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Introduction to Classical Criticism

George Kennedy defines literary criticism as instinctive reaction to the performance of poetry. Literary criticism is as old as a song

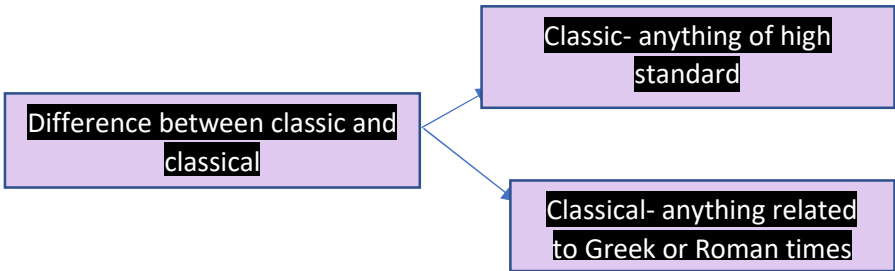
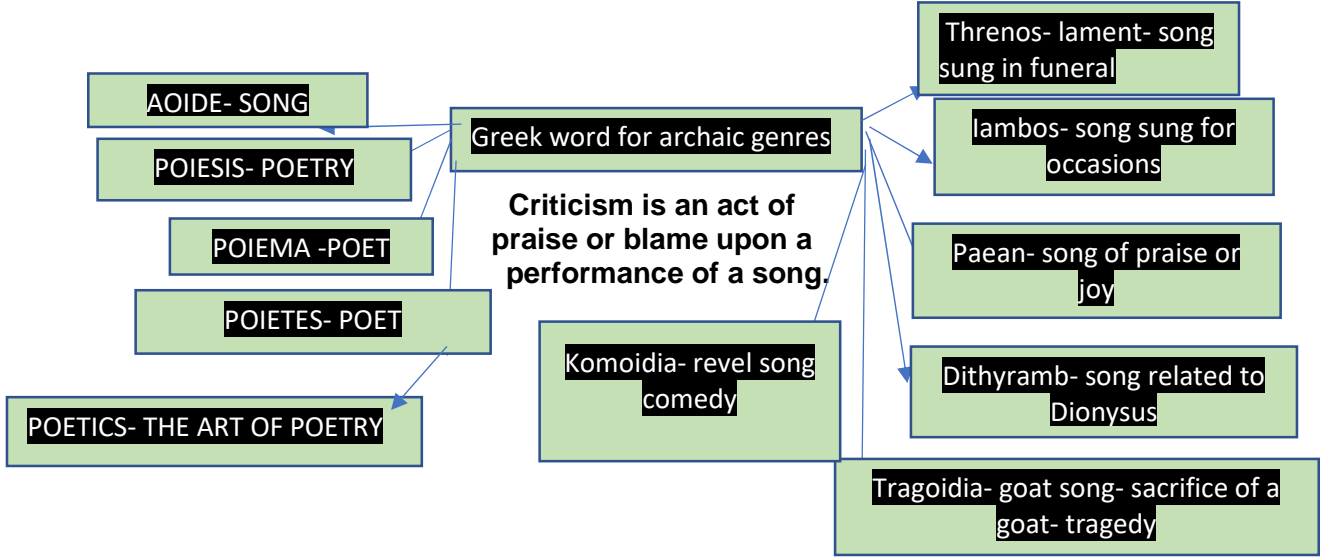
First literary text appeared in eighth century BC

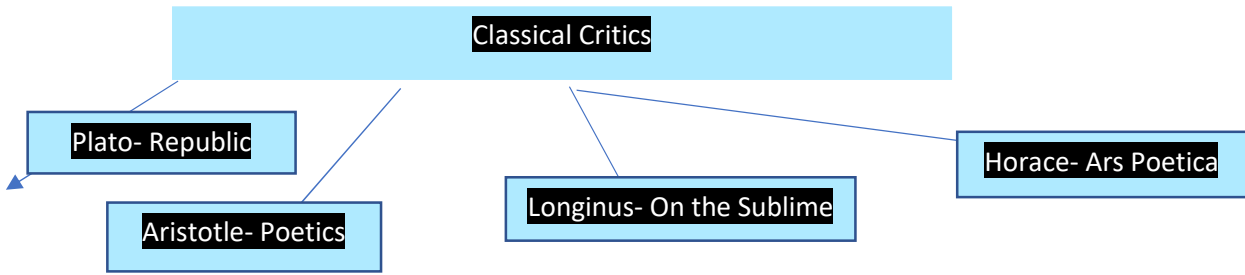
Cornerstone of Classical Criticism

Appreciation for works that yokes style with that of content

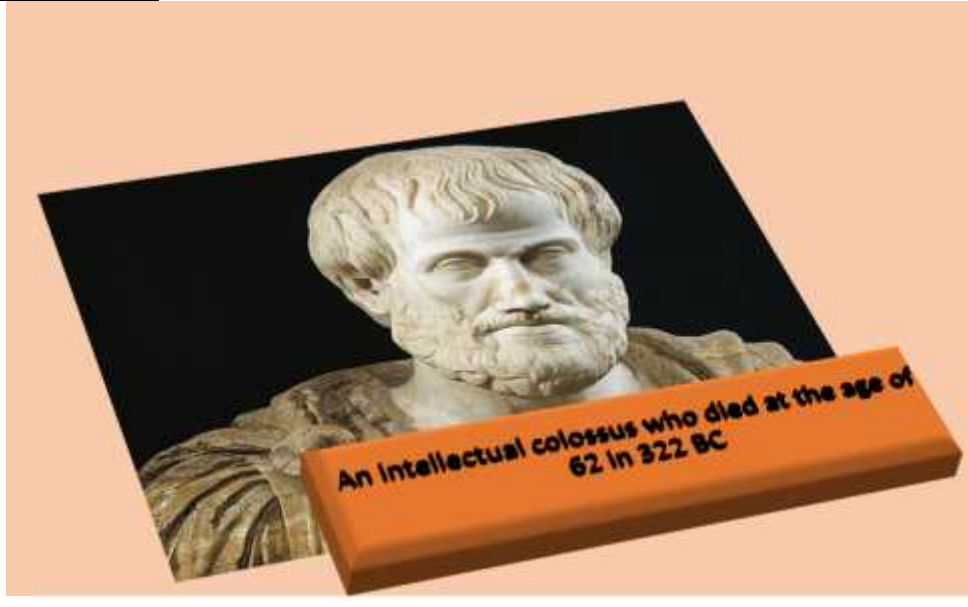
Appreciation for works that indicates harmony and proportion

Appreciation for works that evokes emotional and cognitive response





Introduction to Aristotle



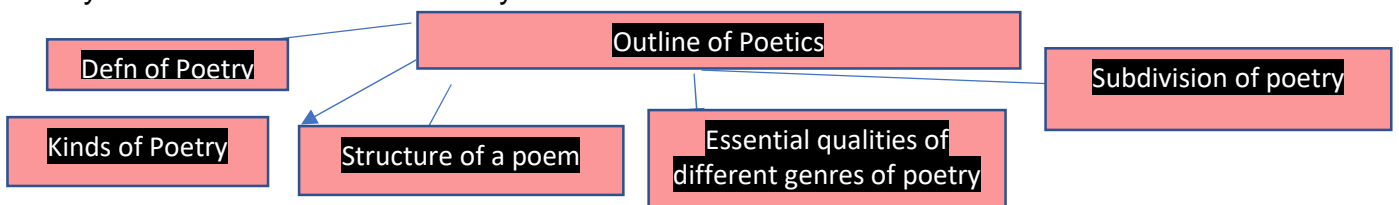
Aristotle (384- 322 B.C. E) was the student of Plato. He founded Lyceum, a philosophical centre in Athens in 335 BCE. Aristotle developed positions that differed significantly from that of his teacher Plato.

Plato’s negative view of art

- 1.The essential character of art is mimesis and it alienates from true reality.
- 2.Artistic mimesis appeals to the emotional rather than the intellectual aspect of human psyche and thereby subverts the character of both the individual and the state.
- 3.Art is mimesis.
4. Art is thrice removed from truth or reality.
5. Plato objects to the art of poetry since it misrepresents God.
- 6.Art is lie and all artists are liars.
- 7.Art is immoral.

Setting of Aristotle’s Poetics

Aristotle’s *Poetics* is defence of poetry against the diatribe of Plato, his teacher. The *Poetics* was written by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C



Summary of Aristotle's Poetics – Chapter – I

In the book titled *Republic*, Plato, the Greek philosopher and critic critiqued the poets as “imitative tribes.” The *Poetics* is an initiative on the part of Aristotle, the student of Plato to defend the art of poetry. Aristotle defines poetry as an art form that duplicates or represents life. Poetry is first and foremost a “medium of imitation.” Poetry imitates life in a number of ways. Poetry represents character, emotion, action or every day objects of life. Poetry can be classified into different genres- epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry and music (inclusive of the flute and the lyre).

The nature of imitation differentiates the different kinds of poetry. Aristotle delineates the tripartite differences- the medium of imitation, the object of imitation and the mode of imitation. The etymological origin of the word mimesis is *mimēsthai* (to imitate). Mimesis is an activity or a process. Medium denotes the act of communication. Manner denotes the method or mode used to classify an individual work of art.

Poetry imitates life through rhythm, language and harmony. The use of rhythm is more pronounced in music and dance. Verse poetry imitates through language. Dithyrambic and Nomic poetry use meter, rhythm and tune in combination. In the case of dramatic genres like tragedy or comedy only either of them are used (either rhythm or metre or tune). It is the medium of imitation that bestows differences among different art forms.

Glossary

- 1.**Plot**- the story or the activity of the poet.
- 2.**Structure**- organization of parts into whole.
- 3.**Inquiry** -the process of asking for information.
- 4.**Principles**- basic idea or rule.
- 5.**Order of nature** – the type or main characteristic of something.
- 6.**Epic**-An epic is also a long poem about events in the past, that involves Gods or kings and queens
- 7.**Tragedy**- a play about death or suffering or has a sad end.
- 8.**Comedy**- a play that is amusing or has a happy end.
- 9.**Music of Flute**- a poem sung to the accompaniment of the music of flute.
- 10.**Lyre**- an ancient musical instrument consisting of a U-shaped frame with strings attached to it.
- 11.**Dithyrambic** - choral poetry (that eventually evolved into the choral song)
- 12.**Forms**- a type or kind of way in which something exists.
- 13.**Conception**- an idea of what something is.
- 14.**Imitation**- copy of reality or real thing.
- 15.**Distinct**-separate and different.
- 16.**Harmony**- notes that are played or sung with the main tune /use of similarities to bring unity to a painting, drawing or the other art object.
- 17.**Rhythm**- a strong pattern of sounds, words, or musical notes that is used in music, poetry, and dancing /a regular repeated pattern of sounds or beats used in music, poems and dances, a regular pattern of change.
- 18.**Character**- Character is one of the six components of tragedy that refers not to the 'attributes' of a given person.
- 19.**Emotion**- a strong feeling such as love and anger.
- 20.**Action**- the way of doing a thing.
- 21.**Prose**- written language in its ordinary form rather than in the form of poems.

22. **Verse**- writing that is arranged in short lines with a regular rhythm; poetry.
23. **Meters**- Meter is the rhythm that organizes the beats in a piece of music into a pattern.
24. **Mimes**- the art of acting without speech, or a person who is skilled at performing art especially in a theatre.
25. **Sophon**-a writer of mimes
26. **Xenarchus**- A comic poet
27. **Socratic dialogues**- is a genre of literary prose developed in Greece at the turn of the fourth century BC. The socratic dialogue discusses the moral and philosophical problems and is used in the works of Plato and Xenophon. Socratic dialogue takes the form of dialogue between two or more characters.
28. **Elegiac**- a sad poem or song, especially remembering someone who has died or something in the past.
29. **Elegiac poets**- Poets who write in elegiac couplets on death love and war. Heraclitus is an elegiac poet. .
30. **Hexameter poets**-Hexameter is a metrical line of verses comprising six feet. The hexameter is used in the satires of Horace, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Hymns of Orpheus.
31. **Meter**- is the basic rhythmic structure of a verse or lines in verse. Meter is a stressed and unstressed syllabic pattern in a verse, or within the lines of a poem. Stressed syllables tends to be longer, and unstressed shorter.
32. **Treatise**-A written work that deals with a subject formally.
33. **Homer**- Greek poet and author of *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.
34. **Empedocles**- Greek philosopher.
35. **Chaeremon**- Athenian dramatist and tragic poet. Aristotle praises his work titled *Centaurus* or *Centaur* as a rhapsody in all kinds of meters.
35. **Centaur**- In Greek mythology, Centaurus is the father of the race of mythological beasts known as the centaurs or Ixionidae. The Centaurs are half-man, half horse. The Centaurs symbolise lust, wildness and savagery.
36. **Dithyrambic**- an ancient Greek hymn sung - danced in honour of Dionysus, the God of wine and fertility; - Dithyrambic denotes an irregular poetic expression or a wildly enthusiastic speech or piece of writing.
37. **Nomic poetry**- comprises lyrics performed in choral song at religious festivals. Aristotle suggests that nomic poetry played a role in the development of tragedy.
39. **Rhythm**- Rhythm is the beat and pace of a poem. Rhythm is created by the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line or verse. Rhythm can help to strengthen the meaning of words and ideas in a poem.
40. **Tune**- a melody which characterizes a particular piece of music.

Essay on Aristotle's Poetics Chapter - I

Aristotle (384- 322 B.C. E) was the student of Plato. He founded Lyceum, a philosophical centre in Athens in 335 BCE. Aristotle developed positions that differed significantly from that of his teacher Plato. Aristotle's *Poetics* is defence of poetry against the diatribe of Plato, his teacher. The *Poetics* was written by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.

Aristotle's fundamental stipulation in the poetics is about the nature of mimesis which is applicable to all genres of literature. Mimesis is fundamental to human nature. Human beings are the most imitative of all creatures. The first learning experience takes place through mimesis. Aristotle did

not coin the term “ mimesis” or imitation. Plato, the Greek philosopher used mimesis with respect to poetry. Aristotle breathed into the word a new and distinct meaning. Poetic imitation does not denote servile copying but an act of imaginative creation by the poet.

The principle of imitation unites poetry with the other fine arts. Imitation is the collective core or basis of all the fine arts. It is imitation that differentiates the fine arts from the other category of arts like painting, music and dance. Plato had associated poetry with painting, but Aristotle equates poetry with music. Imitation is not a mere representation of the superficial appearance of things or objects. Imitation is the representation of the passions and emotions of men. The poet does not imitate the shallow surface of things but the high reality entrenched within. Emotion is also the object of music and therefore poetry has close kinship with music rather than painting.

Poetry can be classified into different genres -epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry and music (inclusive of the flute and the lyre). The nature of imitation differentiates the different kinds of poetry. Aristotle delineates the tripartite differences- the medium of imitation, the object of imitation and the mode of imitation. The medium of a poet and painter is different. The painter imitates or represents through form and colour. The poet imitates through language, rhythm and harmony. The musician imitates through rhythm and harmony. Dithyrambic and Nomic poetry use meter, rhythm and tune in combination. The manner of imitation or representation may either be narrative as in the case of Epic or representation through action as in drama. Different genres of poetry differ from one another in their respective manner of imitation.

In changing times, the voice of Aristotle continues to influence the critics of contemporary period. Through his works, Aristotle asserts with authority the fundamental duty of a critic- namely to investigate the organic structure of a work of art.

Short Questions

1. Define the term mimesis.
2. Define the term poetic imitation.
3. How does Aristotle classify poetry?
4. How does poetry imitate life?
5. What were the objections of Plato towards poetry?
6. What differentiates the different kinds of poetry?
7. What are the tripartite differences outlined by Aristotle?
8. How does the medium of a poet and painter differ?
9. Define the manner of imitation.
10. Why does Aristotle equate poetry with music?

Summary of Aristotle’s Poetics – Chapter – II

Aristotle begins chapter II with a discussion of the varied objects of imitation in different forms of art. Aristotle defined poetry as imitation of men in action. Men in action imitated by poetry could either be of superior or inferior character. The polarity or division between the noble and the base is common in the other ethical treatises of Aristotle. The polarity between the noble and the base reflects Aristotle’s view of the society. Aristotle cites the examples of Polygnotus, Pauson and Dionysius, painters in the Greek period to drive home the point that these painters represented men in real life differently. Dionysius painted or represented men as they were, neither more or less beautiful than the average human being. Polygnotus represented men in their excellence and Pauson represented the defective or repulsive in men. Polygnotus depicted men as better than they were in reality, Pauson represented men in worse conditions and Dionysus represented men in their likeness.

Artists differ in representing their objects. The differences of diversities of representation is evident not only in painting but also in flute-playing, harp-playing, prose and verse. Homer represents men in enhanced position, Cleophon represents men as they are, but Hegemon and Nicochares represent men in their worse condition / position. Differences in representation is also to be noted in dithyrambic and nomic poetry. Timotheus could draw characters like Cyclops. Representation of men also differs in tragedy and comedy. Comedy represents people as worse and tragedy is better in comparison to comedy.

The third difference is the manner of representation. Sophocles is similar to Homer in representation of good men. Sophocles is also equally similar to Aristophanes in representing men in action. Drama represents people in action. Dorians claim the two genres of drama, namely comedy and tragedy as their own. The Megarians claim that comedy originated in the days of democracy in Sicily. Aristotle concludes with a statement that tragedy and comedy are to be distinguished by the imitation of the superior and the inferior characters.

Glossary

- 1.Polygnotus-** He is an ancient Greek painter from the middle of the 5th century BC. His excellence lay in the beauty of his drawing of individual figures, especially in the "ethical" and ideal character of his art
- 2.Pauson-**A Greek painter and caricaturist, whom Aristotle contrasts with Polygnotus. Aristotle advises young people not to look at the pictures of Pauson, but rather at those of Polygnotus or of any other "ethical" artist. A caricature is humourous drawing or description that makes someone's noticeable features even more prominent. A caricaturist is a person who creates caricatures.
- 3.Dionusius** - a Greek painter.
- 4.Homer-** a Greek poet who authored the two epic poems- the *Iliad* and the *.Odyssey*.
- 5.Cleophon-** He is an Athenian politician, who was the object of satire by Plato and Aristophanes in the work titled *The Frog*- Both made fun of Cleophon's Thracian origins and accent. Cleophon's father was an Athenian but his mother was of Thracian origin. Cleophon was a harp maker by trade and led his early life in poverty.
- 6.Hegemon of Thasos-** He is a Greek writer of parody
- 7.Parody-** It is a work that ironically or satirically imitates or makes fun of or offers a comment on an original work inclusive of the subject matter, author and style.
- 8.Nicochares-** an Athenian poet, who wrote comedies. His comedies focused on the legends and the local traditions of his country. His comedies ridiculed the peculiarities of the neighbouring states.
- 9.Timotheus-** a Greek musician and dithyrambic poet who composed musical works of a mythological and historical content.
- 10.Philoxenus-** a Greek dithyrambic poet. He is also known as " New Music poet" since he represented a style that developed between the end of the fifth century BC and the first decade of the fourth century BC,
- 11.Cyclops-** In his poem *Cyclops* or *Galatea*, Philoxenus took up the story of Polyphemus, the Cyclops famously encountered by Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*. It was written to be performed in a wild and ecstatic song-and-dance form — the dithyramb..
- 12 Sophocles-** Greek tragedian- The most famous tragedies of Sophocles feature Oedipus and Antigone.
- 13.Aristophanes-** a comic playwright of Athens. The etymological origin of the word comedy is the Greek word (*k m idía*) which means 'revel' and 'song' (*k mos* and *d*). Aristotle affirmed that comic drama actually developed from a song.

14.**Epicharmus**- Greek poet and originator of Sicilian comedy. The plays of Epicharmus were mythological burlesques in which even the Gods were satirized.

15.**Chionides**- Athenian comic poet.

16.**Magnes**- In Greek mythology, Magnes was the first king of Magnesia.

17.**Peloponnesians**- The inhabitants of the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece.

Essay on Aristotle's Poetics- Chapter II

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The object of poetic imitation are "men in action." The poet may imitate men as they are or as they ought to be. The poet may represent men either as better than in real life or as worse. . Men in action imitated by poetry could either be of superior or inferior character. The polarity or division between the noble and the base is common in the other ethical treatises of Aristotle. The polarity between the noble and the base reflects Aristotle's view of the society. Aristotle cites the examples of Polygnotus, Pauson and Dionysius, painters in the Greek period to drive home the point that these painters represented men in real life differently. Dionysius painted or represented men as they were, neither more or less beautiful than the average human being. Polygnotus represented men in their excellence and Pauson represented the defective or repulsive in men. Polygnotus depicted men as better than there were in reality, Pauson represented men in worse conditions and Dionysus represented men in their likeness.

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In changing times, the voice of Aristotle continues to influence the critics of contemporary period. Through his works, Aristotle asserts with authority the fundamental duty of a critic- namely to investigate the organic structure of a work of art.

Short Questions

1. What does poetry imitate?
2. What does Aristotle's division of men into noble and base reflect?
3. How did Polygnotus, Pauson and Dionysius represent men?
4. How do artists differ in representing their objects?
5. How does representation of men differ in tragedy and comedy?

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIP SIDNEY



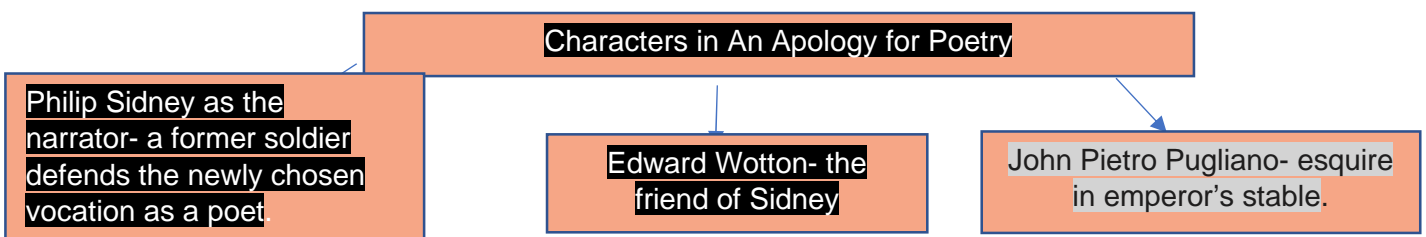
A distinguished poet of the sixteenth century who lived during the age of Elizabeth.

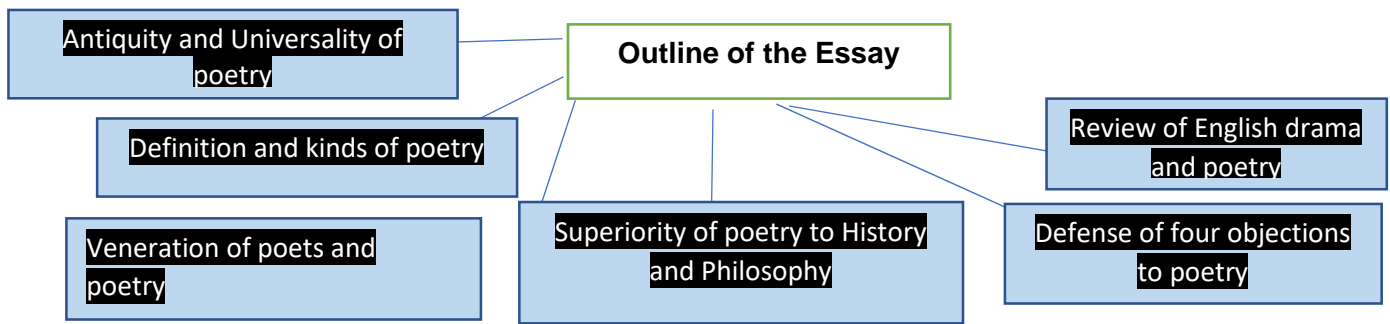
Sidney's *An Apology For Poetry* was first published in the year 1595 in two separate editions. The first edition was published by William Ponosby and titled as *The Defense of Poesie*. The second edition was published by Henry Olney and titled as *An Apologie For Poetrie*.

Occasion for Sidney's An Apology for Poetry

Stephen Gosson's diatribe on poetry in the work titled *The School of Abuse* (1579) provoked a theoretical defense on the part of Sidney. Stephen Gosson deprecated poetry on the following grounds

1. Poets are to be classed with 'pipes and jesters'
2. Poets are the caterpillars of the Commonwealth
3. Poets are the enemies to virtue
4. Drama is of pagan origin and violated the laws of nature since male played the female role.
5. Drama is an incitement to popular debauchery
6. Plato banished the poets from Commonwealth
7. Tragedies deal with acts of cruelty and bloodshed.
8. Comedy depicts love of degrading kind.





Summary of Sidney's An Apology of Poetry

Universality and Antiquity of Poetry

Sidney begins the essay narrating his meeting with the horseman John Pietro Pugliano along with his friend Edward Wotton at the Emperor's court. Pugliano delineated the importance of horsemanship for princes and nobleman. Pugliano's strong fondness for horses inspired him to make an argument in favour of poetry. Poetry has become the laughing stock of England. He personifies poetry as a mother that gives the milk of knowledge to the earlier civilizations. Poetry is the mother of knowledge. Musaeus, Homer and Hesiod were the first learned writers of Greece. In the Greek culture, poets like Orpheus and Amphion tamed beasts and moved stones with their poetry. Poets like Livius, Andronicus and Ennius belonged to the Roman culture. Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch were Italian poets. Gower and Chaucer were English poets of repute. Philosophers presented philosophy in verse under the guise of poets. Historians too, usurped the adornments of poetry. Herodotus named the books of history after the nine muses. Only poets lived in Turkey. The poets were known as Arentos among the most barbarous Indians. The Arentos sang the deeds of their ancestors and praised their Gods.

Veneration of poets and poetry

Romans called the poets as "vates" or prophets and the Greeks called the poet as "a maker". The oracles of Delphi and the prophecies of Sibyl were delivered in verses. All other forms of arts are subsidiary to nature. Poetry transcends nature since a poet is a maker or creator. Shelley's observation "None deserves the name of Creator, but God and the poet" adds on to the point driven by Sidney. God creates the world, likewise the poet creates a world of his own. An assault on poetry is equivalent to an attack on the roots of culture and universality of poetry.

Sidney's definition and kinds of poetry

Sidney was influenced by Aristotle and Horace in his conceptualisation of poetry. Poetry is an art of imitation. The end or function of poetry is to teach and delight. Imitation does not denote a mere copying and reproduction of fact. Imitation alludes to the transmutation of the real and the actual. Sidney refers to poetry as 'speaking picture' in line with Plato and Aristotle's parallel between poetry and painting. Poetry can be classified into the sacred, philosophical, didactic and the right kind. Poets who script sacred poetry are teachers of religion, prophets and theologians subject to limitations. The didactic or philosophical poets are hindered by inadequacy due to dependence on external sources. The third category of poets, namely the 'right kind' are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world.' Poetry is set free from external limitations like metrical patterns. Rhyme and verse do make a poet. Rhyme and verse harmonise the language used by the poet. Sidney recounts the effect of poetry as "purifying wit, enriching memory and enabling judgment."

Pastoral poetry describes the beauty of the rustic life, the trials and tribulations of the peasant under Lords and nobles. Elegiac poetry outlines the weakness of mankind and the woe of the world. Satiric poetry disparages the folly of the human. Iambic poetry unveils villainy. A lyric is a song sung in

praise of God. Neither the epic/ heroic poetry nor the lyric can be disliked since they inculcate virtue through the portrayal of heroic and moral goodness. Sidney regards the heroic poetry as the most accomplished kind of poetry.

Poetry as superior to History and Philosophy

The four people concerned with the goodness of mankind are the historian, the philosopher, the lawyer and the poet. The lawyer prevents evil rather than cultivate goodness. The philosopher verbalizes goodness through 'precepts'. The historian articulates goodness through example. Neither the philosopher nor the historian can use a precept and an example simultaneously to either describe or inculcate goodness. A poet inculcates goodness through a precept and an example. Sidney cites examples of virtuous actions represented by poets – "wisdom in temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valour in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Euryalus."

Sidney observes that poetry can make ugly things beautiful. Poetry can inspire men to great feats. He cites the examples of – a). Menevius Agrippa's parable of a body that starved its belly since the body believed that the belly consumed too much. The parable restored a divided Rome b) Nathan, the Prophet used the story of a lamb taken from its shepherd to show David the sin of his adultery. Philosophy contends with the theoretical aspects and teaches virtue by precept whereas history teaches practical virtue by drawing concrete examples from life. But poetry combines both precepts and practical examples. Philosophy is premised on abstractions and therefore cannot properly guide the youth. On the contrary, the historian is tied to empirical facts. Poetry gives perfect pictures of virtue which are far more effective than the mere definitions of philosophy. It also gives imaginary examples which are more instructive than the real examples of history. The reward of virtue and the punishment of vice is more succinctly shown in poetry than in history. Poetry depicts moral lessons in a very attractive form. Horrid events such as cruel battles, abnormal monsters are made pleasant in poetic imitation. Poet is, consequently, the monarch of all sciences.

Four Chief objections to Poetry and Sidney's defense

1. Poetry is useless- a waste of time.
2. Poetry is deceptive- the mother of all lies.
3. Poetry is immoral and has a corrupting effect.
4. Plato banished poets from his republic.

To Sidney, poetry is the truest form of art. It represents factual truth. The astronomer, geometrician and the historian formulate false statements. The assault on poets for falsity of representation is unjustified since he presents not facts in toto but fiction with ideal truth embedded in it. Poetry does not have an effeminate effect. Poetry is endowed with the potential to goad man to virtuous action. The last accusation levelled against poetry is a high subversion. Sidney construes that Plato was against the atheistic poetry of the ancient times. Plato was not against poetry in general but he directed his charges against a particular kind of poetry that had a baneful effect on the human mind and society. Plato only warned against the abuse or misuse of poetry. In his work titled as *Ion*, Plato describes the poet as "A light and winged and holy thing."

Sidney's review of English poetry and drama

Sidney reviews the wretched condition of poetry in England. The root cause for the poetical decadence is the propensity of the poets to script uninspired. The tripartite combination of art, imitation and exercise initiates a successful poem. Sidney mentions the work *Troilus and Criseyde* by Chaucer, Thomas Sackville, Surrey and Spenser as paradigm's of good poetry. He leaves behind Langland's *Piers Plowman* or Tottel's *Miscellany*.

The fated destiny of drama was redeemed by the play *Gorboduc*, despite the play lacking in unities of time and place. A tragedy should be bound to the laws of poetry and not history. The dramatist should structure historical events to the demands of tragedy. Comedy has degenerated into farce.

The laughter invoked by a comedy is confounded with pleasure. Sidney states that comedy should aim at delightful teaching and not vulgar amusement. Sidney has lost hope in the revival of lyric poetry since it has become feigned in his age.

Sidney applauds the English language as the most suitable for poetry. The English language is adaptable both to the ancient and modern systems of versification. He concludes with a request that poetry should never be degraded. He condemns the contemporary poets for their mercenary motives. They lack the genuine love for poetry. They lack in training and exercise, the prerequisite conditions for successful poetry.

Glossary

1. **Musaeus**-a Greek poet.
2. **Homer**- a Greek poet.
3. **Hesiod**- a Greek poet.
4. **Livius Andronicus** – founder of Roman epic and dramatic poetry.
5. **Ennius**- father of Roman poetry.
6. **Dante**- Italian poet.
7. **Boccaccio**- Italian poet and writer
8. **Petrarch**- Italian poet
9. **Gower**- English poet
10. **Chaucer**- English poet.
11. **Oracles of Delphi**- one of the powerful woman in Greek mythology who could communicate with God through divination.
12. **Prophecies of Sybil**- oracular prophecies
13. **Shelley**- English poet of the Romantic age
14. **Ulysses**- legendary Greek king.
15. **Diomedes**- Greek warrior
16. **Achilles**- hero of Trojan War
17. **Nisus and Euryalus**- pair of friends who served under Aeneas.
18. **Menenius Agrippa**-Roman consul
19. **Nathan**- a prophet
20. **Troilus and Criseyde**- epic poem by Chaucer
21. **Thomas Sackville**- English poet and dramatist
22. **Surrey**-English poet
23. **Spenser**- English poet
24. **Langland's Piers Plowman**- Middle English narrative poem by William Langland.
25. **Tottel's Miscellany**- first anthology of poetry published by Richard Tottel.
26. **Gorboduc**- an English play.
27. **Orpheus**- a musician , prophet and poet in Greek mythology- endowed with the ability to charm all animate and inanimate things with his music.
28. **Amphion**- son of Zeus, who used magic to build the wall of a city
29. **Nine Muses**- inspirational goddesses of science, literature and art- Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (flutes and lyric poetry), Thalia (comedy and pastoral poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Terpsichore (dance), Erato (love poetry), Polyhymnia (sacred poetry), and Urania (astronomy)

Essay on Sidney's An Apology for Poetry

Sir Philip Sidney was the first in line of English poets and critics. His importance to the history of literary theory rests on a single work, namely the *Apology for Poetry*. His *Apology of Poetry* is the quintessence of literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance. It is imbued with the spirit of Renaissance. Stephen Gosson's diatribe on poetry in the work titled *The School of Abuse* (1579) provoked a theoretical defense on the part of Sidney. Sidney bemoans that poetry has become the laughing stock of England. He personifies poetry as a mother that gives the milk of knowledge to the earlier civilizations. Poetry is the mother of knowledge. Musaeus, Homer and Hesiod were the first learned writers of Greece. In the Greek culture, poets like Orpheus and Amphion tamed beasts and moved stones with their poetry.

Romans called the poets as "vates" or prophets and the Greeks called the poet as "a maker". The oracles of Delphi and the prophecies of Sibyl were delivered in verses. All other forms of arts are subsidiary to nature. Poetry transcends nature since a poet is a maker or creator. Sidney was influenced by Aristotle and Horace in his conceptualisation of poetry. Poetry is an art of imitation. The end or function of poetry is to teach and delight. Imitation does not denote a mere copying and reproduction of fact. Imitation alludes to the transmutation of the real and the actual. Sidney refers to poetry as 'speaking picture' in line with Plato and Aristotle's parallel between poetry and painting. Poetry can be classified into the sacred, philosophical, didactic and the right kind. Poets who script sacred poetry are teachers of religion, prophets and theologians subject to limitations. The didactic or philosophical poets are hindered by inadequacy due to dependence on external sources. The third category of poets, namely the 'right kind' are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world. Rhyme and verse do make a poet. Rhyme and verse harmonise the language used by the poet.

The four people concerned with the goodness of mankind are the historian, the philosopher, the lawyer and the poet. The lawyer prevents evil rather than cultivate goodness. The philosopher verbalizes goodness through 'precepts'. The historian articulates goodness through example. Neither the philosopher nor the historian can use a precept and an example simultaneously to either describe or inculcate goodness. A poet inculcates goodness through a precept and an example. Sidney cites examples of virtuous actions represented by poets – "wisdom in temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valour in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Euryalus." Philosophy contends with the theoretical aspects and teaches virtue by precept whereas history teaches practical virtue by drawing concrete examples from life. But poetry combines both precepts and practical examples. Poetry depicts moral lessons in a very attractive form. Horrid events such as cruel battles, abnormal monsters are made pleasant in poetic imitation. Poet is, consequently, the monarch of all sciences.

Stephen Gosson deprecated poetry on the following grounds 1. Poets are to be classed with 'pipes and jesters' 2. Poets are the caterpillars of the Commonwealth 3. Poets are the enemies to virtue 4. Drama is of pagan origin and violated the laws of nature since male played the female role. 5. Drama is an incitement to popular debauchery 6. Plato banished the poets from Commonwealth 7. Tragedies deal with acts of cruelty and bloodshed. 8. Comedy depicts love of degrading kind.

The assault on poets for falsity of representation is unjustified since he presents not facts in toto but fiction with ideal truth embedded in it. Poetry does not have an effeminate effect. Poetry is endowed with the potential to goad man to virtuous action. The last accusation levelled against poetry is a high subversion. Sidney construes that Plato was against the atheistic poetry of the ancient times. Plato was not against poetry in general but he directed his charges against a particular kind of poetry that had a baneful effect on the human mind and society. Plato only warned against the abuse or misuse of poetry. In his work titled as *Ion*, Plato describes the poet as "A light and winged and holy thing."

Sidney reviews the wretched condition of poetry in England. The root cause for the poetical decadence is the propensity of the poets to script uninspired. The tripartite combination of art,

imitation and exercise initiates a successful poem. Sidney mentions the work *Troilus and Criseyde* by Chaucer, Thomas Sackville, Surrey and Spenser as paradigm's of good poetry.

The fated destiny of drama was redeemed by the play *Gorboduc*, despite the play lacking in unities of time and place. A tragedy should be bound to the laws of poetry and not history. The dramatist should structure historical events to the demands of tragedy. Comedy has degenerated into farce. Sidney states that comedy should aim at delightful teaching and not vulgar amusement. Sidney has lost hope in the revival of lyric poetry since it has become feigned in his age. Sidney applauds the English language as the most suitable for poetry. He concludes with a request that poetry should never be degraded. He condemns the contemporary poets for their mercenary motives. They lack the genuine love for poetry.

How does Sidney establish the universality and antiquity of poetry?

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Sidney begins the essay narrating his meeting with the horseman John Pietro Pugliano along with his friend Edward Wotton at the Emperor's court. Pugliano delineated the importance of horsemanship for princes and nobleman. Pugliano's strong fondness for horses inspired him to make an argument in favour of poetry. Poetry has become the laughing stock of England. He personifies poetry as a mother that gives the milk of knowledge to the earlier civilizations. Poetry is the mother of knowledge. Musaeus, Homer and Hesiod were the first learned writers of Greece. In the Greek culture, poets like Orpheus and Amphion tamed beasts and moved stones with their poetry. Poets like Livius, Andronicus and Ennius belonged to the Roman culture. Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch were Italian poets. Gower and Chaucer were English poets of repute. Philosophers presented philosophy in verse under the guise of poets. Historians too, usurped the adornments of poetry. Herodotus named the books of history after the nine muses. Only poets lived in Turkey. The poets were known as Arentos among the most barbarous Indians. The Arentos sang the deeds of their ancestors and praised their Gods.

How were the poets honoured in the Greek and Roman culture?

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driven by Sidney. God creates the world, likewise the poet creates a world of his own. An assault on poetry is equivalent to an attack on the roots of culture and universality of poetry.

How does Sidney classify poetry into different kinds?

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Pastoral poetry describes the beauty of the rustic life, the trials and tribulations of the peasant under Lords and nobles. Elegiac poetry outlines the weakness of mankind and the woe of the world. Satirical poetry disparages the folly of the human. Iambic poetry unveils villainy. A lyric is a song sung in praise of God. Neither the epic/heroic poetry nor the lyric can be disliked since they inculcate virtue through the portrayal of heroic and moral goodness. Sidney regards the heroic poetry as the most accomplished kind of poetry.

How does Sidney establish the superiority of poetry over that of history and philosophy?

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Sidney observes that poetry can make ugly things beautiful. Poetry can inspire men to great feats. He cites the examples of – a). Menenius Agrippa's parable of a body that starved its belly since the body believed that the belly consumed too much. The parable restored a divided Rome b) Nathan, the Prophet used the story of a lamb taken from its shepherd to show David the sin of his adultery. Philosophy contends with the theoretical aspects and teaches virtue by precept whereas history teaches practical virtue by drawing concrete examples from life. But poetry combines both precepts and practical examples. Philosophy is premised on abstractions and therefore cannot properly guide the youth. On the contrary, the historian is tied to empirical facts. Poetry gives perfect pictures of virtue which are far more effective than the mere definitions of philosophy. It also gives imaginary examples which are more instructive than the real examples of history. The reward of virtue and the punishment of vice is more succinctly shown in poetry than in history. Poetry depicts moral lessons in a very attractive form. Horrid events such as cruel battles, abnormal monsters are made pleasant in poetic imitation. Poet is, consequently, the monarch of all sciences.

What are the chief objections to poetry and how does Sidney defend it?

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To Sidney, poetry is the truest form of art. It represents factual truth. The astronomer, geometrician and the historian formulate false statements. The assault on poets for falsity of representation is unjustified since he presents not facts in toto but fiction with ideal truth embedded in it. Poetry does not have an effeminate effect. Poetry is endowed with the potential to goad man to virtuous action. The last accusation levelled against poetry is a high subversion. Sidney construes that Plato was against the atheistic poetry of the ancient times. Plato was not against poetry in general but he directed his charges against a particular kind of poetry that had a baneful effect on the human mind and society. Plato only warned against the abuse or misuse of poetry. In his work titled as *Ion*, Plato describes the poet as "A light and winged and holy thing."

Elucidate Sidney's review of English poetry and drama

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Sidney reviews the wretched condition of poetry in England. The root cause for the poetical decadence is the propensity of the poets to script uninspired. The tripartite combination of art, imitation and exercise initiates a successful poem. Sidney mentions the work *Troilus and Criseyde* by Chaucer, Thomas Sackville, Surrey and Spenser as paradigm's of good poetry. He leaves behind Langland's *Piers Plowman* or Tottel's *Miscellany*.

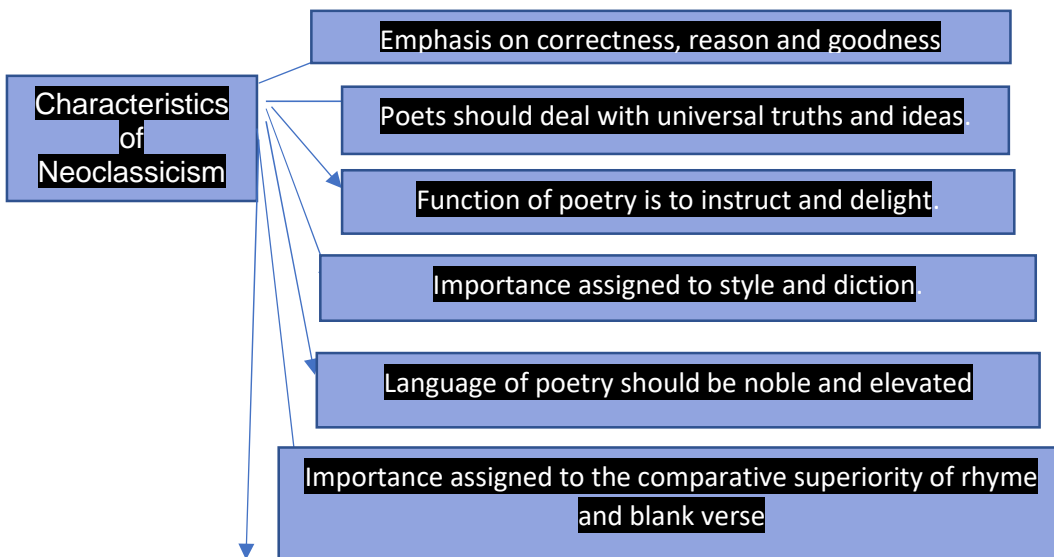
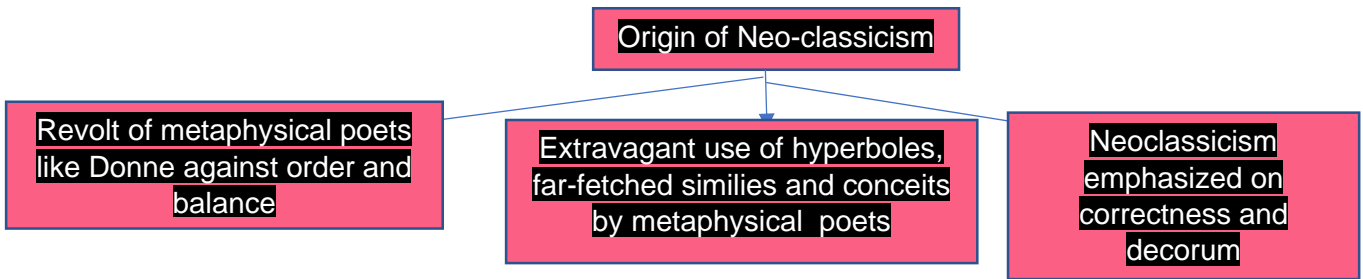
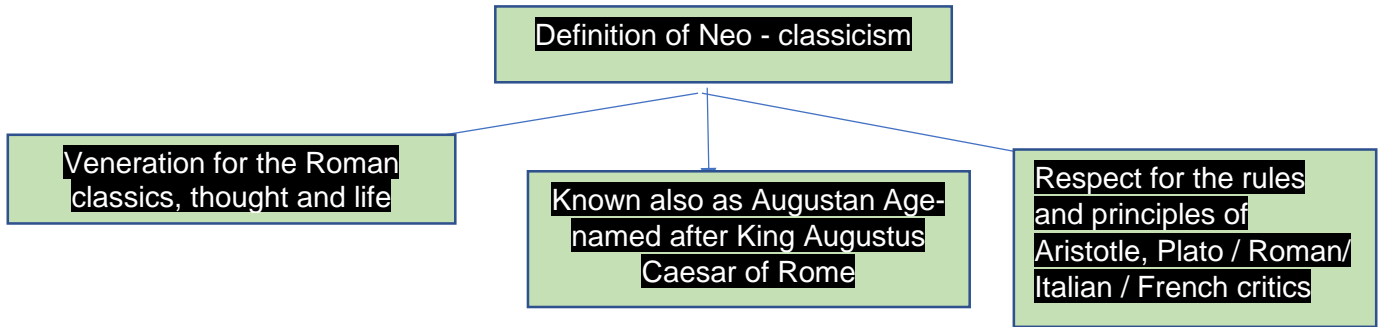
The fated destiny of drama was redeemed by the play *Gorboduc*, despite the play lacking in unities of time and place. A tragedy should be bound to the laws of poetry and not history. The dramatist should structure historical events to the demands of tragedy. Comedy has degenerated into farce. The laughter invoked by a comedy is confounded with pleasure. Sidney states that comedy should aim at delightful teaching and not vulgar amusement. Sidney has lost hope in the revival of lyric poetry since it has become feigned in his age.

Sidney applauds the English language as the most suitable for poetry. The English language is adaptable both to the ancient and modern systems of versification. He concludes with a request that poetry should never be degraded. He condemns the contemporary poets for their mercenary motives. They lack the genuine love for poetry. They lack in training and exercise, the prerequisite conditions for successful poetry.

Short Questions

1. Why did Stephen Gosson attack poetry?
2. Whom does Sidney cite in order to justify his praise of poetry?
3. Why should the poets be respected and honoured?
4. How did philosophers and the historians appear in the beginning?
5. How did poetry flourish in all ages and countries?
6. How did the Romans honour the poets?
7. Why is the poet not a slave to nature?
8. What terms did the Greeks and the Romans use to name the poets?
9. What are the examples given by Sidney to proclaim that the poets are prophets?
10. How does Philip Sidney define poetry?
11. How does Sidney divide poetry?
12. Define religious and philosophical poetry.
13. Why should philosophical poetry not be condemned?
14. Define elegiac and pastoral poetry.
15. How does Sidney subdivide poetry?
16. Why does Sidney call the epic poetry as the best and the most accomplished kind of poetry?
17. Why does Sidney regard poetry as superior to all other branches of learning?
18. How does Sidney establish the superiority of poetry over that of history and philosophy?
19. How is poetry conducive to good or virtuous action?
20. How does Sidney justify the use of rhyme in poetry?
21. Why did regard the last attack levelled against poetry as subversion?

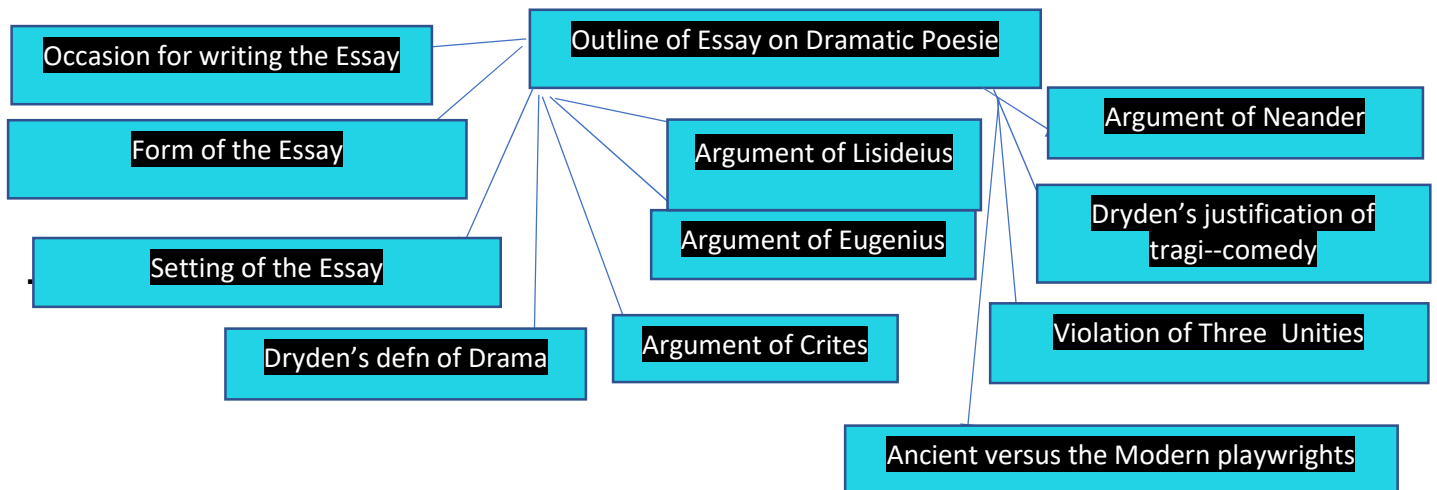
22. What is the root cause for poetic decadence in England?
23. What are Sidney's views on tragedy and comedy?
24. What are Sidney's views on the prerequisites of a successful poem?
25. Why does Sidney applaud the English language ?
26. What are the two publications of Sidney's An Apology of Poetry?



Introduction to John Dryden



John Dryden (9 Aug 1631- 1 May 1700) was a prominent English poet, critic, translator and playwright. He dominated the literary life of the Restoration age and thereafter the age is known as the Age of Dryden. He was bestowed with the honour of poet laureate of England in 1668. He was a critic of contemporary reality which is reflected in his play titled *Macflecknoe*(1682). Dryden's thoughts on literary criticism – on ancient, modern and English literature, in particular drama are presented in the forms of dialogue in an *Essay on Dramatic Poesie*.



Summary of An Essay on Dramatic Poesie

Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* debates on Neo-classical theory of literature. Dryden upheld classical drama by declaring that it is an imitation of life and reflects the human nature. In the year 1663, a Frenchman named Samuel Sorbiere visited England on a diplomatic mission. On returning to France, he published an account of his voyage wherein he made hostile remark about English science and English Stage. Sorbiere incited rejoinders on scientific and literary grounds from the historian of English Royal Society Thomas Sprat and Dryden.

The *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* is in the form of a dialogue in the manner of Plato's *Republic* and through his dextrous usage, Dryden made it into a popular literary form. The essay has four spokesmen :

1. **Crites** represents the brother-in-law of Dryden Sir Robert Howard- spokesperson of the Ancients.
2. **Eugenius** represents the friend of Dryden Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst- spokesperson of the Moderns.

3. **Lisideius** represents Sir Charles Sedley, a younger wit of the day- spokesperson of the French.

4. **Neander** represents Dryden himself- defence of the English dramatists

Dryden's definition of Drama

Dryden defines Drama as "just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind." Drama is an 'image' of 'human nature', and the image is 'just' and 'lively'. Literature imitates human actions. By using the word 'just', Dryden implies that literature imitates (and not merely reproduces) human actions. Poetic imitation is different from servile copy of reality.

Argument of Crites

Crites calls attention to the topic of discussion- namely dramatic poesy. He avers the superiority of the ancients over that of the moderns. He declares that the ancients are faithful imitators and wise observers of nature. The moderns marred and ill represented nature in their plays. He attributes all the rules of dramatic poesy to the ancients. He speaks of the three unities- unity of time, place and action. Unities, in drama, is derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*. A play is to have a single action represented as occurring in a single place and within the course of a day. Crites proclaims that the ancients followed the unity of time especially in the tragedies. They set only a single scene all through the play. Crites subscribes to a practical change in the scenes of the play, only if the location of the play is adjacent. He praises the French as the next best after the ancients. Crites records that in the plays of the French "if the act begins in a garden, a street, or a chamber, 'tis ended in the same place" (Essay of Dramatic Poesie p. 355). The action of the play should be singular.. He cites the English playwright Ben Jonson as the best example for following the rules of the ancients.

Argument of Eugenius

Eugenius draws attention to the shortcomings of the ancients and the merits of the moderns. He condemns the ancients for failing to adhere to a fixed number of acts in a play. The ancients wrote plays at the entrances of each character or chorus and not by acts. The ancients repeated stories as in the play *Oedipus* by Sophocles. Repetition puts down the novelty and delight of the play. The twofold intent of a play is to teach and delight. The characters portrayed by the ancients are narrow despite being imitations of nature. The ancients neither invented the unities nor did they adhere to them in their plays. The Greek philosophers and critic Aristotle and Plato did not write about the unity of action.

The characters painted in the plays of the ancients are limited in nature. The French poets held on to the three unities as a rule of the stage. The ancients displayed no poetic justice in their plays as their heroes were despondent in piety and thrived in wickedness. Poetic justice is a literary device wherein virtue is rewarded and viciousness punished. The modern plays do not lack in decorum. The ancients specialised in each genres. The tragedians wrote only tragedies and the comedians wrote only comedies. Thus the shortcomings of the ancients could not be exempted. The ancient's use or choice of words was not suitable to the taste of the common people. The ancients were dull in the representation of love and passions on the stage. They focussed on harsh emotions such as lust, anger, cruelty, revenge and ambition. The ancients were capable of raising horror rather than compassion in the mind of the audience.

Argument of Lisideius

Lisideius advocates the supremacy of the French drama against the English. The French observe the unities to perfection. The unity of time is complied with and the action of their plays does not exceed thirty hours. The French dramatist adhere to the unity of place and the entire action is limited to the place of origin. The French dramatist do not burden their plots with under-plots which diverts the attention of the audience and the reader. The French dramatists desist the use of tragi-comedy. A tragi-comedy is a medley of mirth, sadness, passion, honour and duel. The French

plays afford variety in a more reasonable manner. The intention of tragedy is to invoke admiration, compassion or concern and this intent is trounced by the combination of mirth and sadness.

The French dramatists have surpassed the ancients through the plot of their tragedies, which is based on known history. Lisideius censures the historical plays of Shakespeare for cramming up years of history in two and half hours, which in effect becomes not an imitation of nature, but a miniature. Lisideius ridicules Ben Jonson for combining the tragic and the comic in his plays.

The French dramatists steer clear of uproar and tumult on stage by reporting/ narrating duels on stage. On the contrary, the English playwrights make their characters fight on the stage so as to covet a prize. The English dramatists sensationalize an army or an act of murder through a charade of five men /drum and artificial weapons. The audience laugh at the tragic scenes of the English dramatist since dying is an art, that can only be enacted by a Roman gladiator. The French dramatists enact scenes of battle or murder through lively descriptions. The performance of action on stage triggers aversion in audience and the playwrights are to refrain from the enactment of such scenes. The French dramatists conclude the play with a conversation. The French dramatists are adept in the use of rhymes in their plays, while the English dramatists are untrained in the use of rhyme in plays.

The English dramatists do not justly represent nature, but only misrepresent nature in miniature. Multiplicity of actions and incidents are absent in the French plays. Characters are given due weightage in the French plays. The French dramatists avoid tumult and violence on the stage through narration of events that have happened off the stage. All passions and emotions are vivaciously represented by the French dramatist on stage but for actions, inclusive of scenes related to death.

Argument of Neander

Neander admits that the French plays are more regular and the laws are adhered to. He acknowledges that the English plays have many irregularities, but “neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us”. The French lack in the rich variety of humour that the English plays are endowed with. Moliere and other French dramatists have combined tragedy and comedy, serious and the gay in the manner of the English dramatists. The plots of the French dramatists lack in variety.

Neander or Dryden’s justification of tragi-comedy

1. Tragic and comic scenes are dissimilar emotions or ideas.
2. A scene of mirth or happiness, introduced in a tragedy provides relief and refreshes the soul. The ease with which the eye can pass from an unpleasant object to that of a pleasant one, is likewise feasible for a human soul to move from the tragic to that of the comic.
3. The oppositional emotions – joy and sadness constitute human nature.
4. Tragi-comedy is a way of writing that is unknown to the Ancients and the moderns of any other nation. The Ancients cannot be a prototype for all times and countries, “What pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience”. The real test of excellence is not a strict observance of rules or conventions, but the attainment of the principal intent of drama. The combination of the tragic and the comic provides dramatic relief.
5. The plots of the English dramatists are profuse and heterogenous. The plots of the French dramatists are empty and narrow. The plays of the French dramatists deal with single action. The

plays of the English dramatists have the main plot and the subplot. The subplot is in par with the main plot and thereby the observance of the unity of action is seldom violated.

6. The French dramatists' obsession with single theme hinders the expression of passion in their plays. The presence of long speeches in the French plays results in boredom. Long speeches suit the aptitude of the French, but they are inappropriate to the sullen temperament of the English audience, who watch plays only for sustenance. The presence of short speeches and rejoinder in the English plays serve to incite emotions/ passions. Wit and repartee are the salient features of a comedy. The English dramatists have reached the pinnacle of excellence in the use of wit. The use of wit endorses the superiority of the English dramatists over that of the French.

7. The presence of innumerable characters bestows great variety to plays. The dexterity of the dramatist is exhibited in the skilful management of the countless characters (– namely assigning equal importance) in the play. Dryden compliments the English dramatist Ben Jonson for his ingenious skill.

Violation of the Three Unities

Dryden stands up for the claim of the genius to write according to his/ her own individual convictions rather than servile observance of rules. Dryden refused to be backed down by the French dramatists and critics. Dryden defends the violation of unities on the part of the English dramatists. The violation of the unities imparts heterogeneity to the English. The observance of unities has a constricted effect on the French plays, leading to absurdities. The neglect of the unities by the English dramatists enables a just and lively portrayal of human nature. The French plays are regular in form and structure, but they are not as pleasant and delightful as that of the English plays. The English dramatist Ben Jonson displayed dexterity in the play *The Silent Woman*, than the French counterpart. Dryden justifies the breach of the unities on the ground that observance of the unities imparts probability and strain on the imagination of the spectators.

Neander's view/ assessment - The Ancients versus Modern Playwrights

In *An Essay on Dramatic Poesie*, Dryden has high regard for the ancients, but defends the Moderns. The supremacy of the ancients is established by the Moderns in imbibing the rules related to poetic imitation formulated by the Ancients. The Ancients had a penchant for drama and excelled in its performance. The veneration of the poets in the Greek and Roman culture promoted beneficial and salubrious competition among the poets. Poetry was honoured than other branches of learning. The modern times seldom appreciate and honour poets. The drama performed by the ancients are superior since the poets closely observed and studied nature. On the contrary, the moderns misrepresent nature. The ancients observed the unities. The moderns violated the unity of time and action. The moderns are inept in appreciating the structure and language of the ancients, since the custom and culture of the ancients is unknown.

Glossary

1. **Wit**- it is a form of intelligent humour or the ability to say or write things that are clever and usually funny.

2. **Pun**- also called as paronomasia, pun is a form of word play that exploits multiple meanings of a term, or of similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect.

3. **Humour**-the quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech.

4. **Comedy Of Humours** -a dramatic genre associated with the English playwright Ben Jonson of the late 16th century. The term derives from the Latin word *humor* (more properly *umor*), meaning "liquid," and its use in the medieval and Renaissance medical theory that the human body held a balance of four liquids, or humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile (choler), and black bile (melancholy). When properly balanced, these humours were thought to give the individual a healthy mind in a healthy body. In his play *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), Jonson's characters usually

represent one humour. Jonson distinguished two kinds of humour: one was true humour, in which one peculiar quality actually possessed a man, body and soul; the other was an adopted humour, or mannerism, in which a man went out of his way to appear singular by affecting certain fashions of clothing, speech, and social habits.

5. **Jonson's play *The Silent Woman***-The setting of the play is London, mainly the home of Morose. Morose is a wealthy old man with an obsessive hatred of noise. He lives on street that is narrow even for carts to pass by. He contrives to disinherit his nephew Dauphine by tying the knot. The vindictive attitude of Morose is due to the conspiratorial tricks of Dauphine. To combat this, Dauphine devises a plan with Cutbeard, the barber of Morose. Cutbeard presents Morose with a young (and supposedly) silent woman to marry. When Morose meets Epicœne, he tries to find out if she's really a silent woman, testing her obedience. He tells her not to succumb to the temptations of the court and tells her about the virtues of silence. Under the assumption that his fiancée, Epicœne, is an exceptionally quiet woman, Morose excitedly plans their marriage. Morose does not know that Dauphine has arranged the whole match for purposes of his own.

6. **Diction**-the choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing.

7. **Hyperboles** -exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.

8. **Similies**- a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, e.g. *as brave as a lion*

9. **Metaphors** -a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them – e.g. *drowning in money*.

10. **Conceits**-an ingenious or fanciful comparison or metaphor. e.g. wind singing

11. **Decorum** - behaviour in keeping with good taste and propriety

12. **Rhyme**- A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds usually, exactly the same sound in the final stressed syllables and any of the following syllables of two or more words.

13.**Blankverse**- Blank verse is poetry is written with regular metrical but unrhymed lines, especially in iambic pentameter. It has been described as "probably the most common and influential form that English poetry has taken since the 16th century.

14. **Classical Unities**- The unities of time, place and action denotes a theory of dramatic tragedy.. The three unities are: unity of action- a tragedy should comprise one principal action, unity of time- the action in a tragedy should occur over a period of no more than 24 hours, unity of place- a tragedy should exist in a single physical location.

Essay on Dryden's An Essay on Dramatic Poesie

Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* debates on Neo-classical theory of literature. Dryden upheld classical drama by declaring that it is an imitation of life and reflects the human nature. In the year 1663, a Frenchman named Samuel Sorbiere visited England on a diplomatic mission. On returning to France, he published an account of his voyage wherein he made hostile remark about English science and English Stage. Sorbiere incited rejoinders on scientific and literary grounds from the historian of English Royal Society Thomas Sprat and Dryden.

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Dryden defines Drama as “just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.” Literature imitates human actions. Poetic imitation is different from servile copy of reality.

Crites avers the superiority of the ancients over that of the moderns. He declares that the ancients are faithful imitators and wise observers of nature. The moderns marred and ill represented nature in their plays. He attributes all the rules of dramatic poesy to the ancients. Crites proclaims that the ancients followed the unity of time especially in the tragedies. They set only a single scene all through the play. He cites the English playwright Ben Jonson as the best example for following the rules of the ancients.

Eugenius draws attention to the shortcomings of the ancients and the merits of the moderns. He condemns the ancients for failing to adhere to a fixed number of acts in a play. The ancients wrote plays at the entrances of each character or chorus and not by acts. The characters portrayed by the ancients are narrow despite being imitations of nature. The ancients neither invented the unities nor did they adhere to them in their plays. The ancients displayed no poetic justice in their plays as their heroes were despondent in piety and thrived in wickedness. The ancients were dull in the representation of love and passions on the stage. They focussed on harsh emotions such as lust, anger, cruelty, revenge and ambition. The ancients were capable of raising horror rather than compassion in the mind of the audience.

Lisideius advocates the supremacy of the French drama against the English. The French observe the unities to perfection. The French dramatist do not burden their plots with under-plots which diverts the attention of the audience and the reader. The French dramatists desist the use of tragi-comedy. Lisideius censures the historical plays of Shakespeare for cramming up years of history in two and half hours, which in effect becomes not an imitation of nature, but a miniature. The French dramatists enact scenes of battle or murder through lively descriptions.

Neander admits that the French plays are more regular and the laws are adhered to. He acknowledges that the English plays have many irregularities, but “neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us”. The French lack in the rich variety of humour that the English plays are endowed with. The plots of the English dramatists are profuse and heterogeneous.

Dryden refused to be backed down by the French dramatists and critics. Dryden defends the violation of unities on the part of the English dramatists. The violation of the unities imparts heterogeneity to the English. The observance of unities has a constricted effect on the French plays, leading to absurdities. The neglect of the unities by the English dramatists enables a just and lively portrayal of human nature.

In *An Essay on Dramatic Poesie*, Dryden has high regard for the ancients, but defends the Moderns. The supremacy of the ancients is established by the Moderns imbibing the rules related to poetic imitation formulated by the Ancients. In the words of Samuel Johnson, Dryden taught the succeeding generations to think naturally and express forcibly.

How did Crites establish the superiority of the ancients?

Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* debates on Neo-classical theory of literature. Dryden upheld classical drama by declaring that it is an imitation of life and reflects the human nature. In the year 1663, a Frenchman named Samuel Sorbiere visited England on a diplomatic mission. On returning to France, he published an account of his voyage wherein he made hostile remark about English science and English Stage. Sorbiere incited rejoinders on scientific and literary grounds from the historian of English Royal Society Thomas Sprat and Dryden.

The essay on Dramatic Poesie is in the form of a dialogue in the manner of Plato's Republic and through his dextrous usage, Dryden made it into a popular literary form. The essay has four spokesmen :

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Dryden defines Drama as "just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind." Literature imitates human actions. Poetic imitation is different from servile copy of reality.

Crites calls attention to the topic of discussion- namely dramatic poesy. He avers the superiority of the ancients over that of the moderns. He declares that the ancients are faithful imitators and wise observers of nature. The moderns marred and ill represented nature in their plays. He attributes all the rules of dramatic poesy to the ancients. He speaks of the three unities- unity of time, place and action. Unities, in drama, is derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*. A play is to have a single action represented as occurring in a single place and within the course of a day. Crites proclaims that the ancients followed the unity of time especially in the tragedies. They set only a single scene all through the play. Crites subscribes to a practical change in the scenes of the play, only if the location of the play is adjacent. He praises the French as the next best after the ancients. Crites records that in the plays of the French "if the act begins in a garden, a street, or a chamber, 'tis ended in the same place" (*Essay of Dramatic Poesie* p. 355). The action of the play should be singular.. He cites the English playwright Ben Jonson as the best example for following the rules of the ancients.

How did Eugenius draw attention to the merits of the moderns?

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Eugenius draws attention to the shortcomings of the ancients and the merits of the moderns. He condemns the ancients for failing to adhere to a fixed number of acts in a play. The ancients wrote plays at the entrances of each character or chorus and not by acts. The ancients repeated stories as in the play *Oedipus* by Sophocles. Repetition puts down the novelty and delight of the play. The twofold intent of a play is to teach and delight. The characters portrayed by the ancients are narrow despite being imitations of nature. The ancients neither invented the unities nor did they adhere to them in their plays. The Greek philosophers and critic Aristotle and Plato did not write about the unity of action.

The characters painted in the plays of the ancients are limited in nature. The French poets held on to the three unities as a rule of the stage. The ancients displayed no poetic justice in their plays as their heroes were despondent in piety and thrived in wickedness. Poetic justice is a literary device wherein virtue is rewarded and viciousness punished. The modern plays do not lack in decorum. The ancients specialised in each genre. The tragedians wrote only tragedies and the comedians wrote only comedies. Thus the shortcomings of the ancients could not be exempted. The ancient's use or choice of words was not suitable to the taste of the common people. The ancients were dull in the representation of love and passions on the stage. They focussed on harsh emotions such as lust, anger, cruelty, revenge and ambition. The ancients were capable of raising horror rather than compassion in the mind of the audience.

How does Lisideius advocate the supremacy of the French drama over that of the English?

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Lisideius advocates the supremacy of the French drama against the English. The French observe the unities to perfection. The unity of time is complied with and the action of their plays does not exceed thirty hours. The French dramatist adhere to the unity of place and the entire action is limited to the place of origin. The French dramatist do not burden their plots with under-plots which diverts the attention of the audience and the reader. The French dramatists desist the use of tragi-comedy. A tragi-comedy is a medley of mirth, sadness, passion, honour and duel. The French plays afford variety in a more reasonable manner. The intention of tragedy is to invoke admiration, compassion or concern and this intent is trounced by the combination of mirth and sadness.

The French dramatists have surpassed the ancients through the plot of their tragedies, which is based on known history. Lisideius censures the historical plays of Shakespeare for cramming up years of history in two and half hours, which in effect becomes not an imitation of nature, but a miniature. Lisideius ridicules Ben Jonson for combining the tragic and the comic in his plays.

The French dramatists steer clear of uproar and tumult on stage by reporting/ narrating duels on stage. On the contrary, the English playwrights make their characters fight on the stage so as to covet a prize. The English dramatists sensationalize an army or an act of murder through a charade of five men /drum and artificial weapons. The audience laugh at the tragic scenes of the English dramatist since dying is an art, that can only be enacted by a Roman gladiator. The French dramatists enact scenes of battle or murder through lively descriptions. The performance of action on stage triggers aversion in audience and the playwrights are to refrain from the enactment of such scenes. The French dramatists conclude the play with a conversation. The French dramatists are adept in the use of rhymes in their plays, while the English dramatists are untrained in the use of rhyme in plays.

The English dramatists do not justly represent nature, but only misrepresent nature in miniature. Multiplicity of actions and incidents are absent in the French plays. Characters are given due weightage in the French plays. The French dramatists avoid tumult and violence on the stage through narration of events that have happened off the stage. All passions and emotions are vivaciously represented by the French dramatist on stage but for actions, inclusive of scenes related to death.

How does Neander/ Dryden justify the use of tragi-comedy by the English dramatist?

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Neander admits that the French plays are more regular and the laws are adhered to. He acknowledges that the English plays have many irregularities, but “neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us”. The French lack in the rich variety of humour that the English plays are endowed with. Moliere and other French dramatists have combined tragedy and comedy, serious and the gay in the manner of the English dramatists. The plots of the French dramatists lack in variety.

Dryden justifies the use of tragi-comedy on the following grounds:

1. Tragic and comic scenes are dissimilar emotions or ideas.
2. A scene of mirth or happiness, introduced in a tragedy provides relief and refreshes the soul. The ease with which the eye can pass from an unpleasant object to that of a pleasant one, is likewise feasible for a human soul to move from the tragic to that of the comic.
3. The oppositional emotions – joy and sadness constitute human nature.
4. Tragi-comedy is a way of writing that is unknown to the Ancients and the moderns of any other nation. The Ancients cannot be a prototype for all times and countries, “What pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience”. The real test of excellence is not a strict observance of rules or conventions, but the attainment of the principal intent of drama. The combination of the tragic and the comic provides dramatic relief.
5. The plots of the English dramatists are profuse and heterogenous. The plots of the French dramatists are empty and narrow. The plays of the French dramatists deal with single action. The plays of the English dramatists have the main plot and the subplot. The subplot is in par with the main plot and thereby the observance of the unity of action is seldom violated.
6. The French dramatists’ obsession with single theme hinders the expression of passion in their plays. The presence of long speeches in the French plays results in boredom. Long speeches suit the aptitude of the French, but they are inappropriate to the sullen temperament of the English audience, who watch plays only for sustenance. The presence of short speeches and rejoinder in the English plays serve to incite emotions/ passions. Wit and repartee are the salient features of a comedy. The English dramatists have reached the pinnacle of excellence in the use of wit. The use of wit endorses the superiority of the English dramatists over that of the French.
7. The presence of innumerable characters bestows great variety to plays. The dexterity of the dramatist is exhibited in the skilful management of the countless characters (– namely assigning equal importance) in the play. Dryden compliments the English dramatist Ben Jonson for his ingenious skill.

How does Dryden justify the violation of the Unities by the English dramatist?

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Dryden stands up for the claim of the genius to write according to his/ her own individual convictions rather than servile observance of rules. Dryden refused to be backed down by the French dramatists and critics. Dryden defends the violation of unities on the part of the English dramatists. The violation of the unities imparts heterogeneity to the English. The observance of unities has a constricted effect on the French plays, leading to absurdities. The neglect of the unities by the English dramatists enables a just and lively portrayal of human nature. The French plays are regular in form and structure, but they are not as pleasant and delightful as that of the English plays. The English dramatist Ben Jonson displayed dexterity in the play *The Silent Woman*, than the French counterpart. Dryden justifies the breach of the unities on the ground that observance of the unities imparts probability and strain on the imagination of the spectators.

How does Neander comparatively assess the ancient versus the modern playwrights?

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In *An Essay on Dramatic Poesie*, Dryden has high regard for the ancients, but defends the Moderns. The supremacy of the ancients is established by the Moderns in imbibing the rules related to poetic imitation formulated by the Ancients. The Ancients had a penchant for drama and excelled in its performance. The veneration of the poets in the Greek and Roman culture promoted beneficial and salubrious competition among the poets. Poetry was honoured than other branches of learning. The modern times seldom appreciate and honour poets. The drama performed by the ancients are superior since the poets closely observed and studied nature. On the contrary, the moderns misrepresent nature. The ancients observed the unities. The moderns violated the unity of time and action. The moderns are inept in appreciating the structure and language of the ancients, since the custom and culture of the ancients is unknown

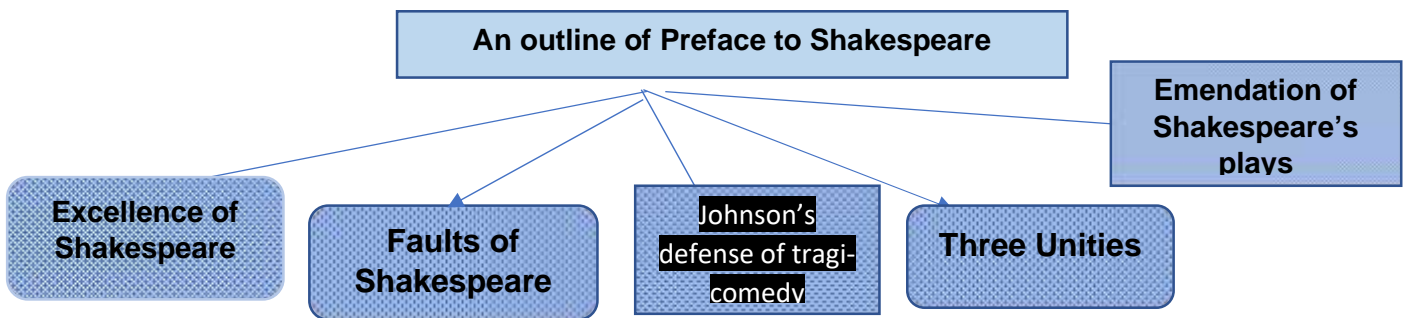
Short Questions

1. Why did Dryden write An Essay on Dramatic Poesie?
2. When did Dryden write An Essay on Dramatic Poesie?
3. What is the form of Dryden's An Essay on Dramatic Poesie?
4. What is the symbolic significance of the four characters in Dryden's An Essay on Dramatic Poesie?
5. Why were the poets honoured in ancient times?
6. Why is the English drama unnatural?
7. Define Unity of Time, Place and Action.
8. How did the English dramatists ill-represent nature?
9. Why does Eugenius regard the modern plays as superior to that of the Ancients?
10. What are the new features added to by the Moderns to drama?
11. How does Eugenius critique the plots of the plays or drama by the Ancients?
12. Why does Eugenius accuse the ancients for flouting the Ancients?
13. Why do the plays of the Ancients neither delight nor instruct?
14. What do the tragedies of the Ancients lack?
15. How does Lisideus establish the superiority of the French dramatists over that of the English in the observation of unities?
16. How do the French dramatists offer variety through their plays?
17. How did the French dramatists excel the Ancients?
18. How do the French dramatists avoid violence on the stage?
19. Why do the French dramatists use rhyme in their plays?
20. How does Neander justify the use of tragedy and comedy by the French dramatists?
21. How does Dryden justify the use of tragi-comedy by the English dramatists?
22. What are the merits of English plays over that of the French?
23. Why do long speeches only suit the genius of the French?
24. What are the chief graces of English comedies?
25. What is the skill attained by the English dramatist Ben Jonson?
26. Why did the English dramatists depict violent action on the stage?
27. What did the French dramatist Corneille admit with regard to the three Unities?
28. What are the merits of the plays of Shakespeare and Fletcher?
29. What is Dryden's comment on Ben Jonson's play The Silent Woman?
30. Why does Crites attack the use of rhyme in plays?
31. Why does Crites attack the use of blank verse in plays?
32. How does Neander defend the use of rhyme in plays?
33. How does Neander defend the use of rhyme in tragedy?
34. How does Neander justify the use of blank verse in comedy?
35. How did the Elizabethan playwrights achieve perfection?
36. Define poetic imitation .

INTRODUCTION TO DR. JOHNSON'S PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE



Dr. Samuel Johnson was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. His claim as a literary critic is evident in the works- *Preface to the Dictionary of the English Language, Preface to Shakespeare, Lives of the Poets* etc. Dr. Johnson is the spokesman of the classical school of criticism. *Preface to Shakespeare* was published in the year 1765



Excellence of Shakespeare

Shakespeare is great and significant because of a just portrayal of human nature. Shakespeare's characters are true to life representation of humanity. Shakespeare deals with the passions and norms that are universal to humanity. His characters are universal but they are also individual. Love is one of the principle passion in the plays of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's works are a storehouse of practical axioms and domestic wisdom. Philosophy of life in theory and practice can be retrieved from the works of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's characters are not larger-than-life. They are imbued with the common feelings and virtues of humanity. Shakespeare has no heroes but only human beings. The characters of Shakespeare, act and think, in accordance with the way, the reader himself/ herself would act and think under such circumstances " Even when the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life". Shakespeare familiarizes the wonderful with a sense of balance.

Shakespeare renders human sentiments in human language. His plays adds on to one's knowledge of the human nature. Shakespeare's adherence or importance assigned to human nature has provoked criticism. Shakespeare is of the conviction, that a King is first and foremost a human being and then a king or a Roman afterwards.

Shakespeare was at ease in writing comedy and not tragedy. Shakespeare had to toil hard in writing tragedies. Shakespeare's tragic scenes always lack in something, but his comedies often surpasses expectation or desire. " His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.." Shakespeare's comic scenes are natural and therefore durable. It is because of the comic scenes that Shakespeare's popularity has not suffered any setback with the passing of time. The language of Shakespeare's comic scenes is the language of real life- neither gross nor over-refined. Thus the comic scenes have not grown obsolete with the passage of time. Shakespeare's language appeals to the soul than that of any other poet of his age.

Dr. Johnson “ tries Shakespeare by the tests of time, of nature, of universality and finds him supreme in all.” Shakespeare’s drama is the mirror of life. Shakespeare is eminent because he holds a mirror to nature and moves from a depiction of the particular to that of the general. He steered clear of particular manner and took up “ representation of general nature.” His characters are endowed with passions universal to all humanity “ In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual, in those of Shakespeare, it is commonly a species”. Shakespeare’s characters are real human beings and not dubious and fantastic beings from some other world. The language spoken by the characters are the language of ordinary Elizabethan men and women.

The motif of love is predominant in the works of other contemporary dramatists. Shakespeare found the source of emotions from the external world. Dr. Johnson finds the heroes of Shakespeare like Macbeth moved by ambition, Brutus by patriotism, Othello by jealousy and King Lear by affection. Thus the characters and themes of Shakespeare’s plays are as diverse and varied as life . Johnson pronounced Shakespeare as a “ transcendent and unbounded genius.”

Faults of Shakespeare

Shakespeare has grave imperfections to mar his greatness. Shakespeare downplayed virtue in his plays. He wrote to please than to instruct . He wrote without any didactic purpose. There is no poetic justice in the plays of Shakespeare. The lack of poetic justice in a Shakespearean play cannot be excused citing the barbarity of his age. Justice is a virtue that is independent of time and place and therefore Dr. Johnson affirms that it is the duty of a writer to make the world better.

The plots of Shakespeare’s plays are loosely structured. His plays abound in faults of chronology and archaism in variety is noticed in his plays. Shakespeare is not to be carped at this fault, it is the fault common to his age. The Elizabethan poet , Philip Sidney is also guilty of the same fault in his work titled *Arcadia* (*The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, also known simply as the *Arcadia*, is a long prose pastoral romance written towards the end of the 16th century).

Shakespeare’s jokes are coarse and licentious. The fault lies with the age of Shakespeare, but Dr. Johnson emphasises that Shakespeare should have imbibed other forms of gaiety and vivacity. The fundamental duty of a writer is to portray the best. Pomp of diction and periphrasis characterise the narration of Shakespeare. Narration in drama has to be brief. The verbosity of Shakespeare’s language led to a mismatch between thought and language.

Johnson’s defence of Shakespeare

Johnson judged Shakespeare with allusion to his age. The age of Shakespeare believed in magic and the supernatural and thus Shakespeare made use of the marvellous in the plays. The audience in Shakespeare’s time was uninterested in narration and declamation and favored events and incidents of thrill and sensation. Thus the plots of Shakespeare’s plays teem with incidents or events. Shakespeare borrowed the plot for his plays from novels, history and translations familiar to the Elizabethan audience. Ingenious or innovative plot would confound and drain the intelligence of the Elizabethan audience. An innovative plot would have demotivated or discouraged the Elizabethan audience to watch the plays of Shakespeare. The skill of Shakespeare is apparent in the creation of suspense. Shakespeare’s plays suffer from many extravagancies but they are defensible.

Johnson’s defense of Shakespeare’s Tragi-comedy

Dr. Johnson defends Shakespeare use of tragi-comedy on the following grounds:

1. Shakespeare’s juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy is true to nature. Human life is a combination of the good and bad, joy and sorrow etc. Shakespeare mirror’s nature.

2. Tragi-comedy is nearer to life than either tragedy or comedy. In tragi-comedy, the high and the low are united both for instruction and pleasure.

3. The intersection of the serious and the gay, of the comic and the tragic does not disrupt the progress of the passions, that is, it does not result in any waning of effect.

4. Pleasure is inherent in variety. Tragi-comedy appeases a greater variety of taste.

5. Shakespeare's plays are pure gold and they have many excellencies. Shakespeare achieved distinction without education, living in abject poverty and impediments. The excellencies of Shakespeare's works result not from a study of books but from his keen sense of observation- of life and nature.

6. Character and dialogue were unknown in his age. Shakespeare introduced character and dialogue. In Shakespeare's age, the study of mankind was facile. Only actions were studied and causes omitted. But Shakespeare studied the causes that led to action.

7. Shakespeare also perfected the English blank verse and imparted to it diversity and flexibility. With Spenser (Elizabethan poet), Shakespeare discerned the harmony of the English tongue and imparted to it both softness and vigour.

Emendation of Shakespeare's plays

Dr. Johnson warns against hasty emendation of the plays of Shakespeare. Emendation is correction and modification of a text. Dr. Johnson recommends conjectural emendation in the form of marginal notes. The obscure passages in the plays of Shakespeare could be explained in compliance with custom and manner of the age.

Dr. Johnson's defense of Shakespeare's violation of the Unities

The history plays of Shakespeare are neither comedies nor tragedies. The history plays need not observe the classical unities, since it was devised only for tragedy and comedy. Consistency and naturalness are the only prerequisites for the history plays. Shakespeare had adhered to the unity of action in the other plays. As a poet of nature, the plots of Shakespeare's plays are complex and heterogenous. The plot has a beginning, a middle and an end. The events in the plot are cogently related/ connected with one another and steers towards denouement.

Dr. Johnson substantiates Shakespeare's violation of the unities of time, place and action, since the compliance of the same is problematic. The unities of time and place imparts credibility to drama. A drama is a delusion with no limits. The audience of a drama can imagine and comprehend the different actions staged, irrespective of the timeline. The unity of time has no authenticity in a dramatic performance. A drama imitates sequential actions in successive places. Dr. Johnson endorses the observance of the unity of action and deems the unity of time and place as supplementary to drama. The breach of unities instructs and imparts diversity.

Glossary

1. Classical Unities- The unities of time, place and action denotes a theory of dramatic tragedy.. The three unities are: unity of action- a tragedy should comprise one principal action, unity of time- the action in a tragedy should occur over a period of no more than 24 hours, unity of place- a tragedy should exist in a single physical location.
2. Plot- the main events of a plot, novel or a play.
3. Elizabethan- period of the history of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.
4. Macbeth- one of the tragedies of Shakespeare. The titular character Macbeth is a Scottish general.
5. Brutus- character in Shakespeare's tragedy Julius Caesar- a Roman senator and one of the assassins of Julius Caesar.
6. Othello-one of the tragedies of Shakespeare- the titular character Othello is the African general in Venetian army.
7. King Lear- one of the tragedies of Shakespeare- the titular character Lear is the king of Britain.

Essay on Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare

Dr. Samuel Johnson was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. Dr. Samuel Johnson is the last Augustan, who reasserts that "the end of writing is to instruct, the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." In the Preface to Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson upholds his predilection for tragicomedy on the way it represents "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and modes of combination."

Shakespeare is great and significant because of a just portrayal of human nature. Shakespeare's characters are true to life representation of humanity. Shakespeare deals with the passions and norms that are universal to humanity. Shakespeare's works are a storehouse of practical axioms and domestic wisdom. Shakespeare renders human sentiments in human language. His plays adds on to one's knowledge of the human nature. Shakespeare's tragic scenes always lack in something, but his comedies often surpasses expectation or desire. "His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.." Shakespeare's comic scenes are natural and therefore durable. It is because of the comic scenes that Shakespeare's popularity has not suffered any setback with the passing of time. Shakespeare is eminent because he holds a mirror to nature and moves from a depiction of the particular to that of the general. Shakespeare found the source of emotions from the external world. Dr. Johnson finds the heroes of Shakespeare like Macbeth moved by ambition, Brutus by patriotism, Othello by jealousy and King Lear by affection. Thus the characters and themes of Shakespeare's plays are as diverse and varied as life. Johnson pronounced Shakespeare as a "transcendent and unbounded genius."

Shakespeare has grave imperfections to mar his greatness. Shakespeare downplayed virtue in his plays He wrote to please than to instruct. The plots of Shakespeare's plays are loosely structured. His plays abound in faults of chronology and archaism in variety is noticed in his plays. Shakespeare is not to be carped at this fault, it is the fault common to his age. Shakespeare's jokes are coarse and licentious. The fault lies with the age of Shakespeare, but Dr. Johnson emphasises that Shakespeare should have imbibed other forms of gaiety and vivacity. The fundamental duty of a writer to portray the best. Pomp of diction and periphrasis characterise the narration of Shakespeare.

Johnson judged Shakespeare with allusion to his age. The age of Shakespeare believed in magic and the supernatural and thus Shakespeare made use of the marvellous in the plays. The audience in Shakespeare's time was uninterested in narration and declamation and favored events and incidents of thrill and sensation. Shakespeare borrowed the plot for his plays from novels, history and translations familiar to the Elizabethan audience.

Shakespeare's juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy is true to nature. Tragi-comedy is nearer to life than either tragedy or comedy. In tragi-comedy, the high and the low are united both for instruction and pleasure. Shakespeare achieved distinction without education, living in abject poverty and impediments. The excellencies of Shakespeare's works result not from a study of books but from his keen sense of observation- of life and nature. Shakespeare also perfected the English blank verse and imparted to it diversity and flexibility.

Dr. Johnson warns against hasty emendation of the plays of Shakespeare. Emendation is correction and modification of a text. Dr. Johnson recommends conjectural emendation in the form of marginal notes. The obscure passages in the plays of Shakespeare could be explained in compliance with custom and manner of the age.

The history plays of Shakespeare are neither comedies nor tragedies. The history plays need not observe the classical unities, since it was devised only for tragedy and comedy. Consistency and naturalness are the only prerequisites for the history plays. Shakespeare had adhered to the unity of action in the other plays. Dr. Johnson substantiates Shakespeare's violation of the unities of time, place and action, since the compliance of the same is problematic. Dr. Johnson endorses the observance of the unity of action and deems the unity of time and place as supplementary to drama. The breach of unities instructs and imparts diversity.

How does Dr. Johnson assess the excellencies of Shakespeare?

Dr. Samuel Johnson was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. Dr. Samuel Johnson is the last Augustan, who reasserts that "the end of writing is to instruct, the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." In the Preface to Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson upholds his predilection for tragicomedy on the way it represents "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and modes of combination." Shakespeare is great and significant because of a just portrayal of human nature. Shakespeare's characters are true to life representation of humanity. Shakespeare deals with the passions and norms that are universal to humanity. His characters are universal but they are also individual. Love is one of the principle passion in the plays of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's works are a storehouse of practical axioms and domestic wisdom. Philosophy of life in theory and practice can be retrieved from the works of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's characters are not larger-than-life. They are imbued with the common feelings and virtues of humanity. Shakespeare has no heroes but only human beings. The characters of Shakespeare, act and think, in accordance with the way, the reader himself/ herself would act and think under such circumstances "Even when the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life". Shakespeare familiarizes the wonderful with a sense of balance.

Shakespeare renders human sentiments in human language. His plays adds on to one's knowledge of the human nature. Shakespeare's adherence or importance assigned to human nature has provoked criticism. Shakespeare is of the conviction, that a King is first and foremost a human being and then a king or a Roman afterwards.

Shakespeare was at ease in writing comedy and not tragedy. Shakespeare had to toil hard in writing tragedies. Shakespeare's tragic scenes always lack in something, but his comedies often surpasses expectation or desire. " His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.." Shakespeare's comic scenes are natural and therefore durable. It is because of the comic scenes that Shakespeare's popularity has not suffered any setback with the passing of time. The language of Shakespeare's comic scenes is the language of real life- neither gross nor over-refined. Thus the comic scenes have not grown obsolete with the passage of time. Shakespeare's language appeals to the soul than that of any other poet of his age.

Dr. Johnson " tries Shakespeare by the tests of time, of nature, of universality and finds him supreme in all." Shakespeare's drama is the mirror of life. Shakespeare is eminent because he holds a mirror to nature and moves from a depiction of the particular to that of the general. He steered clear of particular manner and took up " representation of general nature." His characters are endowed with passions universal to all humanity " In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual, in those of Shakespeare, it is commonly a species". Shakespeare's characters are real human beings and not dubious and fantastic beings from some other world. The language spoken by the characters are the language of ordinary Elizabethan men and women.

The motif of love is predominant in the works of other contemporary dramatists. Shakespeare found the source of emotions from the external world. Dr. Johnson finds the heroes of Shakespeare like Macbeth moved by ambition, Brutus by patriotism, Othello by jealousy and King Lear by affection. Thus the characters and themes of Shakespeare's plays are as diverse and varied as life . Johnson pronounced Shakespeare as a " transcendent and unbounded genius."

How does Dr. Johnson critique the faults of Shakespeare?

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Shakespeare has grave imperfections to mar his greatness. Shakespeare downplayed virtue in his plays He wrote to please than to instruct . He wrote without any didactic purpose. There is no poetic justice in the plays of Shakespeare. The lack of poetic justice in Shakespearean play cannot be excused citing the barbarity of his age. Justice is a virtue that is independent of time and place and therefore Dr. Johnson affirms that it is the duty of a writer to make the world better.

The plots of Shakespeare's plays are loosely structured. His plays abound in faults of chronology and archaism in variety is noticed in his plays. Shakespeare is not to be carped at this fault, it is the fault common to his age. The Elizabethan poet , Philip Sidney is also guilty of the same fault in his work titled *Arcadia* (*The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, also known simply as the *Arcadia*, is a long prose pastoral romance written towards the end of the 16th century).

Shakespeare's jokes are coarse and licentious. The fault lies with the age of Shakespeare, but Dr. Johnson emphasises that Shakespeare should have imbibed other forms of gaiety and vivacity. The fundamental duty of a writer to portray the best. Pomp of diction and periphrasis characterise the narration of Shakespeare. Narration in drama has to be brief. The verbosity of Shakespeare's language led to a mismatch between thought and language.

How does Dr. Johnson's defend Shakespeare?

Dr. Samuel Johnson was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. Dr. Samuel Johnson is the last Augustan, who reasserts that "the end of writing is to instruct, the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." In the Preface to Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson upholds his predilection for tragicomedy on the way it represents "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and modes of combination."

Johnson judged Shakespeare with allusion to his age. The age of Shakespeare believed in magic and the supernatural and thus Shakespeare made use of the marvellous in the plays. The audience in Shakespeare's time was uninterested in narration and declamation and favored events and incidents of thrill and sensation. Thus the plots of Shakespeare's plays teem with incidents or events. Shakespeare borrowed the plot for his plays from novels, history and translations familiar to the Elizabethan audience. Ingenious or innovative plot would confound and drain the intelligence of the Elizabethan audience. An innovative plot would have demotivated or discouraged the Elizabethan audience to watch the plays of Shakespeare. The skill of Shakespeare is apparent in the creation of suspense. Shakespeare's plays suffer from many extravagancies but they are defensible.

Dr. Johnson defends Shakespeare use of tragi-comedy on the following grounds:

1. Shakespeare's juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy is true to nature. Human life is a combination of the good and bad, joy and sorrow etc. Shakespeare mirror's nature.
2. Tragi-comedy is nearer to life than either tragedy or comedy. In tragi-comedy, the high and the low are united both for instruction and pleasure.
3. The intersection of the serious and the gay, of the comic and the tragic does not disrupt the progress of the passions, that is, it does not result in any waning of effect.
4. Pleasure is inherent in variety. Tragi-comedy appeases a greater variety of taste.
5. Shakespeare's plays are pure gold and they have many excellencies. Shakespeare achieved distinction without education, living in abject poverty and impediments. The excellencies of Shakespeare's works result not from a study of books but from his keen sense of observation- of life and nature.
6. Character and dialogue were unknown in the his age. Shakespeare introduced character and dialogue. In Shakespeare's age, the study of mankind was facile. Only actions were studied and causes omitted. But Shakespeare studied the causes that led to action.
7. Shakespeare also perfected the English blank verse and imparted to it diversity and flexibility. With Spenser (Elizabethan poet), Shakespeare discerned the harmony of the English tongue and imparted to it both softness and vigour.

The history plays of Shakespeare are neither comedies nor tragedies. The history plays need not observe the classical unities, since it was devised only for tragedy and comedy. Consistency and naturalness are the only prerequisites for the history plays. Shakespeare had adhered to the unity of action in the other plays. As a poet of nature, the plots of Shakespeare's plays are complex and heterogenous. The plot has a beginning, a middle and an end. The events in the plot are cogently related/ connected with one another and steers towards denouement.

Dr. Johnson substantiates Shakespeare's violation of the unities of time, place and action, since the compliance of the same is problematic. The unities of time and place imparts credibility to drama. A drama is a delusion with no limits. The audience of a drama can imagine and comprehend the different actions staged, irrespective of the timeline. The unity of time has no authenticity in a dramatic performance. A drama imitates sequential actions in successive places. Dr. Johnson

endorses the observance of the unity of action and deems the unity of time and place as supplementary to drama. The breach of unities instructs and imparts diversity.

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What is Dr. Johnson's advise on Shakespeare's emendation?

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How does Dr. Johnson's defend Shakespeare's violation of Unities?

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Short Questions

1. Why does Dr. Johnson regard Shakespeare as a great dramatist?
2. How does Dr. Johnson defend the universality of Shakespeare's characters?
3. How does Shakespeare familiarise the wonderful?
4. How did the readers formulate a philosophy of life from the plays of Shakespeare?
5. How does Johnson justify Shakespeare by the historical context?
6. How does Dr. Johnson defend Shakespeare's use of tragi-comedy?
7. How was the genius of Shakespeare reflected more in comedies than in tragedies?
8. Why has the comic scenes of Shakespeare not grown obsolete?
9. Why does Dr. Johnson refuse to defend Shakespeare in not using poetic justice?
10. What is the fault of Shakespeare with reference to plots?
11. How does Dr. Johnson defend Shakespeare with reference to chronology?
12. How does Dr. Johnson defend the historical plays of Shakespeare?
13. How does Dr. Johnson point out the merits of Shakespeare's plots?
14. Define the term denouement.
15. What is Dr. Johnson's opinion of Shakespeare's emendation?
16. How does Dr. Johnson outline the way obscure passages should be explained in Shakespeare emendation?
17. What is Dr. Johnson's advice on the way to read a Shakespearean play?
18. How did Shakespeare perfect the blank verse?

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