

**I BA - BRITISH POETRY- CHAUCER TO THE MODERNS**  
**SUB.CODE: 18K1E02**

**UNIT I:**

From *The Canterbury Tales*:  
General Prologue

Here begins the Book of the Tales of Caunterbury (lines 1-42):

**Summary:**

The frame story of the poem, as set out in the 858 lines of Middle English which make up the General Prologue, is of a religious pilgrimage. The narrator, Geoffrey Chaucer, is in The Tabard Inn in Southwark, where he meets a group of "sundry folk" who are all on the way to Canterbury, the site of the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket, a martyr reputed to have the power of healing the sinful.

People want to go on religious pilgrimages to spiritual places in the springtime, when the April rains have soaked deep into the dry ground to water the flowers' roots; and when Zephyrus, the god of the west wind, has helped new flowers to grow everywhere; and when you can see the constellation Aries in the sky; and when the birds sing all the time. Some people go to other countries, but many people in England choose to go to the city of Canterbury in southeastern England to visit the remains of Thomas Becket, the Christian martyr who had the power of healing people.

On spring, when Chaucer was making his own humble pilgrimage to Canterbury, stayed at the Tabard Inn in the city of Southwark. While he was there, a group of twenty-nine people who were also making the same pilgrimage arrived at the hotel. None of them had really known each other before, but they had met along the way. It was a pretty diverse group of people from different walks of life. The hotel was spacious and had plenty of room for all of us. Chaucer started talking with these people and pretty soon fit right into their group. They made plans to get up early and continue on the journey to Canterbury together.

But before the poet begins his story, he should probably tell all about the twenty-nine people in that group—who they were, what they did for a living, and what they were all wearing. The concluding lines of the prologue states about the knight.

**The General Prologue : A detailed analysis**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The setting is April, and the prologue starts by singing the praises of that month whose rains and warm western wind restore life and fertility to the earth and its inhabitants. The setting arguably takes place in April being that travel conditions are not up for travel in real life during this time.[1] This abundance of life, the narrator says, prompts people to go on pilgrimages; in England, the goal of such pilgrimages is the shrine of Thomas Becket. The narrator falls in with a group of pilgrims, and the largest part of the prologue is taken up by a description of them; Chaucer seeks to describe their 'condition', their 'array', and their social 'degree.' According to *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume 1*, "The narrator, in fact, seems to be expressing chiefly admiration and praise at the superlative skills and accomplishments of this particular group, even such dubious ones as the Friar's begging techniques or the Manciple's success in cheating the learned lawyers who employ him".

**The prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* - a mirror to fourteenth-century English society:**

Chaucer arguably points out the virtues and vices of each of the pilgrims as described within the work. It is up to the reader to determine the gravity and underlying meaning of Chaucer's methods in doing so the pilgrims include a knight, his son a squire, the knight's yeoman, a prioress accompanied by

a second nun and the nun's priest, a monk, a friar, a merchant, a clerk, a sergeant of law, a franklin, a haberdasher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, a tapestry weaver, a cook, a shipman, a doctor of physic, a wife of Bath, a parson, his brother a plowman, a miller, a manciple, a reeve, a summoner, a pardoner, the Host (a man called Harry Bailey), and a portrait of Chaucer himself.

At the end of the section, the Host proposes that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He lays out his plan: each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whoever has told the most meaningful and comforting stories, with "the best sentence and moost solaaas" (line 798) will receive a free meal paid for by the rest of the pilgrims upon their return. The company agrees and makes the Host its governor, judge, and record keeper. They set off the next morning and draw lots to determine who will tell the first tale. The Knight wins and prepares to tell his tale.

The first lines situate the story in a particular time and place, but the speaker does this in cosmic and cyclical terms, celebrating the vitality and richness of spring. This approach gives the opening lines a dreamy, timeless, unfocused quality, and it is therefore surprising when the narrator reveals that he's going to describe a pilgrimage that he himself took rather than telling a love story. A pilgrimage is for penance and grace:

A pilgrimage is a religious journey undertaken for penance and grace. As pilgrimages went, Canterbury was not a very difficult destination for an English person to reach. It was, therefore, very popular in fourteenth-century England, as the narrator mentions. Pilgrims traveled to visit the remains of Saint Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, who was murdered in 1170 by knights of King Henry II. Soon after his death, he became the most popular saint in England.

In line 20, the narrator abandons his unfocused, all-knowing point of view, identifying himself as an actual person for the first time by inserting the first person—"I"—as he relates how he met the group of pilgrims while staying at the Tabard Inn. He emphasizes that this group, which he encountered by accident, was itself formed quite by chance (25–26). He then shifts into the first-person plural, referring to the pilgrims as "we" beginning in line 29, asserting his status as a member of the group.

The narrator ends the introductory portion of his prologue by noting that he has "tyme and space" to tell his narrative. His comments underscore the fact that he is writing some time after the events of his story, and that he is describing the characters from memory. He has spoken and met with these people, but he has waited a certain length of time before sitting down and describing them.

His intention to describe each pilgrim as he or she *seemed* to him is also important, for it emphasizes that his descriptions are not only subject to his memory but are also shaped by his individual perceptions and opinions regarding each of the characters. He positions himself as a mediator between two groups: the group of pilgrims, of which he was a member, and us, the audience, whom the narrator explicitly addresses as "you" in lines 34 and 38.

On the other hand, the narrator's declaration that he will tell us about the "condicioun," "degree," and "array" (dress) of each of the pilgrims suggests that his portraits will be based on objective facts as well as his own opinions. He spends considerable time characterizing the group members according to their social positions. The pilgrims represent a diverse cross section of fourteenth-century English society. Medieval social theory divided society into three broad classes, called "estates": the military, the clergy, and the laity. (The nobility, not represented in the General Prologue, traditionally derives its title and privileges from military duties and service, so it is considered part of the military estate.)

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, in the portraits that we see in the rest of the General Prologue, the Knight and Squire represent the military estate. The clergy is represented by the Prioress (and her nun and three priests), the Monk, the Friar, and the Parson.

The other characters, from the wealthy Franklin to the poor Plowman, are the members of the laity. These lay characters can be further subdivided into landowners (the Franklin), professionals (the Clerk, the Man of Law, the Guildsmen, the Physician, and the Shipman), laborers (the Cook and the Plowman),

stewards (the Miller, the Manciple, and the Reeve), and church officers (the Summoner and the Pardoner).

Chaucer's descriptions of the various characters and their social roles reveal the influence of the medieval genre of estates satire.

### Short question and answers:

1. What is the importance of the General Prologue in The Canterbury Tales?

The prologue to The Canterbury Tales is most important because it established the class structure of society in Medieval England. Chaucer uses the genre of **estates satire**. He introduces the nobility first, followed by the clergy, the merchants, tradesmen, and finally the peasants.

2. How does the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales begin?

The narrator opens the General Prologue with a description of the return of spring. He describes the April rains, the burgeoning flowers and leaves, and the chirping birds. The travellers were a diverse group who, like the narrator, were on their way to Canterbury. They happily agreed to let him join them.

3. What were the Canterbury Tales written about?

Chaucer's long poem follows the journey of a group of pilgrims, **31** including Chaucer himself, from the Tabard Inn in Southwark to St Thomas à Becket's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral.

4. How many characters are in the General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales?

In Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, 32 characters make the trip to Canterbury. 29 of these are mentioned in line 24 of the "General Prologue." The narrator joins this group (making 30). The host, Harry Bailey, makes 31.

5. What is the structure of the General Prologue?

Structure. The General Prologue establishes the frame for the Tales as a whole (or of the intended whole) and introduces the characters/story tellers. These are introduced in the order of their rank in accordance with the three medieval social estates (clergy, nobility, and commoners and peasantry).

6. What are three features of Chaucer's language and writing style?

Firstly, Chaucer's style is marked by lucidity of expression, joyous originality and easiness free of ambiguities and direct philosophical maxims. In describing nearly all his characters, he uses colloquial language easy to understand for a common man.

7. What is the main theme of the Canterbury Tales?

Social satire is the major theme of The Canterbury Tales. The medieval society was set on **three foundations: the nobility, the church, and the peasantry**. Chaucer's satire targets all segments of the medieval social issues, human immorality, and depraved heart.

8. When was the General Prologue written?

1380-1392

The Canterbury Tales is a work written by Geoffrey Chaucer. During 1380-1392, he wrote the "General Prologue" and some of Canterbury Tales.

9. What is Chaucer's style?

Poetry – rhyming couplets in iambic pentameter

The style of The Canterbury Tales is characterized by rhyming couplets. That means that every two lines rhyme with each other.

10. Who is called the father of English poetry?

Geoffrey Chaucer (/ˈtʃɔːsər/; c. 1340s – 25 October 1400) was an English poet and author. Widely considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages, he is best known for *The Canterbury Tales*. He has been called the "father of English literature", or, alternatively, the "father of English poetry".

11. What is the reason for the pilgrimage in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*? The reason for the pilgrimage in *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* is to visit the shrine of St. Thomas Becket. Becket was a Christian martyr who was believed to have special healing powers.

12. In what does the General Prologue reflect Chaucer's contemporary life?

It is in "The Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*" that Chaucer reflects very clearly the chivalric spirit of the medieval times. Chaucer reflects the fading chivalry of the middle Age represented in the character of the Knight, and the rising chivalry of his own times reflected in his young son, the Squire.

## 2. My mouth doth water, and my breast doth swell

(Taken From the poetic collection *Astrophel and Stella*)

by Sir Philip Sydney

### A detailed analysis of the poem:

Mouth watering is usually a sign of desire, and when one's "*breast doth swell*" it is commonly a sign of being prideful. The itchy tongue thing could be a sign of being thirsty, but in context with the earlier line that his mouth is watering I would believe this means he is "itching to say something." "*My thoughts in labor be*" could mean that his thoughts are coming difficultly (laboriously) but I think it means that he is about to "give birth" to some of his thoughts; i.e. he is about to start speaking his mind. The speaker asks some gentlemen to listen to what his about to say and to listen well...he intends to tell a riddle about his life.

Aurora, mythologically, is the Roman goddess of dawn. She is the one that makes the sun come up and the sun go down. A nymph is a female spirit that is usually attached to a certain location. In this context, a female spirit "lives" near where Aurora holds court. She is "superhot." Words can describe how beautiful she is. "Abase" means to "bring down or reduce," so the poet is saying that she is so gorgeous that men can't find the words to describe her and are stuck saying that she "excels." She is very well known and well thought of, "*deserved renown*." She is also very majestic in a "royal" way, holding herself regally. In short, she has many "treasures" beyond cash...she is a "larger than life" person with the attitudes of a great woman.

All of these wonderful personality gifts make her world a "worldly bliss." She has a good existence. She has no real bad luck, other than the fact that "Rich she is." I find it interesting that the word "rich" is capitalized in mid-sentence. That implies that it is a proper noun, but I can't find any meaning of the word other than to have lots of money.

It seems to imply that being "Rich" in all these gifts is both a blessing and a curse for the nymph. It almost feels like there should be something more to this sonnet...some explanation of why she is both rich and poor for having these gifts, but that doesn't seem to be evident here.

It is also possible I am missing some huge piece of this puzzle...some implication that I don't understand or some piece of the much longer book that explains more about this sonnet.

## **An essay on “My mouth doth water, and my breast doth swell :**

### **Introduction:**

*Astrophil and Stella* is a series of sonnets written by Sir Phillip Sidney and thought to have been published around the 1580s. The sonnets are a series of love poems between the man Astrophil and his star, Stella. Many believe the sonnets are Sidney’s response to the discovery that his childhood love has been married to another.

Astrophil has fallen in love with Stella. Many of the sonnets are speeches delivered to Stella. We learn a lot about the internal world of Astrophil but little of Stella, aside from a few clues in her actions and reactions to the speeches.

### **Sidney’s real love:**

For the first thirty sonnets or so, Stella does not return Astrophil’s love, but does not snub his affections either. She tries to be kind, or at least he believes that she is. Eventually, she marries another man. This does not deter Astrophil, but rather makes Stella more attractive because her marriage is an unhappy one, and he admires her sacrifice.

She does eventually return his affection, but she is never overcome by it. Astrophil, on the other hand, is increasingly more in love and tries to convince her to make love to him despite her vows. He even steals a kiss from her while she is sleeping. She realizes that even though she loves him, she cannot continue in the affair. Because Astrophil will need to consummate his passion, she ends the affair before any improper behavior can happen.

We know that approximately the first thirty sonnets were written while Sidney’s real love, Penelope, was still unmarried and he was still at court. She never gave Sidney any overt encouragement, but just like Stella, never snubbed his affections. These thirty sonnets most likely comprise a year altogether as Sidney left the court, visited his sister’s estate, saw “Stella” at mutual family’s house, and then returned to court.

### **Sidney’s real love, Penelope and her marriage with Lord rich:**

Sidney discovers her marriage to Lord Rich somewhere between sonnets thirty-one and thirty-three. They were engaged to be married in their childhood, but this was broken off. Penelope’s marriage does not make her happy, a thing Sidney notes, but this does not diminish his passion for her. Rather, her selfless dedication to a marriage that brings her no satisfaction is something that Sidney admires and finds attractive.

He is often jealous of Lord Rich’s access to her, though he knows that she is not happy. He does not feel that her husband can appreciate her, and so he vows to win her heart. Around the sixtieth sonnet, she begins to return his love, but only platonically. She is unwilling to risk her reputation and her husband, and so tells Astrophil that the only way she will return his love is if they never consummate it.

He is content with this for a while, but as his passion grows deeper, we see his behavior change. He cannot help but want to be with her physically, and this desire overrides his rational behavior. He steals a kiss while she is sleeping, and this begins the downfall of their affair. She is incredibly angry that he broke her trust; the sonnet describes it as a sort of rape.

She pulls away, and her absence torments him. It takes a toll on him, and he loves her more deeply than ever. Around sonnet ninety-three, he admits to having wronged her, and his guilt and sorrow are overwhelming in the next few sonnets.

We do not have much detail, other than the kiss, for why he feels this way, but he makes it clear that the relationship is doomed forever. She falls ill, and he serenades her under her window to make her feel better. It has the opposite effect. She is so angry that he would continue to pursue her even after she has asked him not to that she ends the relationship entirely. At the end of the series, he is alone and isolated.

He retains some measure of happiness, despite how things turned out, knowing that his love for Stella is genuine and that she once loved him in return.

Sidney mimics a rhyme scheme from a famous poem by Petrarch to tell the story of his love. Just as Stella torments Astrophil, so was Petrarch tormented by his own love, a love that also causes him much joy. He touches on themes of love versus reason, as well as the conflicting desires of purity and desire.

#### **Conclusion:**

It is clear that although Astrophil's love for Stella was fruitless and ended, it brought him an enormous amount of joy as well. He remains happy that Stella once loved him. His inability to keep his love chaste ends their relationship, a point he makes in the sonnet after he steals a kiss. Love, for Astrophil, is something that cannot be contained, though he tries for a long time to keep Stella in his life.

Sidney introduced a new style of poetry into England during the Renaissance, changing the way literature was produced. In the end, he understands that although reason is well and good, he is happier having loved Stella with abandon and knowing that she once loved him as well.

### **3. One day I wrote her name upon the strand (Sonnet 75) by Edmund Spenser**

#### **Introduction:**

*Sonnet 75* is part of *Amoretti*, a sonnet cycle that describes Spenser's courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. *Amoretti* was published in 1595 and it included 89 sonnets and a series of short poems called *Anacreontics and Epithalamion*. The volume was titled "Amoretti and Epithalamion. Written not long since by Edmund Spenser".

Particularly, *Sonnet 75* depicts the lyrical voice's attempts to make his loved one immortal. A scene is described in which the lyrical voice has a conversation with his loved one about this particular topic. This poem is a Spenserian sonnet, **formed by three interlocked quatrains and a couplet**. It has an ABAB BCBC CDCD EE rhyme scheme and it is written in iambic pentameter. **The main themes in *Sonnet 75* are immortality and love.**

### **To immortalize his love: (Writing in Sand)**

The first quatrain depicts the lyrical voice's attempt to immortalize his loved one. The stanza starts by setting the scene: "One day". The lyrical voice writes the name of his loved one on the sand of a beach but the waves wash the writing away ("I wrote her name upon the strand./But came the waves and washed it away"). The lyrical voice writes the name in the sand again, but, as before, the waves wash the name away ("Again I write it with a second hand./ But came the tide, and made my pains his prey"). The action of the wave symbolizes how time will destroy all man-made things. To emphasize this action the waves are personified as they "washed it away" and "made my pains his prey". Notice also, the way in which the lyrical voice refers to his own writing ("my pains") and how this works as a metaphor ("his prey") for the relationship that the words have with nature and time.

### **Lyrical voice of the lady-love: (failure to Accomplish the Impossible)**

The second quatrain describes a dialogue that the lyrical voice has with his loved one. The woman reacts to the writing and tells the lyrical voice that his attempts are in vain ("Vain man, said she, that doest in vain assay/A mortal thing so to immortalize"), as mortal things such as herself cannot live forever. The woman introduces a new perspective to *Sonnet 75*, as she criticizes the lyrical voice's actions and words. She emphasizes her mortal nature because she will also disappear like the words in the sand ("For I myself shall like to this decay/And eek my name be wiped out likewise"). Thus, it is useless to write her name because she, as the words in the sand, will eventually disappear. Time and nature are cruel and destroy man-made things.

### **The lyrical voice response to his lady-love: (Having None of It)**

The speaker, however, is having none of the nonsense of mortality. He admits that lesser things may, indeed, succumb to the whims of the mortal realm, but she is not of those lesser things.

The third quatrain presents the lyrical voice's response to what his loved one said. In this stanza, there is a volta (turn) and the tone of *Sonnet 75* changes. Up to this moment, both the lyrical voice and his loved one emphasized on the mortal nature of them and their creations. Nevertheless, the lyrical voice says the opposite in this stanza. The lyrical voice tells the woman that the "baser things" will disappear, but she will live on ("Not so, (quod I) let baser things devise/To die in dust, but you shall live by fame"). Notice the alliteration in these lines: "devise", "die", and "dust". The lyrical voice, a poet, will immortalize his loved one in his poems and, because of that, she will live forever ("My verse, your virtues rare shall eternize, And in the heavens write your glorious name"). By immortalizing his loved one, the lyrical voice puts her on a heavenly space, as she will be "in the heavens" with her "glorious name". Now, the alliteration is made with "v"sounds ("verse"and "virtues"), and they are much softer than the "d"sounds in the previous lines.

### **Conclusion:**

The final couplet,  
Where, when as death shall all the world subdue,  
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

summarizes the message of the poem. According to the lyrical voice, even if everything comes to an end, their love will survive. There is alliteration in the first line with a "w"sound ("Where", "wheneas", and "world) and with an "l"sound in the second line ("Love", "live", "later", and "life"). The immortal quality in love and death is contrasted to the briefness in life. Throughout the poem, there is a very melodic and stable rhythm that is formed with the regular rhyme scheme and the iambic

pentameter. These devices make the sonnet calm and pleasant to the ear, while creating a very detailed picture.

### Short question and answers:

1. “Vayne man”, said she, “that does in vayne assay,”- Who says this and to whom? Explain the significance of ‘vayne’ and ‘vaine’,

The line is taken from Edmund Spenser’s sonnet ‘One Day I Wrote Her Name’. This is said by the ladylove. She said these words to the poet lover Spenser.

Vayne means full of vanity and boastfulness. ‘Vaine’ means uselessly or without the desired result. The ladylove mocks at the poet’s effort to immortalize her name by writing it on the sea-beach because waves will wash it away. Then the lady said the poet lover in a mocking tone that he was trying in vain by writing her name on the sand. The lover then realized that writing verses for her might immortalize their love.

2. Why does Edmund Spenser say, “Our love shall live, and later life renew”?

Here Spenser says that their mutual love will live forever because of his poetic creation would have regenerative power which would bestow immortality upon their love although they shall lose their physical entity to death, the inescapable reality.

3. What is the central theme of the sonnet “One day I wrote her name upon the strand”?

The central theme of the sonnet is love. It represents the poet’s effort to immortalize his love to the mortal world. Though the lady-love is quite dubious about the result of the poet’s effort, the poet is thoroughly inspired and believe that he can eternize her virtues by his verse. Poetry will conquer time and death, and their life will be renewed by love.

4. Again I wrote it with a second hand”. – Who writes it? Why did the poet write it for the second time?

Edmund Spenser writes it in his sonnet One Day I Wrote Her Name. It refers to the writing of the name of the lady love on the strands to immortalize her. The wave washed away his efforts repeatedly. So the poet wrote the name for the second time.

5. How did the tide make the pains of the poet his prey?

In the sonnet ‘One Day I Write Her Name’ Spenser says that he had written the name of his beloved on the sand but, the wave came and washed it away for each time. Thus the tide spoilt the effort of the poet and made his pain its prey.

6. “In the heavens wryte your glorious name”. – Whose glorious name would be written ‘in heavens’ and why? How would the poet write the name in heaven?

The poet’s ladylove’s name would be written ‘in heaven’. The lover realizes that if he writes his beloved’s name on the earthly strands, it cannot but be wiped out by tide and death. So he proposes to write her glorious name in heaven where death will be unable to subdue it. Thus her name will be free from being wiped out.

7. A mortal thing to immortalize.” -What is meant by ‘a mortal thing’? Who wants to immortalize it?

By ‘a mortal thing’ the poet Edmund Spenser. means his beloved in the sonnet ‘ One Day I Wrote Her Name’. The poet lover wants to immortalize it.

8. But came the tyde, and made my pains his pray.” Bring out the imagery lying in the line.

The poet’s effort of writing his beloved’s name upon the strands to immortalize it is in vain as tides come and wash it away, again and again, The poet expresses this vain effort of his with the help of



imagery. Just as a big bird like the hawk makes a small bird its prey so the tide turns the name of the beloved its prey by wiping it away.

9. How will the love of the poet and his beloved be renewed in later life?

According to the poet, the future generations will come to know about the chaste love of the poet and his beloved by reading his poetry and will like to taste such love in their life. Thus their love will be renewed in later life. The lover is quite confident that there is no fear of the disintegration of their love because it is pure as gold.

10. What is meant by Amoretti?

The word "Amoretti" means little love. Here it refers to the poet's beloved Elizabeth Boyle. He dedicated the whole sequence of sonnets to Elizabeth Boyle. The name of the sonnet sequence is also "Amoretti".

11. What is Sonnet 75 by Edmund Spenser about?

**Sonnet 75** is about a man who keeps writing his lover's name in the sands on a beach, and gets frustrated when they get washed away. She reminds him that he's being silly because she's going to be washed away with her name in the sand when she dies one day.

12. Who is the speaker in **Edmund Spenser's** Sonnet 75? Answer: The speaker in **Edmund Spenser's** Sonnet 75 is a man, who is addressing indirectly his beloved, attempting to convince her that their love will live eternally.

13. What type of sonnet is one day I wrote her name upon the strand?

#### **Spenserian Sonnet**

Those final rhyming lines provide the poem with a major sense of closure. In "Sonnet 75," the final two lines of the poem rhyme beautifully: Where whenas death shall all the world subdue, Our love shall live, and later life renew."

14. What is the central idea of the first quatrain in Sonnet 75?

In "**Sonnet 75**," the speaker discusses writing his beloved's name and seeing it washed away. One **central idea** in the poem is that writing might not last, but love will.

15. What is the tone of Sonnet 75?

The overall **tone of Sonnet 75** is confident and optimistic. Although the woman does not believe that Spenser can immortalize her, he exemplifies his feelings for her through his words, thus reassuring the readers of this unrequited love.

16. Who is the woman addressed in Spenser's sonnet sequence of "One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon the Strand"?

The woman to whom Spenser dedicated his sonnet sequence, Amoretti, is Elizabeth Boyle, his second wife. For more information about her, you'll find useful Fred Blick's "Spenser's Amoretti and Elizabeth Boyle: Her Names Immortalized."

17. Why did the lady love rebuke the poet in the poem "One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon the Strand"?

The speaker's sweetheart castigates the speaker for attempting to accomplish the impossible: to make a mortal immortal. She reminds her lover that not only will the ocean waves obliterate her name, but in time she herself will vanish from the shores of life. The beloved labels her lover a man of vanity for having the notion that he can buck the eternal rounds of life and death by such a limp gesture.

18. To whom does "I" refer to in the poem "One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon the Strand"?

The speaker of the poem.

19. What is the dramatic element in "One day I wrote her name upon the strand"?

Immortalizing a lover in poetry.

20. How does the speaker in Edmund Spenser's "Sonnet 75" want to immortalize the virtues of his mistress?

By putting her in a sonnet.

21. What type of sonnet is Edmund Spenser's "One day I wrote her name upon the strand"?

Spenser receives credit for creating his eponymous sonnet style, taking his place along among such luminaries as Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Milton. The Spenserian sonnet was featured in the poet's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*. The Spenserian sonnet is also referred to as the "Spenserian Stanza" when referring to his long poem.

The Spenserian sonnet features three quatrains and a couplet, thus resembling the Shakespearean; however, Spenser's rhyme scheme differs slightly; the Shakespearean sonnet's rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, but the Spenserian sonnet features two fewer rhymes with the scheme, ABAB BCBC DCDC EE.

22. How was the theme of love shown in Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 75?

In "One day I wrote her name upon the strand," the speaker addresses indirectly his beloved, attempting to convince her that their love will live eternally.

23. What is the love and death concept implied in Sonnet 75?

In sonnet 75 from Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*, the speaker addresses indirectly his beloved, attempting to convince her that their love will live eternally.

24. Who is the woman addressed in Edmund Spenser's sonnet, "One day I wrote her name upon the strand"?

It is likely that the woman is Elizabeth Boyle, his second wife, to whom the poet dedicated his sonnet sequence, *Amoretti*.

25. Are there any figures of speech used in Edmund Spenser's "Sonnet 75"?

The language is literal, not figurative.

26. What do you know about the woman addressed in Spenser's sonnet sequence?

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

27. How does the speaker in Spenser's "Sonnet 75" express the parallel of the transitory world to mortal human life?

That question is based on a false premise. The poem does not address any such "parallel"; instead, in this sonnet, the speaker addresses indirectly his beloved, attempting to convince her that their love will live eternally.

28. What is meant by "made my paynes his pray"?

It means "made my pains his prey."

29. How does the speaker in Spenser's Sonnet 75 use ellipsis?

The speaker's use of ellipsis is genius, "hand" replacing "handwriting" allows for a convenient rhyme.

**30. Who is the speaker in Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 75?**

The speaker in Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 75 is a man, who is addressing indirectly his beloved, attempting to convince her that their love will live eternally.

**31. How does the Spenserian sonnet differ from the Shakespearean sonnet?**

The Shakespearean sonnet's rime scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, and the Spenserian features two fewer rimes with the scheme, ABAB BCBC DCDC EE.

**32. Who is the woman addressed in Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 75?**

The woman to whom Spenser dedicated his sonnet sequence, Amoretti, is Elizabeth Boyle, his second wife. For more information about her, you'll find useful Fred Blick's "Spenser's Amoretti and Elizabeth Boyle: Her Names Immortalized."

**33. Is the title of sonnet 75, "One day I wrote her name upon the strand," appropriate? Please explain it.** Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 75 appears in his collection titled, "Amoretti." This collection features 89 sonnets, which are not titled but are merely numbered. When referring to each sonnet, writers thus need to employ the first line as the title of the sonnet. The first line of sonnet 75 is "One day I wrote her name upon the strand." So, yes, of course, that title is appropriate, especially because it sets the direction of the discourse by stating an act on which the speaker and his addressee engage in a discussion.

**34. "Vain man," she said, who is she here?**

She is the lady, whom the speaker is addressing in the sonnet.

**35. Comment on the character of the lover in sonnet 75?**

The speaker's sweetheart then castigates the speaker for attempting to accomplish the impossible: to make a mortal immortal. She reminds her lover that not only will the ocean waves obliterate her name, but in time she herself will vanish from the shores of life. The beloved labels her lover a man of vanity for having the notion that he can buck the eternal rounds of life and death by such a limp gesture.

## UNIT II

### A Hymn to God the Father BY JOHN DONNE

#### **A Note on the author, John Donne :**

John Donne married Anne More when she was only seventeen years old; she bore Donne twelve children in fifteen years and died at age thirty-three. Although some scholars and critics have suggested that the two major rimes in this poem "done" and "more" amount to a pun, that claim offers no useful information regarding the poem's meaning or value. It is obvious that the rimes refer to the poet and the object of his lust. Anne More, perhaps along with others, had provided serious obstacles to Donne's spiritual progress. As he continued to press his virgin(s) to have sex with him, his lustful appetite obstructed his spirituality. But in the final analysis, it is not the object of lust that is the culprit; it is the manner in which the one suffering the lust addresses his issue. Donne's earlier behavior of pursuing his lusts with a vengeance had triggered in him fears that needed to be addressed.

#### **Summary of “A Hymn to God the Father”**

##### **Introduction:**

‘A Hymn to God the Father’ by [John Donne](#) contains a speaker’s prayer to God that he be forgiven for all of the terrible sins he committed.

The poem begins with the speaker describing how the world is filled with sin. He might not be responsible for all of humanity’s troubles but he has more than enough of his own to account for. The speaker tells of how he spends most of his life in sin. He runs through it, enjoying almost every moment spent there. This is all part of a confession and the plea to God. The speaker hopes that God will look down on him fondly and take away all the guilt he feels about his life. If God were to do so, and make the speaker feel as if Jesus is with him all the time, the he could live a happy life. He needs God to resolve all of his troubles.

##### **Original Sin**

The prayer commences as the speaker supplicates against the original sin of having been born into human flesh. Aware that he, of course, does not recall choosing a human birth, he intuits regardless that the incarnated soul signifies a non-perfected being. The speaker understands that he is burdened with karma to overcome. He has sown and now he must reap what he has sown. He knows that he has to repair his life in order to reap only good in future.

The fact that the speaker has become painfully aware and sin-conscious indicates that he is making progress on the path to self-awareness. Instead of using his energy to seduce virgins, he is now seeking soul-awareness and a clean, dutiful life through prayer and meditation on the Divine. The speaker continues to be accosted by fleshly lusts which are difficult to subdue, but now he knows where to go to get help in overcoming the animal lusts that still exasperate his attempts to remain quiet and still. The speaker has come to hate his earlier sin, and he is aware that he needs help from the Divine as he strives to control and overcome that sin. Thus, the speaker confesses in multiple layers.

##### **The Sin of Lust**

A second sin for the speaker is that he has urged other people to commit that same sin, which is the sin of lust. While the speaker has found it possible to control his lust for a short time, he had engaged in his sin many times longer, thus making the ridding of it very difficult.

The speaker knows that the only help that will be of any true assistance is God. As he fashions his heart song to God, he places his faith, trust, and soul in God's hands. Yet the speaker must continue to ask for more and more. It seems that sin multiplies like rabbits.

### **The Sin of Fear**

The speaker now addresses an ultimate sin, that of fear. He fears total annihilation after death of the physical body. Although he understands that he is primarily an eternal soul and immortal, he confides to his Maker that he also has doubts. Not having achieved union with Divine, the devotee, regardless of how faithful will be tinged with doubt until that union is achieved. The speaker supplicates thus all the more intensely in order to overcome the sin of fear and doubt.

The speaker affirms his strong faith in Christ, and he knows that with guidance from "God the Father," the speaker can gain even deeper realization of the shining presence of Christ. The speaker understands the eternal existence of the Christ-consciousness. Only after the speaker has gained that state of being can he aver, "I fear no more."

### **Conclusion:**

The speaker in Donne's prayer/poem, "A Hymn to God the Father," is seeking forgiveness of his earlier indulgences in sins of the flesh.

## **2. PARADISE LOST BOOK IV (1-100 LINES ONLY)**

BY JOHN MILTON Book 4: (Satan breaks into Paradise, but gets caught)

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Satan, now in prospect of Eden, and nigh the place where he must now attempt the bold enterprise which he undertook alone against God and Man, falls into many doubts with himself, and many passions—fear, envy, and despair; but at length confirms himself in evil; journeys on to Paradise, whose outward prospect and situation is described; overleaps the bounds; sits, in the shape of a Cormorant, on the Tree of Life, as highest in the Garden, to look about him. The Garden described; Satan's first sight of Adam and Eve; his wonder at their excellent form and happy state, but with resolution to work their fall; overhears their discourse; thence gathers that the Tree of Knowledge was forbidden them to eat of under penalty of death, and thereon intends to found his temptation by seducing them to transgress; then leaves them a while, to know further of their state by some other means.

Meanwhile Uriel, descending on a sunbeam, warns Gabriel, who had in charge the gate of Paradise, that some evil Spirit had escaped the Deep, and passed at noon by his Sphere, in the shape of a good Angel, down to Paradise, discovered after by his furious gestures in the Mount. Gabriel promises to find him ere morning. Night coming on, Adam and Eve discourse of going to their rest; their bower described; their evening worship. Gabriel, drawing forth his bands of night—watch to walk the rounds of Paradise, appoints two strong Angels to Adam's bower, lest the evil Spirit should be there doing some harm to Adam or Eve sleeping: there they find him at the ear of Eve, tempting her in a dream, and bring him, though unwilling, to Gabriel; by whom questioned, he scornfully answers; prepares resistance; but, hindered by a sign from Heaven, flies out of Paradise.

### **A WARNING ABOUT SATAN'S ARRIVAL:**

The Speaker is introducing the reader to Earth for the first time. Satan is just arriving to Earth. The Book starts with a warning about Satan's coming, calling him the "secret foe". The next lines go on to say that Satan was enraged when he first arrived on Earth and speaks of him tempting Eve. It goes on to say that he wasn't rejoicing afterward, that he was horrified and doubting himself, but he can't get

away from Hell, no matter where he goes, because Hell is within him. On line 23 the speaker starts talking about Satan's conscience and how it evokes the memory of what he used to be and raises the despair of knowing that he isn't an angel anymore and that worse sufferings are still to come. The passage seems to me to be pretty melancholy. Despair seems to be used a lot in this poem, and I'm not sure what exactly Satan is despondent over. Also these lines introduce the idea of Satan having a conscience which tells us that he knows right from wrong, but his conscience is provoking despair for himself, I think, not remorse for what he's done. He's upset about the consequences not regretting the bad act the prompted the consequences.

### **SATAN'S PASSIONATE SPEECH:**

Satan, gives his passionate speech to the sun. This occurs right before he enters paradise. These lines focus on Satan and what he reveals as he talks. Satan is reflecting on when he lived in heaven while at the same time questioning Gods motives for sending him out of heaven, he says that pride and worse Ambition threw him down which is his recollection of God at the moment Satan himself was sent from Heaven to Hell.

Later , Satan does some thinking on his situation and it becomes evident that to some degree he has self-knowledge of what it is he did. However there is an irony to it because he still sees God as the one to blame and sees him as unjust and unfair. He points out what he feels to be one of Gods injustices and examples of unfair treatment. Here Satan also thinks that even if he did not lead the revolt he still would have fallen anyway. This reminded me of how some people believe that their lives are predetermined for them at birth and that they really do not have control over what they do and what happens to them.

### **SATAN'S BEAUTIFUL SOLILOQUE:**

An important part in this passage is 'Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell', where Satan notices that he is trapped by what it is he has done and by what he is. Where he realizes that he is bad and that hell is also bad because it is where he and the fallen angels live. He sees it as bad because he sees himself as hell and if he is hell and he is bad than hell must be equally as bad as he is. Following this section he goes through a range of emotions, He is desperate in the sense that he wants to get back to Heaven. However he is also very prideful and notes that by boasting too much and by being overly confident in himself he has made large promises to many people. This passage demonstrates how ones ways can have consequences for themselves later on. It show how one character is based off of their continual actions. That through repetition we define who we are. Satan does this to some degree where he notices he is trapped in his particular approach and that since he continues to be evil he will continue to fall and never regain his status that he had before.

### **CONCLUSION: (satan has no choice, than to be evil)**

The last thing is through this passage there is a general bad or sinister tone to what is being said. In some of the last lines Satan choses to be evil. He has no choice but to hate so defines his character as one who is sinister and evil. He decides to see himself as the victim and God as the one who has done him wrong. It is a clear start to Satan's final decision to be cast hope and God aside and to continue on his mission to get to Gods new creation of human kind. Satan by this point knows that God will not forgive him for his actions and feels as if he and the fallen angels have been replaced by the creation of humans. Satan's attitude here reminds me of earlier class discussion how humans on earth appear to be a bit of a pawn in the way of direct access between God and Satan.

### **3. The Pulley**

BY GEORGE HERBERT

#### **Introduction:**

'*The Pulley*' by George Herbert speaks on one part of the Christian creation story in which God chose to imbue humanity with blessings. The poem begins with the speaker stating that he is retelling the story of creation. He is particularly interested in the part where God gives humankind knowledge, wisdom, beauty, and strength. These are important features of human existence that flowed easily from God to humankind.

There is one blessing that God did not let out of his cup, rest. He chose to withhold an innate ability to rest from humankind in order to keep his creation close to him. When one gets weary, they turn to God. Or that is his reasoning. Herbert's speaker states that God did not want humanity to love Nature more than they love "the God of Nature."

Herbert was interested in exploring themes of religion and human nature. This poem provides the reader with an image and idea of how God bestowed various traits on humanity. The speaker describes these traits, which are the best that humanity has to offer, flowing from God. But, human nature was also influenced by that which God did not give—rest. '*The Pulley*' by George Herbert is a four stanza poem that is separated into sets of five lines or quintains. Each of these quintains follows a structured rhyme scheme. They conform to a pattern of ABABA, alternating end sounds as the poet saw fit. The consistent repetition in the rhyme helps to give the poem an overwhelming feeling of unity. This makes sense as the entirety of this piece is dialogue spoken by God or about God.

#### **"A glass of blessings" on humankind:**

In the first stanza of 'The Pulley,' the speaker begins by describing the creation of humankind. Herbert's speaker is seeking to retell the Christian story of creation with a few added details. The speaker is able to describe what God was thinking and feeling when he decided to make humanity. God saw what he had made, and decided to pour "a glass of blessings" on humankind. These "blessings" were just "standing by" in a cup, waiting to be used. This speaks to the ease of God's access to forces separate from human understanding. This fact will become important later on in the text when God decides to withhold a blessing without a second thought. The speaker relays God's words at the moment as he addresses all of creation. He decides to "Pour on [humankind] all that we can." The "world's riches," everything from strength to beauty is bestowed. They have come together into a "span."

The first of the blessings in 'The Pulley' that came to humanity was "strength." It "made away." Next came beauty. It was soon followed by "wisdom, honour" and lastly "pleasure." These are all incredibly important parts of the human experience. There is one more element though that in this retelling of creation Herbert's speaker chose not to include. That was "Rest." "Rest" as a blessing equal to beauty and strength is interesting. It is not something that one might immediately think of as a feature of life that can be given or granted. But in this narrative, it is the "treasure" that remains at the bottom of God's cup. He chooses not to give it to humanity. His reasoning behind this choice is contained within the next two stanzas.

#### **God's reasoning not to give humanity a complete life of rest :**

In the next five lines, the speaker describes how it was God's choice to not bestow "rest" on humanity. He knew that if he did so, then "He would adore my gifts instead of me." Herbert's speaker thinks that God made this choice because he didn't want humankind spending their days worshipping nature. Instead, they should be appreciating "the God of Nature." Rest is not something that is an integral part of human life and God made an informed, at least to him, the choice to withhold it.

In the final lines of 'The Pulley,' the speaker finishes up God's reasoning behind his choice not to give humanity a complete life of rest. He doesn't want humanity to never rest, but there should be different periods. It is ideal for everyone to rest only until they feel restless, then they should get back to their lives. God believes that if there is "weariness" in one's everyday life then that feeling of exhaustion will "toss" humankind to his "breast."

These different periods of activity, exhaustion, rest, and rejuvenation are just as integral to human existence as are strength and wisdom. It seems that Herbert's God has chosen to add them for a reason that appears entirely selfish though. It is not clear, at least through these few lines of reasoning, how "weariness" helps humanity, aside from forcing them closer to God.

### **Conclusion:**

Throughout this poem, as stated in the introduction, Herbert makes use of a metaphysical conceit. This technique is comparable to a metaphor but is much more complex and original in nature. In this case, Herbert uses a pulley to describe the relationship between humanity and God/religion.

## **UNIT III**

### **POETRY (DETAILED)**

#### **1. ODE : INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY – WORDSWORTH**

#### **DETAILED ANALYSIS**

In the first stanza, the speaker says wistfully that there was a time when all of nature seemed dreamlike to him, "apparelled in celestial light," and that that time is past; "the things I have seen I can see no more."

In the second stanza, he says that he still sees the rainbow, and that the rose is still lovely; the moon looks around the sky with delight, and starlight and sunshine are each beautiful. Nonetheless the speaker feels that a glory has passed away from the earth.

In the third stanza, the speaker says that, while listening to the birds sing in springtime and watching the young lambs leap and play, he was stricken with a thought of grief; but the sound of nearby waterfalls, the echoes of the mountains, and the gusting of the winds restored him to strength. He declares that his grief will no longer wrong the joy of the season, and that all the earth is happy. He exhorts a shepherd boy to shout and play around him.

In the fourth stanza, he addresses nature's creatures, and says that his heart participates in their joyful festival. He says that it would be wrong to feel sad on such a beautiful May morning, while children play and laugh among the flowers. Nevertheless, a tree and a field that he looks upon make him think of "something that is gone," and a pansy at his feet does the same. He asks what has happened to "the visionary gleam": "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

In the fifth stanza, he proclaims that human life is merely "a sleep and a forgetting"—that human beings dwell in a purer, more glorious realm before they enter the earth. "Heaven," he says, "lies about us in our infancy!" As children, we still retain some memory of that place, which causes our experience of the earth to be suffused with its magic—but as the baby passes through boyhood and young adulthood and into manhood, he sees that magic die.

In the sixth stanza, the speaker says that the pleasures unique to earth conspire to help the man forget the "glories" whence he came.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker beholds a six-year-old boy and imagines his life, and the love his mother and father feel for him. He sees the boy playing with some imitated fragment of adult life, "some



little plan or chart,” imitating “a wedding or a festival” or “a mourning or a funeral.” The speaker imagines that all human life is a similar imitation.

In the eighth stanza, the speaker addresses the child as though he were a mighty prophet of a lost truth, and rhetorically asks him why, when he has access to the glories of his origins, and to the pure experience of nature, he still hurries toward an adult life of custom and “earthly freight.”

In the ninth stanza, the speaker experiences a surge of joy at the thought that his memories of childhood will always grant him a kind of access to that lost world of instinct, innocence, and exploration.

In the tenth stanza, bolstered by this joy, he urges the birds to sing, and urges all creatures to participate in “the gladness of the May.” He says that though he has lost some part of the glory of nature and of experience, he will take solace in “primal sympathy,” in memory, and in the fact that the years bring a mature consciousness—“a philosophic mind.”

In the final stanza, the speaker says that this mind—which stems from a consciousness of mortality, as opposed to the child’s feeling of immortality—enables him to love nature and natural beauty all the more, for each of nature’s objects can stir him to thought, and even the simplest flower blowing in the wind can raise in him “thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

#### IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS WITH EXPLANATIONS:

- 1. The Rainbow comes and goes,  
And lovely is the Rose,  
The Moon doth with delight  
Look round her .....  
..... I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.**

Wordsworth acknowledges that nature is as beautiful as it was when he was young; but the ‘glory’ the earth used to contain seems to have passed away.

- 2. Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
And no unworthy aim,  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came.**

Nature, and the earth, is like a mother (Mother Nature), conspires with this act of forgetting – perhaps because, like any mother, she knows that the young boy will have to grow up into a man who can go out into the world, earn a living, and accept the realities of the world (with all its limitations). We cannot spend all our lives going around gawping at the wonders of the universe, unless we’re Brian Cox.

Wordsworth doesn’t blame the earth for this, or see it as a betrayal: it is ‘no unworthy aim’ because, like a good mother, the earth knows what’s good for the child of nature (even if it comes at the cost of removing this sense of awe from the child’s mind).

- 3. Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
Thy Soul's immensity;  
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,**

**Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—  
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!**

Wordsworth addresses nature as the ‘best Philosopher’, praising it for its wisdom and immortality, yet asking nature why it strives to limit man’s understanding of its beauty as the years march on, placing us within a limiting ‘yoke’ like an ox ploughing a field. Nature conspire to make us less in touch with it as the years progress, demanding that we devote ourselves to more humdrum things like work.

**4. Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
And let the young Lambs bound  
As to the tabor’s sound!  
We in thought will join your throng,  
Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
Ye that through your hearts to-day  
Feel the gladness of the May!**

Returning to the birds and lambs from earlier in the poem, Wordsworth now enjoins them to continue their sport and singing, because he has now lifted his mood and discovered that ‘in thought’ if not in reality, he can re-experience nature as he did when young.

**5. And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
Forebode not any severing of our loves!  
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;  
I only have relinquished one delight  
To live beneath your more habitual sway.**

Addressing nature, Wordsworth entreats it not to foretell any time when he will become separated from it. He still feels the awesome power of nature in his ‘heart of hearts’ (another *Hamlet* allusion), and has only given up one delight (his youth and childhood) so that he can continue to enjoy its ‘habitual sway’ from season to season.

## 2. RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER – S.T.COLERIDGE

### DETAILED ANALYSIS:

The poem begins by introducing the **Ancient Mariner**, who, with his “glittering eye,” stops a Wedding Guest from attending a nearby wedding celebration. The Mariner stops the young man to tell him the story of a ship, providing no introduction but simply beginning his tale. Despite the Wedding Guest’s efforts to leave, the Mariner continues to speak.

The Mariner’s story begins with the ship leaving harbor and sailing southward. A tremendous storm then blows the ship even further to the South Pole, where the crew are awed as they encounter mist, snow, cold, and giant glaciers. An **Albatross** breaks the pristine lifelessness of the Antarctic. The sailors greet it as a good omen, and a new wind rises up, propelling the ship. Day after day the albatross appears, appearing in the morning when the sailors call for it, and soaring behind the ship. But then as the other sailor’s cry out in dismay, the Mariner, for reasons unexplained, shoots and kills the albatross with his crossbow.

At first, the other **Sailors** are furious with the Mariner for killing the bird which they believed a god omen and responsible for making the breezes blow. But after the bird has been killed the fog clears and the fair breeze continues, blowing the ship north into the Pacific, and the crew comes to believe the bird

was the source of the fog and mist and that the killing is justified. It is then that the wind ceases, and the ship becomes trapped on a vast, calm sea. The Sailors and the Mariner become increasingly thirsty, and some sailors dream that an angered **Spirit** has followed them from the pole. The crew then hangs the albatross around the Mariner's neck.

In this terrible calm, trapped completely by the watery ocean that they cannot drink, the men on the ship grow so thirsty that they cannot even speak. When the Mariner sees what he believes is a ship approaching, he must bite his arm and drink his own blood so that he is able to alert the crew, who all grin out of joy. But the joy fades as the ghostly ship, which sails without wind, approaches. On its deck, **Death** and **Life-in-Death** gamble with dice for the lives of the Sailors and the Mariner. After Life-in-Death wins the soul of the Mariner, the Sailors begin to die of thirst, falling to the deck one by one, each staring at the Mariner in reproach.

Surrounded by the dead Sailors and cursed continuously by their gaze, the Mariner tries to turn his eyes to heaven to pray, but fails. It is only in the **Moonlight**, after enduring the horror of being the only one alive among the dead crew that the Mariner notices beautiful Water Snakes swimming beside the ship. At this moment he becomes inspired, and has a spiritual realization that all of God's creatures are beautiful and must be treated with respect and reverence. With this realization, he is finally able to pray, and the albatross fell from his neck and sunk into the sea.

The Mariner falls into a kind of stupor, and then wakes to find the dead Sailors' bodies reanimated by angels and at work on the ship. Powered by the Spirit from the South Pole, the ship races homeward, where the Mariner sees a choir of angels leave the bodies of the deceased Sailors. After this angels' chorus, the Mariner perceives a small boat on which a **Pilot**, the **Pilot's Boy**, and a **Hermit** approach. As they get closer, the Mariner's ship suddenly sinks, but he wakes to find himself in the Pilot's boat. When the Mariner speaks, the Pilot and Hermit are stunned, by fear. The Hermit prays. The Mariner, in turn, saves his own saviors, and rows them to land, where he begs the Hermit to grant him absolution for his sins. The Hermit crosses himself, and asks the Mariner "what manner of man art thou?" The Mariner then feels compelled to tell his story.

The Mariner concludes his tale by explaining that as he travels from land to land he is always plagued by that same compulsion to tell his tale, that he experiences a peculiar agony if he doesn't give in to his urge to share the story, and that he can tell just from looking at their faces which men must hear his tale. He ends with the explicit lesson that prayer is the greatest joy in life, and the best prayers come from love and reverence of all of God's creation. Thus he moves onward to find the next person who must hear his story, leaving the Wedding Guest "a sadder and a wiser man."

### 3. ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE – JOHN KEATS

#### DETAILED ANALYSIS

The speaker opens with a declaration of his own heartache. He feels numb, as though he had taken a drug only a moment ago. He is addressing a nightingale he hears singing somewhere in the forest and says that his "drowsy numbness" is not from envy of the nightingale's happiness, but rather from sharing it too completely; he is "too happy" that the nightingale sings the music of summer from amid some unseen plot of green trees and shadows.

In the second stanza, the speaker longs for the oblivion of alcohol, expressing his wish for wine, "a draught of vintage," that would taste like the country and like peasant dances, and let him "leave the world unseen" and disappear into the dim forest with the nightingale.

In the third stanza, he explains his desire to fade away, saying he would like to forget the troubles the nightingale has never known: "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of human life, with its

consciousness that everything is mortal and nothing lasts. Youth “grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies,” and “beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes.”

In the fourth stanza, the speaker tells the nightingale to fly away, and he will follow, not through alcohol (“Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards”), but through poetry, which will give him “viewless wings.” He says he is already with the nightingale and describes the forest glade, where even the moonlight is hidden by the trees, except the light that breaks through when the breezes blow the branches.

In the fifth stanza, the speaker says that he cannot see the flowers in the glade, but can guess them “in embalmed darkness”: white hawthorne, eglantine, violets, and the musk-rose, “the murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.”

In the sixth stanza, the speaker listens in the dark to the nightingale, saying that he has often been “half in love” with the idea of dying and called Death soft names in many rhymes. Surrounded by the nightingale’s song, the speaker thinks that the idea of death seems richer than ever, and he longs to “cease upon the midnight with no pain” while the nightingale pours its soul ecstatically forth. If he were to die, the nightingale would continue to sing, he says, but he would “have ears in vain” and be no longer able to hear.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker tells the nightingale that it is immortal, that it was not “born for death.” He says that the voice he hears singing has always been heard, by ancient emperors and clowns, by homesick Ruth; he even says the song has often charmed open magic windows looking out over “the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

In the eighth stanza, the word forlorn tolls like a bell to restore the speaker from his preoccupation with the nightingale and back into himself. As the nightingale flies farther away from him, he laments that his imagination has failed him and says that he can no longer recall whether the nightingale’s music was “a vision, or a waking dream.” Now that the music is gone, the speaker cannot recall whether he himself is awake or asleep.

#### IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS WITH EXPLANATIONS:

**1. My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,**

The speaker says that his heart hurts as if he has just drunken poison.

"Hemlock" is the poison that the Greek philosopher Socrates took when he was put to death for corrupting the youth.

The speaker feels woozy and numb, like when the dentist puts you on Novocain. Imagine him swaying back and forth, kind of drunk and out of it.

The "ache" in his heart almost sounds pleasurable, the way he describes it. Like when you hear a sad song you really love that just pierces your heart, and you're like, "This makes me so sad!" but if anyone tried to turn it off you'd throttle them. Like that.

**1.a. Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,**

**Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.**

The moon is surrounded by her attendants ("fays"), the stars. Despite all these sources of light, there is no light in the nightingale's world beyond what filters down through the trees.

What he is really describing in this complicated-sounding line is the fact that the nightingale lives in the forest, where trees block the light. "Verdurous glooms," just means the darkness that is caused by plants getting in the way of the moon.

Still, the nightingale's home sounds like a magical place, something out of a fairy tale.

**2. Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.**

The speaker names more plants that he smells in the darkness. He also begins listing things that he can hear. This section all relates to the experience of being alone in a dark – but not a frightening – forest. He sees violets, a summer flower, and the musk rose, a flower that blooms in May. The dew of the musk rose is intoxicating, like the wine he spoke of earlier.

He hears the sound of flies on a summer evening.

In short, he seems to experience both spring and summer at the same time, which tells us that we have left the world of strict reality. As Dorothy might say, we're not in Kansas anymore.

**3. Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;**

He thinks that the nightingale must be immortal: it can't die. (Someone needs to buy him a book on biology.)

Being immortal, the nightingale is not followed by future generations, which are metaphorically "hungry" in that they take the place of their parents. This is a very pessimistic view of the cycle of life. Basically, the younger folks are hunting down their own parents to run them off the planet.

**4. Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:**

Now it becomes clear that the nightingale is flying away.

The speaker bids goodbye twice more to the nightingale using the French word, "adieu," which means, "good-bye for a long time."

The bird's sad or "plaintive" song grows harder to hear, as the bird flies from the nearby meadows, across a stream, up a hill, and into the next valley. Now he can't hear it at all.

**5. Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?**

Now that the bird is left, the speaker's not sure if he ever entered its world at all. He thinks that maybe the experience was just a "waking dream" and not really true.

But has the speaker returned to the "real" world? Maybe the nightingale's world was reality, and the "real" world is just a dream.

Everything is topsy-turvy, and he doesn't know what is true from what is fancy. He wonders if he is a awake or sleeping.

**6. O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,**

The speaker wants to stick the south of France, or just the South in general, into a bottle ("beaker") and guzzle the whole thing down! He wants to distill the earth down to its powerful, intoxicating essence. It's like when you go to the beach and wish you could just bottle the breezy ocean air to take back with you to school or the office.

"Hippocrene" is a reference that there is no reason you should know – Keats is showing off his knowledge of Greek mythology again.

Hippocrene is the "fountain of the Muses," a group of eight women (again, in Greek mythology) who inspire struggling poets. The fountain bubbles up out of the earth where Pegasus, the famous flying horse, is supposed to have dug his hoof into the ground.

He wants to drink something that will make him a great poet...and that'll get him drunk. The liquid from the Hippocrene is "blushful" because it is reddish, the color of both wine and a blush.

## UNIT IV

### 1. MY LAST DUTCHESS

**Browning's** inspiration for "**My Last Duchess**" was the history of a Renaissance duke, Alfonso II of Ferrara, whose young wife Lucrezia died in suspicious circumstances in 1561. ... After her death, Alfonso courted (and eventually married) the niece of the Count of Tyrol.

Duke of Ferrara

Who is speaking in My Last Duchess?

The speaker of "My Last Duchess" is, of course, the **Duke of Ferrara**. But it's important to think about him, not only as a character, but as a speaker.

What happened to the last duchess?

In My **Last Duchess**, the **duchess** has died, most likely as an act of murder. The speaker in the poem is the **duchess's** husband, the duke.

#### Summary

This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself. His musings give way to a diatribe on her disgraceful behavior: he claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his "gift of a nine-hundred-years- old name." As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with ever-more chilling certainty that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess's early demise: when her behavior escalated, "[he] gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl. As the Duke and the emissary walk leave the painting behind, the Duke points out other notable artworks in his collection.

"My Last Duchess" is a dramatic monologue written by Victorian poet Robert Browning in 1842. In the poem, the Duke of Ferrara uses a painting of his former wife as a conversation piece. The Duke speaks about his former wife's perceived inadequacies to a representative of the family of his bride-to-be,

revealing his obsession with controlling others in the process. Browning uses this compelling psychological portrait of a despicable character to critique the objectification of women and abuses of power.

### “My Last Duchess” Summary

The speaker (the Duke of Ferrara) directs the attention of a guest to a painting of his former wife, the Duchess of Ferrara, which hangs on the wall. The Duke praises the painting for looking so lifelike and then remarks on how hard the painter, Fra Pandolf, worked hard on it. The duke asks the guest to sit and look at the work. The duke then explains that he deliberately mentioned the name of the painter, because strangers like the emissary always look at the duchess’s painted face—with its deep, passionate, and earnest glance—and turn to the duke (and only the duke, since only he pulls back the curtain that reveals the painting) and act as though they would ask, if they dared, how an expression like that came into her face. The duke reiterates that the guest isn’t the first person to ask this question.

The duke continues by saying that it wasn’t only his presence that brought that look into the painted eyes of the duchess or the blush of happiness into her painted cheek; he suggests that perhaps Fra Pandolf had happened to compliment her by saying "her shawl drapes over her wrist too much" or "paint could never recreate the faint half-blush that’s fading on her throat." The duke insists that the former duchess thought that polite comments like those were reason enough to blush, and criticizes her, in a halting way, for being too easily made happy or impressed. He also claims that she liked everything and everyone she saw, although his description suggests that she was ogling everyone who crossed her path. The duke objects that, to his former duchess, everything was the same and made her equally happy, whether it was a brooch or present from him that she wore at her chest, the sun setting in the West, a branch of cherries which some interfering person snapped off a tree in the orchard for her, or the white mule she rode on around the terrace. He claims that she would say the same kind words or give the same blush in response to all of them. The duke also objects to her manner of thanking men, although he struggles to describe his concerns. Specifically, he complains that she values his pedigree and social position (his 900-year-old name) as equally important to anyone else’s gifts to her.

The duke rhetorically asks whether anyone would actually lower themselves enough to argue with someone about their behavior. The duke imagines a hypothetical situation in which he would confront the former duchess: he says that even if he were good with words and were able to clearly say, "This characteristic of yours disgusts me," or, "Here you did too little or too much"—and if the former duchess had let herself be degraded by changing, instead of being stubborn and making excuses— that even then the act of confronting her would be beneath him, and he refuses to ever lower himself like that.

The duke then returns to his earlier refrain about his former wife’s indiscriminate happiness and complains to his guest that, while the duchess did smile at him whenever they passed, she gave everyone else the same smile as well. The duke explains that she began smiling at others even more, so he gave orders and all her smiles stopped forever, presumably because he had her killed. Now she only lives on in the painting.

The duke then asks the guest to stand up and to go with him to meet the rest of the guests downstairs. He also says that the Count, revealed here as the guest's master and the father of the duke's prospective bride-to-be, is so known for his generosity in matters of money that no request the duke could make for a dowry could be turned down. The duke also adds quickly that he has always insisted since the beginning of their discussions that the Count’s beautiful daughter, and not the dowry, is his primary objective.

The duke ends his speech by demanding that he and the Count's emissary go downstairs together, and on their way, he directs the emissary’s attention to a statue of the God Neptune taming a seahorse, which is a rare work of art that Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze specifically for him.

### **The Objectification of Women**

“My Last Duchess” is a dramatic monologue in which the Duke of Ferrara tells the messenger of his potential wife’s family about his previous wife, the “last” duchess of the poem's title. Using a painting of that former duchess as a conversation piece, he describes what he saw as her unfaithfulness, frivolity, and stubbornness, and implies that he prefers her as a *painting* rather than as a living woman.

Throughout the poem, the duke reveals his belief that women are objects to be controlled, possessed, and discarded. In many ways, this reflects the thinking of Browning’s own era, when Victorian social norms denied women the right to be fully independent human beings. Through this portrayal of the duke, Browning critiques such a viewpoint, presenting sexism and objectification as dehumanizing processes that rob women of their full humanity.

The duke’s treatment of the painting reflects his treatment of women as objects to be owned. His description of the painting as a “piece” and a “wonder” portray it as a work of art rather than a testament to a former love. By repeating the name of the painter (the famous “Fra Pandolf”) three times in the first 16 lines of the poem, he again implies that he values the painting because of its status as an object that shows off his (that is, the duke's) wealth and clout. The painting is meant to aggrandize the *duke* rather than honor the woman it portrays.

This is made even clearer by the fact that the duke has placed this painting in a public area of his palace so he can proudly display it to guests, whom he invites to “sit and look at her” much like a museum curator would direct visitors to a famous work of art in a gallery. Such an attitude is reflected yet again when he tells the messenger that the Count’s “fair daughter’s self [... is his] object”: he intends to make his new bride another one of his possessions. Women, in the duke’s mind, are simply ornamental objects for men rather than actual people in their own right.

The poem thus implies that the duke finds his former wife’s actions unforgivable because they reflected her status as an independent person rather than an inanimate possession. Her crimes appear to be not sexual or romantic infidelity, but rather being happy (“too soon made glad,”), appreciative of others (she considered the duke’s “gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody’s gift”), self-confident (she wouldn’t “let / Herself be lessoned”), and willing to stand up for herself (she “plainly set / Her wits to [his]”). The duke, however, appears to believe that a husband owns his wife, and therefore has the right to dictate her feelings and to be the sole recipient of her happiness, kindness, and respect; any indication that she has thoughts or feelings of her own are unacceptable.

Ultimately, the poem heavily implies that the duke was so vexed by the idea that his former wife had an inner life of her own that he had the “last duchess” killed. Of course, the duke avoids explicitly confessing to assassinating his wife, and Browning himself allegedly once said in an interview that the duke may have simply had her sent to a convent. Regardless, the outcome is the same: there is no “last duchess” present in the poem to speak for herself and give her side of the story. The poem thus underscores how objectifying women ultimately silences them, robbing them of their voices and autonomy.

### **Social Status, Art, and Elitism**

Though the poem doesn't outright condemn the duke, it does suggest that he's a brutish figure whose social status is in no way a reflection of any sort of moral worth. The duke repeatedly draws his guest's attention to his wealth and power, and issues veiled threats about what happens to those who don't put a high enough price on his social standing. Through the duke, the poem takes a subtle jab at the snobbery of the upper class, suggesting the shallowness of an elitist society that bestows respect based on things like having a good family name or owning fancy artwork. Instead, the poem reveals the various ways in which powerful men like the duke may use such markers of status simply to manipulate—and dominate—those around them.

The duke repeatedly reminds the messenger of the power in his title. He does this in part by mentioning the famous artists (Fra Pandolf and Claus of Innsbruck) who created works especially for him, but also



by mentioning his “nine-hundred-years-old name.” The duke then moves quickly from intimidation to intimidated threats when he hints that he had his former wife killed for not valuing his status sufficiently: he objects that she “ranked” his “nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody’s gift” and so he “gave commands” that “stopped” her “smiles.”

Since the duke and his potential father-in-law, the Count, are about to sit down to discuss the fiancée’s dowry, they will put a price on exactly how much his name is worth. Consequently, the duke’s claim that the Count’s generosity is “ample warrant”—that the Count will give him a substantial amount of money for the daughter’s dowry—can actually be read as a veiled threat: the duke implies that, if the in-laws want their daughter to live, they will value his name and pay him a large sum.

Immediately before beginning negotiations with the prospective in-laws, the duke also tells the emissary to admire a statue of Neptune “taming a sea-horse,” made by a famous sculptor. The duke emphasizes the statue’s aesthetic merit as a means of imbuing himself with more importance: the statue is a “rarity” and was created just for him.

This moment has nothing to do with the duke emphasizing his refined tastes and his appreciation of art. Instead, again, it serves as a warning: Neptune was the Roman god of the sea, and the statue depicts this god forcefully subduing a creature who challenged him. By drawing the emissary’s attention to this statue before the negotiation, the duke implies that he himself is a godlike figure like Neptune, who will tame the emissary and the Count just as he did the former duchess. The trappings of upper-class status are again mainly a means for the duke to bully people.

The duke’s seemingly refined manner and opulent surroundings are thus no indication that he’s any better than those with lesser means—or that he’s even a decent person at all. Through this depiction, the poem offers a subtle rebuke of elitism and the upper class. To men like the duke, beauty is not something to be valued and appreciated; instead, it is only something to dominate.

### **Control and Manipulation**

Closely tied to the duke’s repeated emphasis on his social status and his objectification of women is his clear desire for control. By treating women as objects to be possessed, the duke can more readily dominate them; similarly, by drawing attention to his title and social clout, the duke can intimidate others into following his commands. Yet the poem also draws attention to quieter forms of control, as the duke dictates everything from the flow of conversation with his guest to the choreography of the scene itself. Through these forms of asserting dominance, the poem suggests the power—and danger—of such inconspicuous manipulation, which is made all the more insidious by its subtlety.

The duke uses his social status—indicated by his ancient name and opulent artwork—to intimidate and threaten his guest. More discreetly, however, Browning also shows the duke controlling the conversation via its physical setting. The duke has staged the area with the duchess’s painting: the painting is behind a curtain so he can limit who can view it, thereby reminding his audience that he can give and take away whatever he wants. He has also placed a seat in front of the painting so he can command visitors to sit while he tells the story of his former wife, a power dynamic that literally elevates him above anyone else in the room.

The duke likewise controls the flow of the conversation. He never gives the messenger a chance to speak, and once goes so far as to pretend that the messenger has asked a question (“not the first / Are you to turn and ask thus”) even though the messenger himself remains silent. This action gives the messenger the illusion of being an active participant in the conversation without having any actual agency in it whatsoever.

Most intriguingly, there is nothing improvisatory about the duke’s words, even when he trips over them. He comments that “strangers” who have seen the painting have asked him about the former duchess’s expression, and that the messenger is “not the first” to inquire. The duke’s insistence that others have asked about the duchess’s expression suggests that he has given this spiel about his wife’s supposedly inappropriate behavior to others. It is hard to believe, therefore, that his interjections about his inarticulateness (“how shall I say?” or “somehow—I know not how”) are genuine hesitations: if he has

given this speech before, then presumably he knows what to say and how. In other words, his actions contradict his stated lack of expertise. The improvised nature of the duke's speech, then, with its self-interruptions and hesitations, might all be an act. He is so committed to controlling others that he seemingly rehearses even his moments of self-deprecation and seeming uncertainty. He says he doesn't have any "skill in speech"—meaning he's not a good talker—but this clearly isn't the case. By having the duke deliver the dramatic monologue to the emissary, addressed throughout the poem as "you," Browning forces his readers to experience the duke's manipulation to better understand how abuse of power operates. This form of address can encourage readers to imagine how they themselves would respond in such a situation: would they notice the manipulation and feel resentful, or would it slip past as they found themselves convinced by the duke's subtle coercion?

## Analysis

"My Last Duchess," published in 1842, is arguably Browning's most famous dramatic monologue, with good reason. It engages the reader on a number of levels – historical, psychological, ironic, theatrical, and more.

The most engaging element of the poem is probably the speaker himself, the duke. Objectively, it's easy to identify him as a monster, since he had his wife murdered for what comes across as fairly innocuous crimes. And yet he is impressively charming, both in his use of language and his affable address. The ironic disconnect that colors most of Browning's monologues is particularly strong here. A remarkably amoral man nevertheless has a lovely sense of beauty and of how to engage his listener.

In fact, the duke's excessive demand for control ultimately comes across as his most defining characteristic. The obvious manifestation of this is the murder of his wife. Her crime is barely presented as sexual; even though he does admit that other men could draw her "blush," he also mentions several natural phenomena that inspired her favor. And yet he was driven to murder by her refusal to save her happy glances solely for him. This demand for control is also reflected in his relationship with the envoy. The entire poem has a precisely controlled theatrical flair, from the unveiling of the curtain that is implied to precede the opening, to the way he slowly reveals the details of his tale, to his assuming of the envoy's interest in the tale ("strangers like you... would ask me, if they durst, How such a glance came there"), to his final shift in subject back to the issue of the impending marriage. He pretends to denigrate his speaking ability – "even had you skill in speech – (which I have not)," later revealing that he believes the opposite to be true, even at one point explicitly acknowledging how controlled his story is when he admits he "said 'Fra Pandolf' by design" to peak the envoy's interest. [The envoy](#) is his audience much as we are Browning's, and the duke exerts a similar control over his story that Browning uses in crafting the ironic disconnect.

In terms of meter, Browning represents the duke's incessant control of story by using a regular meter but also enjambment (where the phrases do not end at the close of a line). The enjambment works against the otherwise orderly meter to remind us that the duke will control his world, including the rhyme scheme of his monologue.

To some extent, the duke's amorality can be understood in terms of aristocracy. The poem was originally published with a companion poem under the title "Italy and France," and both attempted to explore the ironies of aristocratic honor. In this poem, loosely inspired by real events set in Renaissance Italy, the duke reveals himself not only as a model of culture but also as a monster of morality. His inability to see his moral ugliness could be attributed to having been ruined by worship of a "nine-hundred-years-old name." He is so entitled that when his wife upset him by too loosely bestowing her favor to others, he refused to speak to her about it. Such a move is out of the question – "who'd stoop to blame this kind of

trifling?" He will not "stoop" to such ordinary domestic tasks as compromise or discussion. Instead, when she transgresses his sense of entitlement, he gives commands and she is dead.

Another element of the aristocratic life that Browning approaches in the poem is that of repetition. The duke's life seems to be made of repeated gestures. The most obvious is his marriage – the use of the word "last" in the title implies that there are several others, perhaps with curtain-covered paintings along the same hallway where this one stands. In the same way that the age of his name gives it credence, so does he seem fit with a life of repeated gestures, one of which he is ready to make again with the count's daughter.

And indeed, the question of money is revealed at the end in a way that colors the entire poem. The duke almost employs his own sense of irony when he brings up a "dowry" to the envoy. This final stanza suggests that his story of murder is meant to give proactive warning to the woman he is soon to marry, but to give it through a backdoor channel, through the envoy who would pass it along to the count who might then pass it to the girl. After all, the duke has no interest in talking to her himself, as we have learned! His irony goes even further when he reminds the envoy that he truly wants only the woman herself, even as he is clearly stressing the importance of a large dowry tinged with a threat of his vindictive side.

But the lens of aristocracy undercuts the wonderful psychological nature of the poem, which is overall more concerned with human contradictions than with social or economic criticism. The first contradiction to consider is how charming the duke actually is. It would be tempting to suggest Browning wants to paint him as a weasel, but knowing the poet's love of language, it's clear that he wants us to admire a character who can manipulate language so masterfully. Further, the duke shows an interesting complication in his attitudes on class when he suggests to the envoy that they "go Together down," an action not expected in such a hierarchical society. By no means can we justify the idea that the duke is willing to transcend class, but at the same time he does allow a transgression of the very hierarchy that had previously led him to have his wife murdered rather than discuss his problems with her.

Also at play psychologically is the human ability to rationalize our hang-ups. The duke seems controlled by certain forces: his own aristocratic bearing; his relationship to women; and lastly, this particular duchess who confounded him. One can argue that the duke, who was in love with his "last duchess," is himself controlled by his social expectations, and that his inability to bear perceived insult to his aristocratic name makes him a victim of the same social forces that he represents. Likewise, what he expects of his wives, particularly of this woman whose portrait continues to provide him with fodder for performance, suggests a deeper psychology than one meant solely for criticism.

The last thing to point out in the duke's language is his use of euphemism. The way he explains that he had the duchess killed – "I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together" – shows a facility for avoiding the truth through choice of language. What this could suggest is that the duchess was in fact guilty of greater transgression than he claims, that instead of flirtation, she might have physically or sexually betrayed him. There's certainly no explicit evidence of this, but at the same time, it's plausible that a man as arrogant as the duke, especially one so equipped with the power of euphemism, would avoid spelling out his disgrace to a lowly envoy and instead would speak around the issue.

Finally, one can also understand this poem as a commentary on art. The duke remains enamored with the woman he has had killed, though his affection now rests on a representation of her. In other words, he has chosen to love the ideal image of her rather than the reality, similar to how the narrator of "Porphyria's Lover" chose a static, dead love than one destined to change in the throes of life. In many ways, this is the artist's dilemma, which Browning explores in all of his work. As poet, he attempts to

capture contradiction and movement, psychological complexity that cannot be pinned down into one object, and yet in the end all he can create is a collection of static lines. The duke attempts to be an artist in his life, turning a walk down the hallway into a performance, but he is always hampered by the fact that the ideal that inspires his performance cannot change.

## **2.The Forsaken Merman by Mathew Arnold**

Summary :

The poem is filled with melancholy and loss. Arnold belonged from the English Victorian Era and was known for his literary and social criticism, especially his classical attacks on contemporary tastes and manners of the “Barbarians” (the aristocracy), “Philistines” (the middle class) and “Populace” (the rich).

Margaret, who is a member of the human race marries this Merman and starts living with him beneath the sea for many years and carries his children.

She was having a happy life with him for many years in this enchanting world beneath “Where the winds are all asleep/ Where the spent lights quiver and gleam/ Where the sea snakes coil and toil/ Where the great whales comes sailing by”.

She sat on throne with the merman “a red gold throne in the heart of the sea”.

The journey was filled with gaiety and joy until one day Margaret heard the bells of Easter tolling from the mortal world above and she develops within the need of her religious duty. She decides to leave the merman and his children, “I must go for my kinsmen pray/ in the little grey church on the shore today”.

The Forsaken Merman Bell Ringing

The merman grants her to quit and go to the village assuming that her visit will be ephemeral, “Go up dear heart, through the waves/ Say thy prayer and come back to the kind sea-caves”. But to make him lament she did not return back.

### **Analysis of The Forsaken Merman**

The poem opens up the crude fact of isolation that the merman and his children was put into by Margaret.

They try to recall Margaret and bring her back to their world from the church but the reality that their efforts are all in vain makes them isolated even more, “was it yesterday?” and “call her once”.

The merman keeps repeating these phrases which shows that he is not over yet from her aura and still hold onto her giving it a try.

Arnold here depicted the life of the merman with the sterility of the world of humans through the imagery he creates. The merman and his children symbolizes many things.

The world beneath the sea illustrated a different story, it is filled with colors, wilderness and has wild nature.

The merman and the children lived a carefree life, doing things that made them happy, not reasoning themselves to the societal norms due to which Margaret decided to leave them and wanted her children to grow up as adults as she could not accept this lifestyle.

#### The Forsaken Merman Waiting

The fact that she left him and made him face a lot of interrogation with oneself has caused a sense of seclusion in the entire poem.

The merman is deeply hurt by Margaret's sudden choice of going back to the earthly life without saying a word leaving him and the children has left him in bewilderment which has caused the sense of loneliness setting aside the emotion of anger or sadness which in a way is a strong feeling to make a person lose control over one's mind or soul.

On the other hand, Arnold has portrayed Margaret's character too by showing her loneliness in the poem where she exits herself from the merman and starts living in the terrestrial life, on her own will.

She returns back to the church and never goes back to the merman. She joins a loom over there and starts working without having any free time, moaning over the things she has left behind by expressing through "drop a tear".

#### The Forsaken Merman Theme

This also highlighted the isolation during the Victorian age in the form of governess where a woman had to leave her family voluntarily to raise her status and make money.

A governess puts back her life and starts working in a stranger's house upraising her children without being a part of that family.

#### The Forsaken Merman as a Dramatic Monologue

Dramatic Monologue is a lyric poem. It was first introduced in the Victorian era. A dramatic monologue occurs at a critical situation when the scene is intense and gives a dramatic overview to its readers.

In this poem, The Forsaken Merman, the above is introduced at a time when the Margaret decides to leave the Merman and go to the church to deliver her duties. It is at that time the Merman starts realizing that his wife will never come back and he starts uttering the poem.

## The Forsaken Merman Moral Lesson

“The Forsaken Merman” uplifted the abandonment of a woman who would find solace by working in a loom and staying all by herself. The poem highlighted both the aspect of isolation of someone who was left behind and by someone who has to leave.

### 3. Tithonus by Alfred lord Tennyson

#### Summary

The woods in the forests grow old and their leaves fall to the ground. Man is born, works the earth, and then dies and is buried underground. Yet the speaker, Tithonus, is cursed to live forever. Tithonus tells Aurora, goddess of the dawn, that he grows old slowly in her arms like a “white-hair’d shadow” roaming in the east.

Tithonus laments that while he is now a “gray shadow” he was once a beautiful man chosen as Aurora’s lover. He remembers that he long ago asked Aurora to grant him eternal life: “Give me immortality!” Aurora granted his wish generously, like a rich philanthropist who has so much money that he gives charity without thinking twice. However, the Hours, the goddesses who accompany Aurora, were angry that Tithonus was able to resist death, so they took their revenge by battering him until he grew old and withered. Now, though he cannot die, he remains forever old; and he must dwell in the presence of Aurora, who renews herself each morning and is thus forever young. Tithonus appeals to Aurora to take back the gift of immortality while the “silver star” of Venus rises in the morning. He now realizes the ruin in desiring to be different from all the rest of mankind and in living beyond the “goal of ordinance,” the normal human lifespan.

Just before the sun rises, Tithonus catches sight of the “dark world” where he was born a mortal. He witnesses the coming of Aurora, the dawn: her cheek begins to turn red and her eyes grow so bright that they overpower the light of the stars. Aurora’s team of horses awakes and converts the twilight into fire. The poet now addresses Aurora, telling her that she always grows beautiful and then leaves before she can answer his request. He questions why she must “scare” him with her tearful look of silent regret; her look makes him fear that an old saying might be true—that “The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.”

Tithonus sighs and remembers his youth long ago, when he would watch the arrival of the dawn and feel his whole body come alive as he lay down and enjoyed the kisses of another. This lover from his youth used to whisper to him “wild and sweet” melodies, like the music of Apollo’s lyre, which accompanied the construction of Ilion (Troy).

Tithonus asks Aurora not to keep him imprisoned in the east where she rises anew each morning, because his eternal old age contrasts so painfully with her eternal renewal. He cringes cold and wrinkled, whereas she rises each morning to warm “happy men that have the power to die” and men who are already dead in their burial mounds (“grassy barrows”). Tithonus asks Aurora to release him and let him die. This way, she can see his grave when she rises and he, buried in the earth, will be able to forget the emptiness of his present state, and her return “on silver wheels” that stings him each morning.

## Form

This poem is a dramatic monologue: the entire text is spoken by a single character whose words reveal his identity. The lines take the form of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter). The poem as a whole falls into seven paragraph-like sections of varying length, each of which forms a thematic unit unto itself.

## Commentary

Like Ulysses, Tithonus is a figure from Greek mythology whom Tennyson takes as a speaker in one of his dramatic monologues (see the section on “Ulysses”). According to myth, Tithonus is the brother of Priam, King of Troy, and was loved by Aurora, the immortal goddess of the dawn, who had a habit of carrying off the beautiful young men whom she fancied. Aurora abducted Tithonus and asked Zeus to grant him immortality, which Zeus did. However, she forgot to ask that he also grant eternal youth, so Tithonus soon became a decrepit old man who could not die. Aurora finally transformed him into a grasshopper to relieve him of his sad existence. In this poem, Tennyson slightly alters the mythological story: here, it is Tithonus, not Aurora, who asks for immortality, and it is Aurora, not Zeus, who confers this gift upon him. The source of suffering in the poem is not Aurora’s forgetfulness in formulating her request to Zeus, but rather the goddesses referred to as “strong Hours” who resent Tithonus’s immortality and subject him to the ravages of time.

Tennyson wrote the first version of this poem as “Tithon” in 1833, and then completed the final version for publication in 1859 in the *Cornhill Magazine* edited by William Makepeace Thackeray. The 1833 version contained several significant differences from the version we know today: the poem began not with a repetition but with the lament “Ay me! ay me! The woods decay and fall”; the “swan,” which here dies after many summers was not a swan but a “rose”; and immortality was described as “fatal” rather than “cruel.”

The 1833 poem was initially conceived as a pendant, or companion poem, to “Ulysses.” “Ulysses” alludes to the danger that fulfillment may bring—“It may be that the gulfs will wash us down”; “Tithonus” represents the realization of this danger. For the character of Tithonus achieves that which Ulysses longs for and finds himself bitterly disappointed: Ulysses wanted to sail “beyond the sunset” because he sensed “how dull it is to pause”; Tithonus, in contrast, questions why any man should want “to pass beyond the goal of ordinance where all should pause” (lines 30-31). “Tithonus” thus serves as an appropriate thematic follow-up to “Ulysses.”

This poem was one of a set of four works (also including “Morte d’Arthur,” “Ulysses,” and “Tiresias”) that Tennyson wrote shortly after Arthur Henry Hallam’s death in 1833. Whereas Hallam was granted youth without immortality, Tithonus is granted immortality without youth. Tennyson developed the idea for a poem about these themes of age and mortality after hearing a remark by Emily Sellwood, Tennyson’s fiancée: Sellwood lamented that unlike the Hallams, “None of the Tennysons ever die.” Appropriately, in depicting the futility of eternal life without youth, Tennyson drew upon a timeless figure: the figure of Tithonus is eternally old because he lives on forever as an old man in the popular imagination.

## UNIT V - POETRY

### 1. A Prayer for My Daughter by W.B. Yeats

#### Summary of A Prayer for My Daughter

W. B. Yeats in his ten-stanza poem, '*A Prayer for my Daughter*' questions how best to raise his daughter. Though by 1919, the war was over, in Ireland it yet turned normal. So, he ponders how she will survive the difficult times ahead, in the politically turbulent times. The poem not only expresses the helplessness of Yeats as a father but all fathers who had to walk through this situation. He wants to give his daughter a life of beauty and innocence, safety, and security. He further wants her to be well-mannered and full of humility free from intellectual hatred and being strongly opinionated. Finally, he wants her to get married into an aristocratic family which is rooted in spirituality and traditional values.

#### Form and Structure of *A Prayer for My Daughter*

The poem '*A Prayer for My Daughter*', written in the lyric form containing ten eight-line stanzas. The stanza form is the same as employed by him in '*In memory of Major Robert Gregory*'. Each stanza follows a regular rhyme scheme of "AABBCDDC". The poem follows a metrical structure that alternates between "iambic pentameter" and "trochaic pentameter". The poem is structured as a poet's appeal to God and to his daughter on how he wants her to be like, as she grows up.

#### Theme and Settings of *A Prayer for My Daughter*

The poem '*A Prayer for my Daughter*' portrays the theme of love and anxiety of a father, who has been blessed with a daughter. It also presents the poet's hopes for his daughter and his expectation of her becoming a very beautiful woman, blessed with the attributes of a virtuous soul. The setting of the poem is uncertain for the poem is conceived in the mind of the poet. The speaker is the poet himself talking to his daughter. The poem is conversational and didactic in tone with varying emotions of gloom, uncertainty, hope, and fear.

### 2. Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend by Gerard Manley Hopkins

'*Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend*' by Gerard Manley Hopkins is a fourteen-line poem that conforms to the traditional pattern of an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet. This means that beyond having fourteen lines, the poem also follows a pattern of ABBAABBA in the first eight lines. This section of the poem is known as the octet. In the second section, known as the sestet, the six lines follow a pattern of CDCDCD. While the sestet is known to vary in Petrarchan sonnets, the pattern Hopkins chose for '*Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend*' is one of the most traditional.

#### Epigraph

Before getting to the first lines of the poem, a reader comes across the epigraph. An epigraph is a brief piece of information at the beginning of a poem. It could provide details regarding the setting, or contain a quote or statement about the piece. In this case, the epigraph is in Latin and it reads:

Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum; verumtamen

justa loquar ad te: Quare via impiorum prosperatur;



This loosely translates to “Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend; if I plead against thee, yet remonstrate with thee I must; why is it that the affairs of the wicked prosper.” The lines come from Psalm 119 of the Latin translation of the Bible by St Jerome. These lines tell the reader something about what Hopkins wants to discuss in the text. They also make the reader very aware that the poem is going to be religious in nature.

### **Summary of *Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend***

*‘Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend’* by Gerard Manley Hopkins utilizes Bible passages to outline the speaker’s frustration with God.

The poem begins with the speaker using a line from the Bible, specifically Psalm 119. Through this passage, he asks God why everything he does comes to nothing, but that which nonbelievers do is successful. He sees this as being very unfair. The next lines set out a possible scenario in which the speaker turned from God. He wonders if his situation would get worse or if everything would stay the same. There is clearly some doubt in his mind about God and his ability to influence the speaker’s life.

In the last lines, he specifically asks God that he be allowed, like the birds, to build something that lasts. Thus far everything he’s made in his life has come to nothing.

In the first lines of *‘Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend’* the speaker makes use of the lines from Psalm 119. He asks God, through the words translated by St. Jerome, why sinners prosper. The speaker is clearly of the same mind. He wants to know why, since he loves and puts his faith in God, why others who don’t do so, are allowed to do well. This is a genuine question, but the speaker does not expect to receive an answer.

It is followed by another question, this one asking why all his own “endeavour[s] end” in disappointment. This phrase does not have any contextual information behind it. A reader would be unaware of what the speaker is specifically referring to, and that’s the point. The lines are meant to tap into a wide variety of situations. Perhaps someone hearing or reading this poem will feel the same and be able to apply the concerns to their own situation.

The next two and a half lines of *‘Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend’* are complex. Through a jumble of syntax, the speaker asks how God would treat him differently if the speaker was not so devout. It seems to him, in this moment of doubt and frustration, that being a believer and a nonbeliever come out to about the same thing. It is also clear in these lines that the speaker does not want to offend God. This is seen through the insertion of remarks such as “O thou my friend.” He wants to make sure that God knows that he’s still on his side.

In the next lines, he repeats the same sentiment that was in the first part of the poem. He refers to the “sots and thralls of lust.” These are the servants of lust, those who are in its power, rather than in Gods. They are the nonbelievers and the faithless. The speaker feels as though these people he considers to be bad, “thrive” more than he does.

The situation set out in the first eight lines is unfair to the speaker as he spends his “life upon [God’s] cause.” The next lines are more complex than those which came before. He goes into specific details about his own situation. First, though, he looks to the “banks and brakes,” or thickets. They are “leaved...thick.” He is speaking about the number of leaves that cover them and then, about the “chervil” that is fretted over their surfaces. This connects into the twelfth line.

In the last three lines of *'Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend,'* the speaker continues his description of this natural scene. The wind shakes the "banks and brakes," but they remain intact. It is there, that "birds build." Unlike the speaker, who is unable to build anything. Through these lines, he is implying that anything he sets out to do falls apart. What he does have though, is "strain." He is like "Time's eunuch." He has time, it passes, but nothing gets made. The only things that he breeds are words that don't wake.

This is what he is asking for from God; that he be sent rain to give his roots life and the ability to make something of himself.

### **Analysis of The Unknown Citizen**

"The Unknown Citizen" was written by the British poet W.H. Auden, not long after he moved to America in 1939. The poem is a kind of satirical **elegy** written in praise of a man who has recently died and who lived what the government has deemed an exemplary life. This life, really, seems to have been perfectly ho-hum—exemplary only insofar as this man never did anything to question or deviate from society's expectations. On the one hand, the poem implicitly critiques the standardization of modern life, suggesting that people risks losing sight of what it means to be an individual when they focus exclusively on the same status symbols and markers of achievement (like having the right job, the right number of kids, the right car, and so forth). The poem also builds a frightening picture of a world ruled by total conformity and state oppression, in which a bureaucratic government dictates and spies on its citizens' daily lives.

*The Unknown Citizen* is both satirical and disturbing, written by Auden to highlight the role of the individual and the increasingly faceless bureaucracy that can arise in any country, with any type of government, be it left-wing or right-wing.

The tone of the poem is impersonal and clinical, the speaker more than likely a suited bureaucrat expressing the detached view of the state. The unknown citizen is reduced to a mere number, a series of letters; there is no name, no birthplace or mention of loved ones.

- It is clear from the first five lines that the state is in total control and has planned and structured this individual's life in order to create a complete conformist, someone who has a clean identity, who serves the greater good.
- The state even call him a 'saint', because he kept to the straight and narrow and was a good role model, not because he was holy or carried out religious acts. He maintained the standards expected of him by those in power. He worked hard, was part of the union but never strayed or broke the rules. Only the war interrupted his working life which made him a popular member of the workforce.

There is mention of the Social Psychology department, part of the state who no doubt investigated his background when he died, and found all was normal according to his mates.

He bought a newspaper each day, that is, he read the propaganda dished out by the bias press, and had no adverse reaction to the advertisements in that paper. There is some sound corporate brain-washing going on here and this citizen has one of the cleanest in the Greater Community.

He's not a critical thinker but a solid type of guy who you would want living next door. He keeps up with his household goods, he adheres to all societal rules. This man is an average Joe, a perfect citizen who is conditioned to routine and will never question the settled life, unless the state call on him for purposes of war.

This citizen is treated like a little boy himself, patted on the head for being a good if unquestioning person. But note that the speaker mentions the Eugenist - a person who investigates eugenics, the genetic make up of this man's family - and coldly says that his 5 children was the 'right number' for his generation.

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