walter's investment, an enraged Mama attacks Walter before being stopped by Beneatha.

Joseph Asagai tries to cheer up a brooding Beneatha by proposing she come home with him to Africa. At first, Walter is inclined to accept Lindner's buyout offer, but when he arrives at the Younger apartment with papers, Walter refuses to accept the money. The family finishes packing up, and Mama comments that Walter has become a man.

UNIT IV

1) **Henry D Thoreau**

Civil Disobedience (Essay)

Q.1 Write a note on the summary of Civil Disobedience.

ANS.

"There will never be a really free and enlightened state until the state comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived."
— Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience

Civil Disobedience is an essay by the transcendentalist writer and philosopher Henry David Thoreau. It was published in 1849 under the title, *Resistance to Civil Government*. In the essay, Thoreau espouses the need to prioritize one's conscience over the dictates of laws and criticizes American social institutions and policies—especially slavery and the Mexican American War.

Civil Disobedience had only limited impact during Thoreau's lifetime, but its influence would eventually become widespread. The work inspired India's Mahatma Gandhi, and later, ideas from it were embraced by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the American Civil Rights Movement

Thoreau begins *Civil Disobedience* by saying that he agrees with the motto, "That government is best which governs least." Indeed, he says, men will someday be able to have a government that does not govern at all. As it is, government rarely proves useful or efficient. It is often "abused and perverted" so that it no longer represents the will of the people. The Mexican-American War illustrates this phenomenon

The American government is necessary because "the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have." However, the only times when government has been useful has been when it has stood aside. Thoreau says that government does not, in fact, achieve that with which we credit it: it does not keep the country free, settle the West, or educate. Rather, these achievements come from the character of the American people, and they would have been even more successful in these endeavors had government been even less involved. Thoreau also complains about restrictions on trade and commerce. However, Thoreau then says that speaking "practically and as a citizen," he is not asking for the immediate elimination of government. Rather, for the moment, he is asking for a *better* government.

Thoreau argues that by answering to the majority, democracies answer the desires of the strongest group, not the most virtuous or thoughtful. A government founded on

this principle cannot be based on justice. Why can't there be a government where right and wrong are not decided by the majority but by conscience?

"Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think we should be men first, and subjects afterward."

He asserts that it is more important to develop a respect for the right, rather than a respect for law, for people's obligations are to do what is right

Too much respect for law leads people to do many unjust things, as war illustrates: Soldiers become only a shadow of their humanity; the government shapes them into machines. Soldiers have no opportunity to exercise moral sense, reduced to the existence comparable to that of a horse or dog. Yet these men are often called good citizens. Similarly, most legislators and politicians do not put moral sense first, and those few who do are persecuted as enemies.

The question then becomes how to behave toward the American government. Thoreau's answer is to avoid associating with it altogether. He declares,

"I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave's* government also."

Thoreau says that while everyone recognizes the right to revolution when faced with an intolerably tyrannical or inefficient government, most people say that such a revolution would not be warranted under current conditions. However, Thoreau argues that we have not only the right, but indeed the duty, to rebel. The enslavement of one sixth of the population and the invasion of Mexico represent tremendous injustices that we must not allow to continue.

Thoreau criticizes the attitude that civil obligation should be maintained for the sake of expediency and that government should be obeyed simply to preserve the services we enjoy. Expediency does not take precedence over justice; people must do what justice requires regardless of cost—indeed, even if the cost is one's own life. Thus, Thoreau writes,

"If I have unjustly wrested a plank from a drowning man, I must restore it to him though I drown myself."

The people of the United States must stop slavery and the war with Mexico, even if it costs them their existence as a people.

In practice, the opponents to reform in Massachusetts are not the Southern politicians everyone blames for extreme conservativism. Rather, they are the people who passively tolerate the status quo: merchants and farmers in Massachusetts who are not will ing to fight for justice at any cost. Many argue that the majority of U.S. citizens would be unprepared for the societal changes that slavery would bring about. Thoreau responds to this by saying that we need only a few wise people to educate the majority and, thus, prepare them for these changes. There are thousands of people who oppose slavery and war with Mexico and yet do nothing, waiting for others to take action. It is this passive waiting that Thoreau condemns.

“All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or back gammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked.” – Civil disobedience

UNIT IV

2)F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Echoes if the Jazz Age

"Echoes of the Jazz Age" is a short essay by American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald that was first published in Scribner's Magazine in November 1931.The essay analyzes the societal conditions in the United States which gave rise to the flowering of youth culture in the raucous historical era known as the Jazz Age and the subsequent events which led to the era's abrupt conclusion. The frequently anthologized essay represents an extended critique by Fitzgerald of 1920s hedonism and is regarded as one of Fitzgerald's finest non-fiction works.

The essay's contents reflect a number of Fitzgerald's opinions previously expressed in newspaper interviews. Fitzgerald had publicly rejected the argument that the meaningless destruction of World War I spawned the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald also did not believe the war affected the morality of younger Americans. He likewise rejected other popular claims that either Prohibition in the United States or the advent of motion pictures corrupted the morals of American youths.

Fitzgerald's essay instead posits various technological innovations and cultural trends as fostering the societal conditions which typified the Jazz Age. He attributes the era's sexual revolution to a combination of both Sigmund Freud's sexual theories gaining salience among young Americans and the invention of the automobile allowing youths to escape parental surveillance in order to engage in premarital sex. Echoing Voltaire's belief that novels influence social behavior,Fitzgerald cites the literary works by E. M. Hull, D. H. Lawrence, Radclyffe Hall, and others as influencing young Americans to question their sexual norms.

In the essay, Fitzgerald makes a critical and much-overlooked distinction between contemporary generations. In contrast to the older Lost Generation to which Gertrude Stein posited Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway belonged, Fitzgerald notes the Jazz Age generation were those Americans younger than himself who had been adolescents during World War I and were largely untouched by the conflict's psychological and material horrors.It was this hedonistic younger generation—and not the Lost Generation—which riveted the nation's attention upon their leisure activities and sparked a societal debate over their perceived immorality. After Fitzgerald's death in 1940, critic Edmund Wilson collected the essay in the 1945 anthology The Crack-Up.

Following the unexpected success of his debut novel This Side of Paradise (1920), a 23-year-old F. Scott Fitzgerald became one of the most celebrated novelists of the Jazz Age. Living in luxury at the opulent Biltmore Hotel in New York City, many famous persons sought his personal acquaintanceship, and he became close friends with the cultural elites of the period.

At the peak of his commercial success and cultural salience, Fitzgerald recalled traveling in a taxi one afternoon through the streets of New York City and weeping when he realized he that he would never be as happy again. During this period, the zeitgeist of the Jazz Age "bore him up, flattered him and gave him more money than he had dreamed of, simply for telling people that he felt as they did, that something had to be done with all the nervous energy stored up and unexpended in the war."

With the onset of Great Depression in 1929, Fitzgerald experienced a dramatic reversal of fortune. Once favorable critics now deemed his literary output to be elitist and out-of-touch. As writer Budd Schulberg recalled, "my generation thought of F. Scott Fitzgerald as an age rather than a writer, and when the economic stroke of 1929 began to change the sheiks and flappers into unemployed boys or underpaid girls, we consciously and a little belligerently turned our backs on Fitzgerald".

With his book royalties declining precipitously and his short stories no longer selling as easily to slick magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post and Esquire amid the economic downturn, Fitzgerald became keenly aware that one historical era had ended

and another begun. "The Jazz Age is over," Fitzgerald wrote to his editor and friend Max Perkins in May 1931 while abroad in Europe.

Perkins knew that Fitzgerald had popularized the phrase "Jazz Age" via the publication of his 1922 story anthology Tales of the Jazz Age, and he believed Fitzgerald's insights about the now bygone era worthy of more consideration. Perkins suggested that Fitzgerald should write at least one article reflecting upon and eulogizing the era—some kind of "an elegy that would remind the public of his previous cultural influence as a writer and simultaneously fix a point in his mind from which he could begin a new phase of [literary] career".

At the request of Perkins, managing editor Alfred "Fritz" Dashiell of Scribner's Magazine wrote Fitzgerald and pressed him to contribute the retrospective about the bygone era. "There is no one more qualified to sound its knell," Dashiell declared. Fitzgerald could not initially commit himself to the assignment, but he could not put it out of his mind.

After further pressure by Perkins to jot down a short essay that would serve as a retrospective of both the preceding era and his own life as the era's most famous chronicler, Fitzgerald drafted the essay while in Switzerland and while his wife Zelda Fitzgerald underwent voluntary psychiatric treatment in a nearby sanatorium.

As he had already spoken at length about the so-called Jazz Age in numerous newspaper interviews throughout the 1920s, Fitzgerald's final essay recycled many of these same opinions which he had expressed nearly a decade earlier

Fitzgerald opens the essay by positing that the historical era known as Jazz Age began in the spring of 1919. In contrast to social conservatives and isolationist politicians who insisted that World War I spawned the Jazz Age, Fitzgerald instead pinpoints the 1919 May Day Riots as the actual starting point when young Americans read newspaper accounts of how mounted police officers brutally suppressed peaceful veterans. The excessive use of force by police officers against the demobilized war veterans triggered a wave of cynicism among younger Americans, and they questioned whether their country was any better than the despotic regimes in southern Europe. Due to this resulting cynicism proliferating among American youth, "it was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all."

Although Fitzgerald pinpoints the Jazz Age as beginning in Spring 1919, he asserts that the societal transformations which occurred had their roots as far back as 1915 before the country had formally entered World War I. During this earlier period, the avant-garde sexual theories espoused by psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung became vogue among the younger generation of Americans. The result was that American women wondered whether or not they had a fulfilling sex life and pursued remedies accordingly. Simultaneously, many parents purchased automobiles for young

American men in an attempt to make them "self-reliant." Amorous couples used the privacy of these new automobiles to engage in kissing and petting. Soon after, the automobiles began to be used by unchaperoned couples for the express purpose of premarital sex. At this point, Fitzgerald contends, "the veil finally fell—the Jazz Age was in flower.

Due to the above confluence of technological innovations and cultural trends, Fitzgerald argues that Prohibition in the United States had no effect whatsoever on the libertinism of the Jazz Age and claims the rampant hedonism would have occurred regardless. Rejecting yet another popular argument, Fitzgerald insists that 1920s cinema had little influence on the creation of the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald mentions Clara Bow's films and Colleen Moore's now lost film Flaming Youth (1923) as the only films worthy of note, but he cautions that the ingravescent film censorship prevented contemporary motion pictures from accurately reflecting the libertine values of the era which had been already salient in popular novels.

Echoing Voltaire's belief that books have a dominant influence on social behavior, Fitzgerald ascribes the blithe spirit of the Jazz Age to the literary works of the period. Novels such as E. M. Hull's The Sheik (1919), Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919), Samuel Hopkins Adams's Flaming Youth (1923), D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928), and others reflected a gradual realization by society that neither premarital sex nor extramarital sex is harmful. Fitzgerald also implies a greater acceptance of homosexual relations in literature with the publication of Radclyffe Hall's novel The Well of Loneliness (1928).

Fitzgerald notes that the younger American generation which defined the Jazz Age was not the Lost Generation—to which Gertrude Stein posited that he and Ernest Hemingway belonged—but their precocious younger peers who had been adolescent during World War I. This younger generation, whose bob-haired women would later be described by newspapers as "flappers,"[b] became the actual luminaries of the era, and the older Lost Generation merely imitated the wild behavior of their younger siblings.

As the riotous era known as the Jazz Age progressed, the middle-aged and elderly adults of the Gilded Age generation imitated the insouciance of the younger cohorts with the result of "a whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure." Although the economic depression of 1920–1921 had initially hampered the giddiness of the period, the subsequent economic largesse which followed in the mid-1920s accelerated the frenzied hedonism, and "the Jazz Age now raced along under its own power, served by great filling stations full of money."

With the Wall Street Crash of 1929, Fitzgerald mused that "the most expensive orgy in history was [now] over." By 1931, a mere two years into the Great Depression, the carefree era known as the Jazz Age now seemed as distant to economically

impoverished Americans as the antebellum period before World War I. Fitzgerald deems this outcome as inevitable since the bygone era had existed on "borrowed time anyhow—the whole upper tenth of a nation living with the insouciance of grand dukes and the casualness of chorus girls." After recognizing the inevitability of the era's abrupt end, Fitzgerald concludes the essay with a wistful coda about lost opportunities and lost youth:

"Sometimes, though, there is a ghostly rumble among the drums, an asthmatic whisper in the trombones that swings me back into the early twenties when we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said "Yes, we have no bananas," and it seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were—and it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more.

UNIT V

1) John Steinbeck:

Of Mice & Men (Fictional Novella)

Q.1 Write plot construction, theme, title of the novel “Of Mice & Men”.

OR

Loneliness, solitude, discrimination, empathy and hope are the theme of “Of Mice & Men”. Comment on this.

ANS.

“Guys like us, that work on raches, are the loneliest guys in the world.”

-Of Mice & Men

Published in 1937, *Of Mice and Men* is a classic novella written by Nobel Prize-winning author John Steinbeck. Set against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the story follows two displaced migrant ranch workers, George Milton and Lennie Small, as they navigate the harsh realities of life in California. George, small and wiry, is the caretaker of the mentally challenged Lennie, who possesses immense physical strength but struggles to understand the complexities of the world.

The novella explores themes of friendship, freedom, and the pursuit of the American Dream. George and Lennie’s dream of owning a piece of land together, a place of refuge from the challenges they face.

“Just like heaven, everybody wants a little piece of lan’. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. Its just in the head; they are all the time talking about it but it’s jus’ in their head”

Steinbeck’s narrative captures the struggles of itinerant workers during a challenging economic period and sheds light on the broader issues of social injustice and inequality. The characters’ dreams and aspirations resonate with readers, emphasizing the human desire for connection and a better life.

Of Mice and Men has been adapted into multiple stage productions and films.

On their way to a new job, George and Lennie spend the night in a clearing. George scolds Lennie for accidentally killing a mouse and warns Lennie to avoid any problems at the new ranch. To console Lennie, George reminds him of their dream to one day own their own farm.

George and Lennie arrive at the ranch bunkhouse, where they meet a ranch hand, Candy, and the boss. After meeting the boss's aggressive son, Curly, George cautions Lennie to stay away from Curly and his wife. George and Lennie also meet two other ranch hands, Slim and Carlson, who discuss Slim's puppies and the possibility of killing Candy's aging dog. The writer quotes:

"I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean."

Slim marvels at George and Lennie's friendship, leading George to explain how they met, why George feels obligated to protect Lennie, and why they were forced to leave their old job. Lennie, Carlson, and Candy enter the bunkhouse, at which point Carlson convinces Candy to let him shoot his dog out of mercy. Curley, upset over his suspicion that Slim is sleeping with his wife, takes his anger out on Lennie, only to have his arm broken by Lennie in self-defense.

Crooks, the only Black worker on the ranch, is joined by Lennie and Candy. Crooks disregards Lennie and Candy's dream of owning their own farm. The men are interrupted by Curley's disenchanted and unhappy wife who threatens to have Crooks lynched for stepping out of line.

Lennie escapes to the clearing after accidentally killing Curley's wife and the puppy Slim gifted him. Candy finds the body of Curley's wife and informs George of what transpired. A mob forms to hunt Lennie down. He says:

"I wish somebody'd shoot me when I ain't no good no more."

At the clearing, Lennie has a vision of his Aunt Clara and a giant rabbit. George appears and tells Lennie about the farm one last time, as well as iterating how lucky they are to have one another. George then shoots Lennie. George tells the mob a version of what happened, but only Slim realizes that George shot Lennie out of mercy.

Steinbeck emphasizes aspirations throughout the book. George aspires to become independent, to be his own boss, to have a homestead, and, most important, to be "somebody". Lennie aspires to be with George on his independent homestead, and to quench his fixation on soft objects. Candy aspires to reassert his responsibility lost with the death of his dog, and for security for his old age—on George's homestead. Crooks aspires to a small homestead where he can express self-respect, security, and most of all, acceptance. Curley's wife dreams to be an actress, to satisfy her desire for fame lost when she married Curley, and an end to her loneliness.

Of Mice and Men can be associated with the idea that inherent limitations exist and despite all the squirming and struggling, sometimes the circumstances of one's existence limits their capacity to live the fairy tale lives they wish to. Even the title of the novel itself references this "the title is, of course, a fragment from the poem lay Robert Burns, which gives emphasis to the idea of the futility of human endeavor or the vanity of human wishes"

Animals play a role in the story as well; the heron shifts from a beautiful part of the scenery from the beginning of the novel to a predator near the end. The ending chapter has the heron return, preying upon snakes that get too curious in a repetitive nature, symbolic of the dreams of men constantly being snatched away.

In every bit of honest writing in the world there is a base theme. Try to understand men, if you understand each other you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love. There are shorter means, many of them. There is writing promoting social change, writing punishing injustice, writing in celebration of heroism, but always that base theme. Try to understand each other.

—*John Steinbeck in his 1938 journal entry*

UNIT V

2) WILLIAM FAULKNER

A Rose for Emily

Q.1 Write a note on the title of A Rose for Emily.

ANS. "**A Rose for Emily**" is a short story by American author William Faulkner, first published on April 30, 1930, in an issue of *The Forum*. The story takes place in Faulkner's fictional Jefferson, Mississippi, in the equally fictional county of Yoknapatawpha. It was Faulkner's first short story published in a national magazine.

Title

Faulkner described the title "A Rose for Emily" as an allegorical title: this woman had undergone a great tragedy, and for this Faulkner pitied her. As a salute, he handed her a rose.The exact meaning of the word "rose" in the title in relation to the story, however, remains open to debate; no actual rose appears in the story.

The story opens with a brief fourth-person account of the funeral of Emily Grierson, an elderly Southern woman whose funeral is the obligation of the town. It then proceeds in a non-linear fashion to the narrator's recollections of Emily's archaic, and increasingly strange, behavior throughout the years. Emily is a member of a family of the antebellum Southern aristocracy. After the Civil War, the family falls into hard times. She and her father are the last two survivors of that branch of the family. Emily's father refuses to allow her to marry. Her father dies when Emily is on the cusp of her 30th birthday, which takes her by surprise. For several days, she refuses to give up his corpse, insisting he is not dead. The townspeople write it off as her grieving process. They pity Emily for losing her father but also for his not having allowed her to marry. Emily depended heavily on her father, believing he would never leave her; he was all she had.

After her father's death, the only person seen moving about Emily's home is Tobe, a black man serving as Emily's butler. He is frequently seen entering and

exiting the house for groceries. Although the reclusive Emily does not have a strong relationship with the town, she opens her home to give art lessons to local children, doing so out of need for an income. She teaches until she is 40. With the acceptance of her father's death, Emily somewhat revives, even changing the style of her hair, and becomes friendly with Homer Barron, a laborer from the North who comes to town shortly after Mr. Grierson's death. The connection surprises some of the community, while others are glad she is taking an interest. However, it is stated that Homer "liked men, and it was known that he drank with younger men at the Elks' Club — that he was not a marrying man", which draws attention to Homer's sexuality but it is unclear whether he is homosexual or simply has more interest in drinking and carousing than in marrying Emily. Emily buys arsenic from the town's druggist. When the druggist says the law requires him to ask customers why they want poisons Emily refuses to disclose it; the druggist chalks it up to a rat infestation in her home. Some townspeople are convinced that she will use it to poison herself. Emily's distant cousins are called into town by the minister's wife to supervise Miss Emily and Homer Barron. Emily is seen in town buying wedding presents for Homer, including a monogrammed toilet set. Homer leaves town for some time reputedly to give Emily a chance to get rid of her cousins, and returns three days later after the cousins have left. After he is observed entering Miss Emily's home one evening, Homer is never seen again, leading the townsfolk to believe he ran off.

Despite these turnabouts in her social status, Emily continues to behave mysteriously as she had before her father died. Her reputation is such that the city council finds itself unable to confront her about a strong smell that has begun to emanate from the house. They believed Tobe was unable to maintain the house and something was rotting. Instead, the council decides to send men to her house under the cover of darkness to sprinkle lime around the house, after which the smell dissipates. The mayor of the town, Colonel Sartoris, makes a gentleman's agreement to overlook her taxes as an act of charity, though it is done under a pretense of repayment towards her father, to assuage Emily's pride after her father's death. Years later, a new generation has come to power in the county. Having no ties to Colonel Sartoris or Mr. Grierson, they approach Emily about being subject to taxation. Emily insists on maintaining this informal arrangement, flatly denying she owes any taxes, stating "I have no taxes in Jefferson." After this, the council declines to press the issue due to her obduracy. Emily has become a recluse: she is never seen outside of the house, and only rarely accepts people into it. The community eventually comes to view her as a "hereditary obligation" on the town, who must be humored and tolerated.

The funeral is a large affair: Emily has become an institution, so her death sparks a great deal of curiosity about her reclusive nature and what remains of her house. After she is buried, a group of townsfolk enters her house to see what remains of her life there. Tobe walks out of the house and is never seen again, giving the townspeople access to Miss Emily's home. The door to her upstairs bedroom is locked. Some of the townsfolk break down the door to see what has been hidden for so long. Inside, among the gifts that Emily had bought for Homer, lies the decomposed corpse of Homer Barron on the bed. On the pillow beside

him is the indentation of a head and a single strand of gray hair, indicating that Emily had slept with Homer's corpse. The house is an indicator revealing how Emily struggled to keep everything the same, in a frozen time period, avoiding change.

Q.2 Write a note on the theme of A Rose for Emily.

"A Rose for Emily" discusses many dark themes that characterized the Old South and Southern Gothic fiction.

The story explores themes of death and resistance to change. Also, it reflects the decaying of the societal tenets of the South in the 1930s. Emily Grierson had been controlled by her overbearing father for the first 30 years of her life and she had never questioned it. Once her father had passed, Emily, in denial, refused to give his corpse up for burial—this shows her inability to functionally adapt to change. When the present mayor and aldermen insist Miss Emily pay the taxes which she had been exempted from, she refuses and continues to live in her house. Miss Emily's stubborn insistence that she "pays no taxes in Jefferson" and her mistaking the new mayor for Colonel Sartoris brings into question whether her acts of resistance are a conscious act of defiance or a result of decayed mental stability. The reader is only shown Emily from an external perspective, we can not ascertain whether she acts rationally. The death of Homer, if interpreted as a murder, can be seen in the context of the north–south clash. Homer, notably a northerner, is not one for the tradition of marriage. In the framework that his death was not an accident, but a murder on the part of Emily, Homer's rejection of the marriage can be seen as the North's rejection of Southern tradition. The South ends its relations with the North in retaliation. Emily continuing to sleep next to Homer's body can be seen as the south holding on to an ideal that is no longer feasible.

Control and its repercussions are a persistent theme throughout the story. Emily's father was an intimidating and manipulative figure, keeping her from experiencing life on her terms. She was never able to grow, learn, live her life, start a family, and marry the one she truly loved. Even after Emily's father died, his presence and impact on his daughter were still apparent. Discussing Emily and her father, the townspeople said "We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door".Emily is portrayed as small and powerless, placed behind the overbearing frame of her father. She wears white, a symbol of innocence and purity. Emily falls victim to the ruling hand of her father and her place in the society: she has to uphold the noblesse oblige into which she was born. In this way, her father's influence remains after he has passed. This control leads to Emily's isolation, both externally and internally imposed. Emily is alone, yet always being watched by the townspeople; she is both apart from and a part of the community. Her position prevents her from ever finding happiness.

The power of death is a consistent theme throughout the story. Emily herself is portrayed as a "skeleton" that is both "small and spare" which is representative of the fact that she emanates death. When it comes to death itself Emily is in denial, most of that feeling has to do with her loneliness. After her father dies, she keeps his corpse for three days and refuses to admit that he is dead before surrendering his body for burial. The reader also sees this with the corpse of Homer Barron, except she is the one who inflicts death upon him. She poisons him and keeps him locked away in her room; she did not want to lose the only other person she had ever loved, so she made his stay permanent. These examples show that the power of death triumphs over everything, including "poor Emily", herself.

Due to this inevitability in the portrayal of death, "A Rose for Emily" is seen as a tale based on determinism, making the short story part of the naturalism literary movement. Here, a character's fate is already determined no matter how much the individual struggles to change it. There are impersonal forces of nature that prevent him or her from taking control. As the very universe itself appears indifferent, this character descends into an inevitable death and decay. The case of Emily is the same. Insanity ran in her family and it is possible her father's motives for keeping her from marrying were to end this genetic blight. This is a more charitable interpretation of Mr. Grierson (and his actions) than is normally imputed to him. No matter what she did, there was the implication that she would ultimately go mad. There was also the depiction of a cursed land due to slavery and the class structure based upon it. No matter how those who clung to the glorious past soldiered on, it was a tarnished way of life that led to ruin to those who clung to it.[

WILLIAM FAULKER

2) DRY SEPTEMBER

Q Dry September explores racial tensions, violence and moral decay. Comment.

ANS "Dry September," by American author William Faulkner, is a short story that explores racial tension, violence, and moral decay in a small Southern town when a white woman's accusation against a Black man leads to violence. The story, which unfolds in five parts, revolves around the rumors that Will Mayes, a Black man, assaulted or frightened a white woman, Miss Minnie Cooper. Without concrete evidence, the men of the town exact their revenge against Mayes. Presented in a nonlinear narrative style, the story jumps between different perspectives and culminates in the lynching of Mayes.

Set in rural Jefferson, Mississippi, in 1920, "Dry September" was first published by *Scribner's Magazine* in 1932 and later reproduced in Faulkner's first collection of short stories, *These 13*. Each story in the collection takes place in Yoknapatawpha County, a fictional region invented by Faulkner to mimic the landscape of Lafayette County, where his hometown of Oxford was seated. Yoknapatawpha serves as the backdrop for many of the author's early writings. It is characterized by its Southern Gothic atmosphere, intricate family histories, and sense of the decay and decline of the white Southern aristocracy. Thematically similar to "A Rose for Emily," "Dry September" explores the darker aspects of human nature in the post–World War I American South, particularly the pervasive, destructive power of prejudice, tradition, and small-town gossip and mentality. Through "Dry September" and other stories set in Yoknapatawpha County, Faulkner explored the South's troubled race and class dynamics and his characters' inability to cope with their changing world.

"Dry September" paved the way for later related narratives, such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Set in the 1930s and published in 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* tells the story of Tom Robinson, a Black man accused of raping the young, white Mayella Ewell. Unlike Will Mayes in Faulkner's "Dry September," Tom

Robinson is afforded a trial. However, Robinson, sentenced to life in prison by a biased jury, is ultimately shot and killed. Both he and Mayes symbolize the presumed criminality of Black men, the violence of mob dynamics, and the injustice of small-town vigilantism in the early 20th-century American South.

As the story opens in Part 1, a group of men are gathered at the local barbershop in Jefferson, bearing the insufferable heat from a 62-day drought. The topic of discussion is "something about Miss Minnie Cooper and a Negro". None of them know if she was "[a]ttacked, insulted, [or] frightened" by Will Mayes.
Lacking evidence of the crime, the group of men breaks into factions of men who want to wait for evidence and men who want immediate retribution:
the protagonist, barber Henry Hawkshaw, doubts the legitimacy of the rumor and defends Will Mayes's innocence: "I dont believe Will Mayes did it […] I know Will Mayes". At least two unnamed others also want evidence or question if Miss Minnie's story can be believed. The other faction dismisses the others' calls for facts and denigrates the others with racial epithets.
Rivaled only by the outside temperature, the heat of the argument inside the barbershop intensifies as the antagonist, John McLendon, bursts into the barbershop. McLendon, a former World War I commander and respected war hero, proclaims that Mayes's guilt or innocence is irrelevant: "What the hell difference does it make? Are you going to let the black sons get away with it until one really does it?".
As Hawkshaw urges the men to trust in the law and the judicial system, the armed and dangerous McLendon continues to work the mob into a frenzy. Aided by the insufferable heat, one by one, men join him on a manhunt for Will Mayes. In a desperate attempt to calm them, Hawkshaw rushes after the mob.
Part 2 switches the focus to Miss Minnie Cooper, an unmarried but formerly popular socialite in her late thirties. As a young woman, she attended social functions until, at one event, she overheard others gossiping about her and "never accepted another invitation" . Now, she lives with her mother and elderly aunt. Her days follow a typical pattern of sitting on the porch until noon, taking a nap after lunch, then putting on a new voile dress to go downtown in the late afternoon. While her family is described as "comfortable," Minnie "was the last to realize she was losing ground" socially as her peers became more aware of class stratification and moved on to marriages and children. The children of former schoolmates began to call her "aunty" until she requested they call her "cousin" instead. Eight years before this September evening, she had spent time with a widowed bank cashier. This relationship went nowhere, and Miss Minnie again became the object of gossip.
Part 3 changes the point of view again and follows Hawkshaw as he catches up to the mob. The day has died "in a pall of dust," and the town square is "shrouded by the spent dust". Once Hawkshaw finds the mob, McLendon is convinced Hawkshaw has changed his mind regarding Will Mayes's innocence. Hawkshaw joins the manhunt to the ice plant where Mayes works as a night watchman.
Once the men find Mayes at the ice plant, a voice from the mob twice urges, "Kill him, kill the black son". McLendon doesn't want to kill Mayes at the ice plant, so he handcuffs him and loads him into the backseat of McLendon's car. After addressing

McLendon by name, asking what he's done and what they will do to him, Mayes attempts to fight back. He quickly realizes he is powerless as the vehicle speeds down a barren dirt road toward an empty pasture, home to an abandoned brick kiln, mounds of red dirt, and a series of bottomless containers.

Although Mayes calls out to "Mr Henry" several times, his pleas for help go unanswered as the barber realizes he is equally powerless. McLendon refuses to stop the car to let Hawkshaw out, so the barber opens the car door, jumps out, and limps back toward town. Ducking by the side of the road as McLendon's car races back into Jefferson, Hawkshaw can tell by the headcount in the vehicle that they are returning to town without Mayes.

Part 4 of "Dry September" returns the focus to Miss Minnie Cooper as she prepares for an evening at the movies. In a carefully executed grooming session, she dons her "sheerest underthings and stockings and a new voile dress". Her friends inquire if she's strong enough to go out, and they reveal that they don't know what, if anything, happened with Will Mayes.

Once downtown, Minnie slowly walks through town and along the square, trembling and holding her hands at her sides. Minnie's friends note the absence of Black people on the square. Finally the center of attention again, Minnie is identified as "the one"; men tip their hats, and murmured conversations confirm the speed with which the news that Mayes "went on a little trip" has spread through town.

Welcomed by the circle of women desperate for information, Miss Minnie accompanies them to the movie theater, noticing the succulent smell and youthful appearance of young lovers taking their seats as the lights go down and the movie begins to play. Overwhelmed by the images of beauty and passion on the screen juxtaposed against her faded looks and loneliness, Miss Minnie begins to laugh uncontrollably. When her laughter draws attention, Minnie's friends escort her back home. Trying to calm her hysteria, they undress her, put her in bed, apply ice packs, and call for the doctor.

"Dry September" concludes in Part 5 as McLendon returns home. He's angry that his wife is still awake and "waiting to see when [he comes] in". She frantically explains that the heat made sleep impossible, but he grabs her by the shoulder and throws her across a chair. As the story concludes, he removes his pistol from his hip and undresses on the screen porch, enveloped in the hot darkness that surrounds him.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

3) That Evening Sun

Q.1 Write the theme of That Evening Sun.

ANS "That Evening Sun" is a short story by American writer William Faulkner. It was first published in 1931 as part of his collection *These 13*. The story is narrated by one of Faulkner's most memorable characters, Quentin Compson, and presents a dark portrait of white Southerner's indifference to the fears of one of their black employees, Nancy. The narrative sees Quentin and his two siblings, Jason and Caddy, attempting to understand part of the adult world that they have not yet encountered.

Nancy Mannigoe is an African-American washerwoman working for Quentin's family since their regular cook, Dilsey, has fallen ill. At the time, it was common for white families to have a black laundress or washerwoman who would wash their laundry. They would pick up the bundles of clothing from families such as Quentin's and carry them on their heads all the way to their cabins, where they would wash them before bringing them back. The process soon came to include the use of automobiles to facilitate transportation, though the operations were still run almost entirely by African American women. Through his narration, Quentin reflects how times have changed in his hometown of Jefferson, Mississippi and how this is no longer commonplace, although it was considered to be normal just fifteen years earlier.

Quentin is a young boy of nine when his family hires Nancy as their washerwoman. He observes the way his family interacts with her, not sure what to make of it but still observing without judgment in the way an innocent child does. He comes to know that Nancy lives on the other side of the ditch, which they call "Negro Hollo." She is responsible for cleaning the Compsons' laundry and doing their cooking when their regular cook, Dilsey, is unavailable. Nancy's estranged husband, Jesus, lives on the margins of both the African American and the white communities. He

has a scar across his face, the result of a razor cut from a fight, presumably one of many fights in which he has participated.

Nancy gets into an argument with a white man on Main Street in the middle of the day. Mr. Stovall is the town bank clerk and church deacon; Nancy rails against him publicly for money owed to her for providing sexual favors. In response, Stovall knocks Nancy to the ground and kicks her in the face, knocking loose several of her teeth. She is taken away and put in jail, though no reason is given. While in jail, Nancy sings about her troubles and tries to hang herself. The jailer accuses her of using cocaine, sees that she is pregnant, and proceeds to beat her for her behavior anyway.

After she is released, Nancy receives a visit from her estranged husband. Jesus. in the Compsons' kitchen. Speaking in vulgar sexual innuendos, they discuss her pregnancy and the identity of the father of the unborn child. After Nancy makes it clear that Jesus is not the father, he flies into a rage and vows to kill whoever it was that impregnated his wife. Nancy knows that Jesus would not go so far as to confront Stovall, because there would likely be grave consequences for such a thing, maybe even lynching. However, this fact brings her no comfort as she begins to fear Jesus himself and that, with nowhere else to direct his growing rage, he might take it out on her. She believes that Jesus is capable of killing her out of jealousy. After their conversation, Jesus disappears, heading off to visit another woman in Memphis.

Nancy refuses to return to her cabin across the river for fear that Jesus is lying in wait. The Compsons set up a place for her to sleep in the kitchen, and she even spends a night sleeping in the children's room. However, once Dilsey recovers and is well enough to work again, Mrs. Compson refuses to allow Nancy to stay any longer. Nancy is distraught at the idea of crossing the river, convinced that Jesus is hiding out in the ditch just waiting for her. Terrified to go home alone, Nancy convinces the children to come to her cabin with her. She tells them a story that mirrors her own situation, desperately trying to entertain them to keep them by her.

Five-year-old Jason starts to get upset and wants to return home, as Quentin and seven-year-old Caddy grow increasingly uneasy. Eventually, Mr. Compson arrives. He is sympathetic to Nancy's fears but does not believe she is in imminent danger. He takes his children home, leaving Nancy alone. Terrified and convinced that Jesus will return no matter what she does, she leaves the door to her cabin open, seemingly resigned to her fate, but she keeps the light burning because she does not want to be killed in the dark.